

SOUTH MOOR VETS

FARM NEWSLETTER



February 2023

ZEBRAS!

Welcome to the latest edition! Us vets have a saying: "When you hear hoofbeats, think horses. But don't forget the zebras!"

-meaning that the commonest cause of a symptom is usually the one you'll find, but not always! You should always bear in mind the rare causes too.

I went to see a down cow not far off calving last week, and she was so enormously swollen that she must've been carrying enormous twins. But there were no twins to be felt—just an enormous waterbag. This was a case of the rare condition hydrops allantois, where there's a huge accumulation of foetal fluids. We must have drained out about 200L of fluid. At which point she started eating and got up!



ABORTION IN EWES

As we approach the height of lambing season all our fingers are crossed that everything runs smoothly. However, if you do have any problems don't forget that we are always at the end of the phone.

Up to a 2% abortion rate is not out of the ordinary for British flocks. However, if you're seeing more than that it warrants investigation to identify the cause, solve the problem and prevent it happening again.

Signs of abortive infections

- Premature lambings



- Still births
- Mummified lambs
- High barren rates
- Weak lambs
- 'Hairy shakers'
- Deformed lambs

Common UK causes of abortion

- Enzootic (Chlamydia)
- Toxoplasma
- Campylobacter

Abortion prevention

If you see any abortions or stillbirths, always follow the rules below to help contain the spread:

- Isolate the ewe and keep aborted ewes separate from pregnant ewes
- Remove and destroy any aborted material (lamb, cleansing etc)
- Ensure all cleansings are cleared from lambing pens
- Clean all pens between lambings. Allow to dry and use hydrated lime to help keep bacteria at bay
- Wear and change gloves between ewes for any assisted lambings, to prevent spreading infection between ewes

What to do if you have more than 2% of ewes aborting, or if

you're concerned

- Give us a call! We are able to give advice over the phone, or visit the farm to start an investigation. This will usually include collecting samples from the foetus, placenta and blood samples from the ewe/s.
- Keep the aborted foetus and placenta. You can bring this to the practice for a post-mortem and samples by one of our vets, or alternatively we can arrange for them to be sent to Starcross for further analysis.
- Pregnant women shouldn't be around lambing ewes, especially if abortions are occurring, as some infections can also cause abortion in humans.

How to prevent abortions next year

If abortions have been occurring on farm this year it's worth testing to find out which organisms are causing issues.

There are vaccines available against both Enzootic abortion ('Enzovax') and Toxoplasma ('Toxovax') which can be given

before tupping to help prevent abortions in the future, and just one injection protects most ewes for life

PARASITE PLANNING

This year we have seen more wormer resistance, and gradual increase in the number of worms surviving treatment. Even low levels of resistance (10%) can leave enough worms behind to affect growth rates and 98% of sheep farmers have found resistance to at least one type of wormer.

To try to stop resistance developing:

-Dose correctly- weigh the animals, calibrate the dosing gun and dose to the heaviest animal in the group

-Don't over-use wormers: move from routine dosing to routine monitoring. Lambs should only be treated when their worm burden reaches the point where it starts to decrease their growth rate; the same wormer group should not be used repeatedly or for consecutive treatments.

-Quarantine doses - Consider the use of Zolvix as a quarantine dose for all incoming sheep to avoid buying in resistant worms – See SCOPS for full details on effective quarantine treatments.

For farmers with confirmed resistance, Zolvix™ may be required to be used at different times of year. Veterinary advice should always be consulted

-Only worm when necessary – if in doubt, drop some faecal samples in to the vets to check a **Faecal Egg Count**. Adult stock often don't need worming at all.

-Post-drench testing- It's always best to check how effective a

treatment has been by doing a post-treatment drench check, with a faecal egg count 10 days after treatment.



CALF SCOUR

Going into spring where lots of calves will be born is sometimes where we see increased calf scour.

Causes can be separated into viruses such as Rotavirus, Coronavirus and BVD, bacteria such as Salmonella and E Coli and parasites such as Coccidiosis, Cryptosporidium and worms. Nutritional scour can also be a problem.

Calf age is an important factor:

1-4 days: E-coli

1-3 weeks: Rotavirus, Coronavirus, Cryptosporidia

2-6 weeks: Salmonella, Cocci

Prevention

Minimise exposure – Hygiene around calving, try to keep feeding equipment clean and keep pens clean and disinfect between batches. In beef herds, try to calve outside and try to move the cows that have calved away from the ones that haven't. This segregates calves by age to prevent spread of bugs between them.

Maximise Protection- In dairy cows give 3 litres of colostrum within 6 hours and repeat in 12 hours.

Follow the **4 Qs of colostrum:**

Quickly (within 6 hours of birth), Quietly (limit stress), Quality and

sQueezy clean (using clean equipment). In beef animals make sure the calf has sucked enough milk from the dam, on average 20 minutes of continuous sucking leads to the calf drinking 2 litres of colostrum. Keep frozen or powered colostrum for topping up as needed.

We can check that calves have received adequate colostrum by doing a simple blood test.

Treatment

If you have a calf with scour then treat with fluids and electrolytes such as "Lifeaid". Give little and often, aiming to give four 2 litre feeds daily. Do not stop feeding the calf milk as milk repairs the gut mucosa and provides energy to the calf – feed electrolyte solution and milk alternately. Antibiotics are only necessary if we think the calf scour is caused by bacteria. We can do a quick scour check at the practice which takes 10 minutes and checks for Rotavirus, Coronavirus, E Coli and Cyptosporidium. There are also some vaccines which can help prevent calf scour which are generally given to pregnant cows. To find out more, give us a ring or chat when we are out on farm. See you out there!

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