



# Newsletter

## April 2025



### Welcome

I always find this a very positive time of the year. The days are lengthening , at present the sun seems to be shining, lambs are in the field and turnout can't be too far away. We've been busy over the past month with both lambings and calvings but I do get the impression that most folk are having a good lambing time helped of course by the weather.

I hope you are finding our new ordering regime not too inconvenient. It keeps us within the rules and hopefully you are seeing the benefit of the additional advice and not having to hang around in the surgery waiting for your meds to be put up.

**Mark Stott**

### Bugs in the Lambing Shed and People



Though health and safety may appear the least of our worries at this time of year, it is best to remember that diseases that can affect your sheep can also affect yourselves. As vets we can only help with sick sheep not sick farmers!

**Abortion zoonoses:** Some infectious diseases that can cause abortions in sheep can cause similar issues in pregnant women. Enzootic abortion, toxoplasma and campylobacter are some of the culprits that can be a risk. Strict hygiene, removal of all abortion material and deep cleaning of any contaminated bedding will help to reduce any zoonotic risk. Women who could be pregnant are advised to avoid the lambing shed if possible, for safety.

**Skin/ contact zoonoses:** Our old friend Orf will likely make its return around lambing time. These lesions can be spread from sheep to farmer through direct contact, therefore wearing gloves and regular hand washing will help mitigate this. Scabivax vaccination can be administered to lambs from 1 day old to help reduce clinical signs. Please take care and wear gloves when administering the vaccine as it is a live formulation which can also cause lesions.

**Faecal/oral zoonoses:** It goes without saying that strict hand hygiene especially before mealtimes will help reduce the spread of any potential E.coli, salmonella or cryptosporidium. Children are particularly susceptible due to their sporadic hygiene practices!

**Alex Vayro**

#### Included this month

- **Bugs in the Lambing Shed** –Alex Vayro
- **Rumen Drinking**– Gill Lumb
- **Useful Bugs** – Jim McKinstry
- **Calf Rehydration** –Rebekah Clayton
- **Arkguard** - Sarah Harker
- **News and Diary Dates**



Available now, blood sample 6-8 aborted ewes, the lab work cost is then subsidised for EAE and Toxoplasmosis. This can be done up to 3 months after abortion so please mark them for testing, when time allows.

## Rumen Drinking

A calf's oesophageal groove has a very important job – to direct milk to the abomasum, it closes the pathway to the rumen when a calf is drinking milk. In some stressful situations the calf's reflex mechanism can fail and milk can end up in the Rumen, once milk is in the Rumen bacteria cause the milk to ferment, leading to acidosis. Here are some of the reasons this may happen...

- Bucket feeding instead of suckling (calves that drink from a bucket drink too quickly).
- Bucket teat height may be incorrect (mothers natural height is 2'/600mm).
- Feeding milk that is too cold (37-38deg is ideal).
- Irregular feeding times.
- Not feeding enough volume of milk (hungry calves drink too quickly).
- Stress and competition at feeding times.

Do your best to make sure that your calves receive the right amount of high quality, clean colostrum as calves with a lower immunity are always going to be at a greater risk of rumen drinking. The lab we use have some figures to suggest that rumen drinking in pre-weaned dairy calves is the second most common cause of death. Some of the signs to look out for are...



- Ill doing, dehydrated and depressed calves, with poor co-ordination and hair loss.
- Signs of pain.
- Poor appetite, weak suckling reflex.
- Bloat
- Grey, pasty scours.
- Increased pneumonia cases.

Prevention of this condition is key to higher productivity and lower costs with healthier calves.

Gill Lumb

## Useful Bugs

All my life as a vet I have learnt how to kill bacteria as they were the cause of many of the diseases that I needed to treat. This is why it is more surprising why I am starting to see the benefit of “good” bacteria to help keep calves healthy.

Antibiotics have been used, overused and abused it animals over the years. The increased scrutiny and legislation involving the use of antibiotics does get a lot of sighs and rolling of eyes but it is a good thing as we have to use these crucial medicines properly. In the last couple of years I have personally seen some really nasty bacteria that are resistant to our antibiotics killing calves. It scares me. We have always been told antibiotic resistant bacteria are a problem, but it is not until you see calves dying and our antibiotics not working that you realise you need to be doing something different. We have been using a new product, **Precision Microbes** on some farms to help the calves fight disease. This product has probiotics, which are good bacteria which help the gut to fight disease. It also has the prebiotics which is the food the probiotics use and the postbiotics which are the products the bacteria make to help the gut stay healthy. By putting good bacteria in the gut, it in theory, will stop bad bacteria from growing and will allow the gut and the calves immune system to develop and to resist disease.

This is not the only probiotic product on the market, there are quite a few others. The reason we are recommending this product is the thinking behind it. It is a liquid with all the products that the probiotics need to make them work. The research that I have done into it has me thinking that this product will make a positive difference to calf health.

This product is no substitute for cleanliness, good colostrum management and good nutrition. By doing everything correctly you can still get problems. This product will help the gut to develop, make it more difficult for bad bacteria to invade and boost the immune system of the calf without needing to use treatments that could promote antibiotic resistance.

If you want to know more about this product don't hesitate to have a word with me.

Jim McKinstry

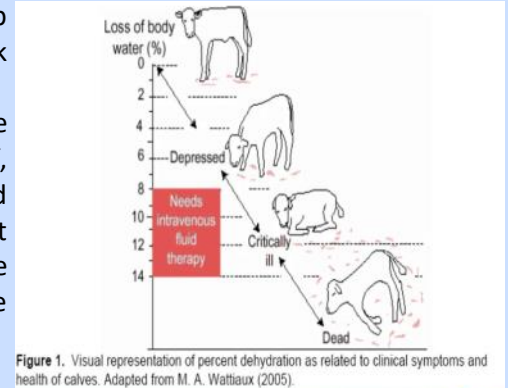


## Calf Rehydration

Recently we had a vet meeting on oral rehydration sachets. One thing that stood out from this talk was hearing that in order for a calf to scour, they must have already lost 40% of their gut function. Add to that a 5% dehydrated calf looks clinically normal, they lose on average 7% of their body water a day and once they reach 14% they die; it's no wonder they go downhill fast. Therefore, feeding rehydration sachets whilst calves are still bright and keen to drink milk gives you your best chance at getting them right, quick. This is because the electrolytes in rehydration sachets enable faster rehydration than just water alone.

Calves need about 2000 calories for maintenance, i.e. less than this and they will lose weight and their immune system will suffer. Even our most calorific sachet (**Hydrafast**, stocked by us) only contains 440 calories a feed. This is because if too much glucose is added to the powder it will do the opposite of its intended purpose and cause the calf to become more dehydrated. Therefore, in order for the calf to have enough energy to keep their weight maintained and immune system functioning, they need to have milk alongside, but separate, to the rehydration sachets.

The problem comes when the calf won't suck. We really don't want to be stomach tubing milk, as it just sits in the underdeveloped rumen and goes off, causing bloat. If your calf does not have a suckle reflex, it is likely acidotic and needs us to give some bicarb directly into the vein, so please give us a ring if that is the case. Giving bicarb orally in a calf is unlikely to work as it can't enter the bloodstream as effectively and also may cause harm by reducing the pH of the stomach, enabling bacteria such as E.coli and Salmonella to survive.



### Take home points:

- Give rehydration sachets to every calf that scours even those bright and drinking.
- Keep feeding milk but not via stomach tube.
- Needs bicarb in vein if won't suck.

Rebekah Clayton

## Arkguard - New in the Armoury for Watery Mouth Prevention

I will never be really rich cos I'm not good enough at selling stuff. As farmers and vets, we are confronted with shelves full of shiny products and adverts promising an easy fix. For me, the combination of an agricultural Yorkshire upbringing, a vet degree and almost 30 years in practice creates an enquiring mind but a healthy scepticism. The current drive away from unjustifiable antibiotic usage is a necessary one to limit resistance and protect animal and human health. It also encourages us to look at improving management practices and preventative strategies that can be much more effective than any antibiotic.

Nothing illustrates the above points better than the watery mouth story. Watery mouth in lambs is caused by an overgrowth of bacteria in the gut within the first 3 days of life. Adequate colostrum intake should be the main focus of prevention through its supply of IgG antibodies and that from a healthy, well-fed ewe is the best a lamb can get. Where supplementation is necessary, cow colostrum or powdered products can be used. Cow colostrum can be tested for quality with a colostrometer or refractometer on which we are more than happy to advise further. Commercially available powdered colostrums vary massively in quality, in spite of their marketing, so please speak to us to ensure you are not being miss sold. Environmental hygiene should be maximised where possible to reduce bacterial challenge to these lambs. Maximise the resilience of the lamb, minimise the challenge from the environment and you should be a long way there.

The reduced availability of oral antibiotic products for watery mouth left a gap in the market that was eagerly seized upon. Despite their claims, a quick look at the ingredients of some products suggests little of any value to a newborn lamb. The danger comes if you have too much faith in these products. Colostrum management and environment hygiene should be maximised regardless of whatever else you choose to use.

A new product called Arkguard Lamb does however warrant further consideration. It contains IgY antibodies in high concentrations, harvested from the yolks of eggs from vaccinated hens. A 2.4ml dose immediately after birth coats the gut with protective antibodies and mops up any bacteria ingested by the lamb. This is no substitute for a proper dose of antibodies in the form of good colostrum as a follow up, but provides a headstart for at-risk lambs. The science sounds sensible and I would be happy that it's worth a try.

Sound science to back up clever marketing of many animal health and nutritional products is often lacking. Please note that any powdered colostrum substitutes, rehydration sachets or lamb and calf potions that we choose to stock at the vets come with an assurance that we have some faith in the value of that brand and that product.

Sarah Harker



## Whatsapp Ordering Reminder

07442 862092

Please include-

- Name and Farm Name -
- Collection from Lancaster, J36, Sedbergh or Tynedale
- Medicine requested and quantity
- Reason for use - e.g. lame cows.



## Introducing Kim

I joined Farm Gate Vets in November 2024 as a 14 year qualified veterinary nurse, I had previously worked in a small animal practice in Kendal as Head veterinary nurse.

My day to day roles in the practice at Sedbergh including monitoring anaesthetic from small furries to St Bernard's. I also care for the inpatients, this includes taking them out for walks and giving them lots of cuddles and fuss. My main areas of interest are anaesthesia and weight watches for pet. I also process the insurance forms and help keep on top of stock control.

At home I have a 15 years old Labrador, 5 year old Stabyhound, 8 year old and a syrian hamster. All these pets keep me busy along with my two girls who are 12 and 10 years old- we all enjoy going away in our caravan, out on our mountain bikes and dog walks.



## Winners



0-6 years  
Summer Inman



7-15 years  
Emily Bargh



Adult Category  
Dalehead Veterinary Group

Well done to our Colouring Comp Winners, **Summer Inman** and **Emily Bargh**. Not forgetting our adult category winner, **Dalehead Vet Group!**

## Happy 30th Birthday to Beth G !!



We boxed her up and sent her back down south to celebrate last month but all the team would like to wish Beth a very **Happy 30th Birthday**. Keep entertaining us and don't let age bring sensibleness!



## Easter Opening Times

Lancaster & Kendal

Good Friday April 18th- 9am -12pm

Saturday 19th April- 9am - 12pm

Easter Monday April 21st 9am - 12pm

Sedbergh - Closed



**What Should we be doing about Blue Tongue Disease? Tuesday 15th April 12.30pm at our J36 Practice Meeting Room.** Aimed at Cattle clients, Lunch at 12.30pm followed by a discussion on Blue Tongue, Hannah will also update us on Bestico plans for 2025. Please book your place by phoning the office or e mail [linda@farmgatevets.com](mailto:linda@farmgatevets.com)



**Medicine Courses (Dairy Focus) - Thursday 24th April 2025- 11.30pm -2.00pm (lunch included) The Function Room, Boot and Shoe, 171 Scotforth Road, Lancaster, LA1 4PU.** Cost £40 plus VAT per person which includes work book and certificate. This meets the new Red Tractor Requirements for a Course every 5 years for Dairy. North course coming soon.

To book your place please phone the office or e mail [linda@farmgatevets.com](mailto:linda@farmgatevets.com)

### Lancaster Office

Tel: 01524 60006

Open 8:30am-5pm

Monday-Friday

9am—12noon Saturdays

CLOSED Sundays

### J36 Kendal Office

Tel: 015395 67899

Open 8:30am-5pm

Monday-Friday

9am—12noon Saturdays

CLOSED Sundays

### Sedbergh Office

Tel: 015396 20335

Open 8:30--5pm

Monday-Friday

CLOSED Saturdays

CLOSED Sundays

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