

At the time of writing, the snow outside is turning to sleet and rain and spring seems a long way off but lambing time for many has started or is just round the corner. To that end we've got articles on sheep mastitis and a new vaccine on the market; the quality of powdered colostrum; watery mouth; and Scabivax. In addition, there's an article on the merits of lungworm vaccination before turnout. We've also got no less than six online meetings coming up in the next four weeks so there's plenty to read and keep you entertained in the evenings! **Mark**

## Preventing Mastitis in Ewes

Mastitis is an on-going and frustrating problem in many flocks and I'm afraid there is no easy answer. Disease is most commonly caused by Pasturella or Staphylococcal bacteria, with symptoms from sudden illness and death, through to inapparent infection with loss of milk production or the quarter. Good hygiene in housed sheep helps to reduce bacterial contamination, and control of orf limits teat lesions that allow infection in.



Ewes are less prone to problems if lambs suck efficiently and get full quickly as the udder is less traumatised and teats are not damaged. This is helped by:

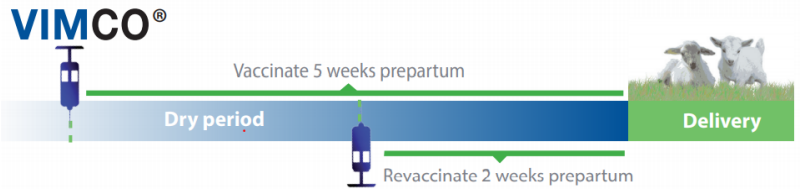
- Good udder conformation with regard to teat size and position.
- Don't expect a ewe to suck more lambs than she can keep full. It can make more sense to take a lamb off.
- Good nutrition in late pregnancy and lactation ensures appropriate body condition and milking ability. Pay attention to energy levels and provision of good quality protein (Digestible Undegradable Protein/DUP).

There is also an argument that over-nutrition in later lactation means that lambs are weaned when some ewes are still milking well, and 'bag-up' when lambs stop sucking. If you think this is an exacerbating factor in your flock, consider restricting grazing at weaning. Antibiotic tubes have been used in some flocks at weaning, but few have found it enough benefit to continue year-on-year. Consider these things when culling ewes. Obviously those that have lost a quarter warrant culling, but think about those that fail to milk well, get damaged teats etc. It is likely that some ewes are genetically more prone to mastitis, perhaps through a link to milking ability, udder conformation, or other factors. If keeping your own replacements, make this a consideration, although not always easy when you are looking at lots of other traits too.....

Continued.....



**Sheep Mastitis continued ...** A vaccine is available against Staphylococcal strains, requiring 2 injections 3 weeks apart, 5 weeks and 2 weeks pre-lambing. Samples can be taken in early cases before any treatment is administered to determine which bacteria we are dealing with and hence if the vaccine may benefit your flock. Please speak to us for further details.



**Sarah Harker**

## Focus on Husk

*Have you noticed a trend of more coughing in older cows? Are you finding youngstock more prone to pneumonia post housing? These are trends that we are seeing across the practice. Changes to lungworm risk may be playing a part in this trend on your farm.*

### Cattle lungworm quickfire questions

#### **What is it and how does it cause disease?**

Lungworm is a parasite of cows picked up from pasture. After ingestion, the worm migrates from the gut through blood vessels to the lungs, where they mature into adults and lay eggs. These eggs hatch in the lung where they are coughed up, swallowed and passed out in the muck to contaminate pasture thus completing the cycle. It is this “lung stage” that we associate with disease e.g. coughing, pneumonia at grass and production losses.

#### **Can I just use a long-acting wormer e.g. injection behind the ear before turnout?**

It depends – lung worm was traditionally considered a young animal disease. Once infected and recovered, animals maintained a good immunity to the parasite. We now know that regular exposure to lungworm is required to maintain this immunity and long-acting wormers prevent this from happening. Because of this, we are now seeing disease due to lung worm in older cattle e.g. adults in the milking herd who have not developed suitable immunity as calves. Therefore, unless your adult stock never graze fresh grass, I don't think long acting wormers are a good strategy for lungworm control in youngstock. I guess it is a good example of convenience today but effectively pushing problems down the road into older cattle.



#### **What in your opinion is the best strategy for lung worm?**

Find out if you have lungworm on your holding – this is herd specific so speak to us about your specific situation. Planning for this is best done before the grazing season. If you do have lungworm, **Huskvac** is probably the best strategy in most herd settings. It is an oral lungworm vaccine that is given **twice 6 and 2 weeks before turnout** and gives calves the immunity they need without the disease or productivity impacts associated with the parasite. It allows you to control the immunity of your heifers before they enter the milking herd where treatment options are limited.

#### **Where can I find out more about Lung worm?**

If you want to do your own research on the parasite, I recommend the COWS (Control of Worms Sustainably) material on lungworm here:

<https://www.cattleparasites.org.uk/app/uploads/2020/01/lungworm-231219.pdf>

**Finbarr O Sullivan Greene**

## Watery mouth and Spectam

Watery mouth, or rattle belly, is a bacterial infection, caused by E-coli. Lambs are infected during the first hours of life when they ingest large numbers of *E. coli* from the ewe's teats, fleece (as they find the udder), or bedding. In older lambs, the acid in the stomach can destroy the bacteria, but in young lambs, the stomach is at a neutral pH and unable to do this. Lambs that have not received sufficient amounts of colostrum are most vulnerable to the disease.

Over the past few years, clients have done a great job reducing the amount of antibiotics used on farm, including Spectam. The graph below shows the decline in the amount of Spectam sold in the practice over the last 4 years – lets hope this year is even lower!



If you are wondering where to start to reduce your use, or have successfully reduced usage and are wanting to reduce it further, here are some ideas:

- Only use on triplets, as it is possible not each lamb will receive an adequate amount of colostrum.
- Use only if the ewe has no colostrum, or is in poor body condition, and you're using a powdered alternative.
- Use only later on in the lambing season when infection pressure has inevitably mounted (if lambing indoors).



Do not use Spectam for treatment of watery mouth – it is a preventative only.

With this in mind, we need to concentrate on preventing infection. **The best way to protect against infection is colostrum!** Prompt ingestion of sufficient colostrum, together with attention to navel treatments and environmental hygiene is key. Lambs should receive at least 50mls colostrum/kg bodyweight in first 4-6 hours of life, and 200mls/kg in 1st 24hrs. Navels should be treated at birth and again 6-12hours later. Pens for sheep and lambs should be as clean as possible - well bedded and ideally mucked out between each set.

**Becky Inman**

## Colostrum Replacers in Lambs: The good, the bad, the useless...

Lambs are born with no antibodies to fight disease (like calves) this is NOT the same as puppies, kittens and even humans that receive some antibodies before birth. Therefore, they are solely reliant on receiving good quality colostrum in good time after birth. On average 22% of ewes produce colostrum of poor quality/ volume.

For a 1kg lamb give: 50ml in the 1<sup>st</sup> feed, another 50ml within 6 hrs, and another 100ml within 24 hours (this can be split!).

A colostrum **REPLACER** should give **3 grams of IgG per feed**. IgG is the immunoglobulin that fights the bugs. If the above is not received, then lambs will succumb to diseases such as watery mouth and salmonella

Be wary! The average colostrum replacer IgG content per feed is 1.9 grams, remember **3 grams of IgG per feed** is what is needed so make sure you check the IgG content per feed. There are only 4-5 colostrum replacers on the market that are fit for purpose.

**Bethany Thornton**





## Scabivax for Orf—how are you using it?

Orf is a virus that affects around one in five lambs every year. It is highly contagious and causes scabs and blisters, usually around the mouth but can also spread to sheep's teats and legs. The vaccine **Scabivax** is very effective at preventing orf on farms that have the virus. However a recent study has shown that the vaccine is only being used properly by a quarter of farmers. Common pitfalls include:

- Using an open bottle for too long – **the shelf life of the vaccine is just 8 hours**. This is a live vaccine so once it is exposed to air it quickly dies off and will not be effective.
- Not vaccinating in the right place – **the vaccine should be given in the axilla (armpit)**, not in the groin. Once vaccinated it takes 4-8 weeks for full immunity to develop, so a vaccine scratch under the front leg is less likely to be nuzzled and less likely to cause an infection from the vaccine site before full protection is achieved.
- Not wearing gloves.



Hannah Tatham

## Dates for your diary!

Thursday 4th Feb 2021, 7pm Online - **Looking after the pregnant ewe before lambing.**

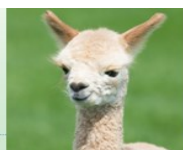
Tuesday 9th Feb 2021, 7pm Online - **Practical Lambing** - an online version of our popular course. Free for Farm Gate Sheep Club members.

Thursday 11th Feb 2021, 7pm Online- **Top Tips for keeping goats fit and healthy**

Wednesday 24th Feb 2021, 7pm Online- **Lets talk poultry for backyard poultry keepers**

Tuesday 2nd March, 2021, 7pm Online—**Essential health knowledge for Camelid Keepers**

The above courses cost £15.00 inc. VAT, for more information and to book please visit- <http://www.farmgatevets.com/practice-info/events.aspx> or phone the practice.



Book Online



**BVD the Big Reveal**– Thurs 18th February 2021 7pm Zoom, for all clients who have used the BVD Stamp It Out scheme, this meeting is for you! Join us online as we summarise our findings, update you on the national picture and remind you why you are taking part in this UK effort to control BVD. To register for the link please e mail [linda@farmgatevets.com](mailto:linda@farmgatevets.com) or phone the office.

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