Last month saw Grosvenor Farms host a Dairy Co meeting to increase awareness of the success of the Healthy Feet Programme. After working through the stages involved in the very structured process with the Dairy Co team, we had great insight into cow flow and the effects it can have on lameness from the world renowned speaker, Neil Chesterton. Neil has worked in New Zealand for many years, and has travelled around the world looking at lameness on many farms. He really focused on cow flow and how to best use cow behaviour to efficiently work with cows, and reduce lameness. His predominant experience is in grazing systems, however, his visit highlighted that cow flow issues are present on most farms, and small alterations can have dramatic effects on reducing herd lameness. Lameness is a preventable condition that should not be tolerated on farm, as it is a severely profit limiting. Contact Jonny for more information on the Dairy Co Healthy Feet Programme. Receive free enrolment information with no obligation, and access to grant money for the scheme. This is your most economical chance to reduce the number of lame cows you will have to trim every week.

Vet Challenge
Following on from our success last year we are again entering a team in the Vet Challenge Charity Triathlon. The event is a gruelling day of running, cycling and kayaking against 49 other teams. Not content with putting our bodies to the test the organisers also include a number of problem solving and teamwork tests throughout the day. This year our team is made up of vets John, Jonny, Rachel and our fourth member is Sandra from the Hartford Farm Office. The event raises money for animal charities and this year’s three supported charities are Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, SPANA and Animals Asia. Please feel free to support them.

BOVINE TB:
Tough new ‘edge area’ rules form DEFRA to halt the spread of disease in Cheshire
Tough new rules to stop the spread of bovine TB, including more targeted support for badger vaccination are being introduced to the “edge areas”. Bovine TB is endemic in major parts of the south west, and there is growing concern about the spread of disease northwards and eastwards into counties within the edge area. The edge area includes Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, and parts of Cheshire, Derbyshire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire and East Sussex. The new measures will start to be introduced in October 2013. All farms in the edge area are already on compulsory yearly TB testing, and compulsory testing before the movement of any cattle from their farm.

Farming Minister David Heath said: “Bovine TB is a highly infectious disease that is devastating our dairy and beef industry and continues to spread across England at an alarming rate. We must do everything we can to crack down on what is the biggest animal disease threat facing the nation. “We are taking tough and decisive action on TB at the frontier of this disease to stop and then reverse the spread. The measures we are introducing this year will help protect vast areas of England from the scourge of TB and take a significant step towards our goal of eradicating TB within 25 years.”

Analysis suggests that, if left unchecked, bTB could spread beyond the edge area to areas such as Greater Manchester, Lincolnshire, Herefordshire and West Yorkshire by 2022. Reaseheath College are hosting a ‘Bovine TB Question Time Open Discussion and Debate’ on 11th September at 6.30 for 7.00 start. Members of the Cheshire TB Eradication Advisory Group and other industry representatives will be available to answer your questions. Contact Lesley on 01270 635131 if you would like to attend or submit a question in advance.
Abortion in Sheep

Next year’s lambing may seem a few months off but good planning now can avoid disasters later on! For those of you who purchase ewes then the risk of buying in disease is even higher! A tailored plan for your plan can help reduce the risk of buying in disease. The potential of many abortion agents to infect humans (zoonotic infection) must be stressed to everyone attending sheep on your farm, especially pregnant women.

Enzootic Abortion of Ewes (EAE)- Chlamydia Abortus

This disease is transmitted by ingestion following exposure of susceptible sheep to high levels of infected uterine discharges and aborted material. Infection does not result in abortion in that pregnancy unless the ewe is more than six weeks from her due lambing date rather infection remains latent in the sheep until the subsequent pregnancy then causes abortion. Infection typically results in the abortion/ birth of fresh dead and/or weak lambs during the last three weeks of gestation. The ewe is not sick and may only be identified by a red/brown vulval discharge staining the wool around the tail/perineum, and a drawn-up abdomen. Live lambs rarely survive more than a few hours despite supportive care. Vaccination offers an excellent means of control for farms buying breeding replacements (including ewe lambs) as they come into the flock will lead to the whole flock being protected within 4-5 years.

Toxoplasmosis (the Cat abortion!)

Toxoplasmosis results from infection of susceptible sheep with the protozoan parasite Toxoplasma gondii. The sexual cycle takes place in cats while the asexual cycle can occur in a range of species including sheep. Infection during early pregnancy may be manifest as embryo/early fetal loss with an increased number of returns to service after an irregular extended interval or an increased barren rate, often above 8 to 10 per cent. Often the highest number of barren sheep is in the youngest age group. Toxoplasma infection during mid pregnancy results in abortion or production of weakly live lambs near term often with a small mummified fetus. The mummified fetus has a dark brown leathery appearance and is about 10 cm long. All sheep feed should be stored in vermin-proof facilities to prevent contamination by cats and other vermin. Vaccination provides excellent immunity to natural infection and should be administered at least three weeks before the breeding season. Care should be taken when administering the vaccine; the detailed safety instructions provided by the manufacturer should be followed closely. As it is a live vaccine, pre-ordering is essential in plenty of time as the vaccine has a short fridge shelf life, and there can be manufacturing problems (tip- get your order in early!)

Campylobacter

(C. Jejuini and C. Fetus fetus)

Campylobacter are an increasingly common causes of abortion in the North West, particularly where sheep are managed intensively leading to heavy contamination and unhygienic environments (eg outwintered on kale etc) during late gestation. The main source of infection is purchased carrier sheep. The common presentation is abortion during late gestation although some lambs are carried to full-term and are born weak and succumb soon after birth. Following infection, ewes are immune to further challenge and will not abort. It is possible to import a vaccine under a special import licence if you are having problems.

Salmonella

There are many potential sources of salmonelae in a group of sheep including contaminated feedstuffs and water courses, sewage effluent overflow, carrier cattle, and carrion. Strict hygiene is very important.

Schmallenberg (SBV)

In newborn animals and foetuses, the disease is associated in animals born alive or dead at term or aborted following infection of the dam, affecting mainly sheep but also cattle and goats. Malformations observed include bent limbs and fixed joints, brain deformities and marked damage to the spinal cord. Persistent flexion of the joints (arthrogryposis or “contracted tendons”) is reported to be a common birth defect. The foetal deformities vary depending on when infection occurred during pregnancy. There is now a SBV vaccine which has been granted a marketing authorisation in the UK. Due to the unknown occurrence of SBV in sheep flocks then we recommend vaccination due to the possible adverse effects of SBV on your flock.

The main cause of abortions in 2013 in the North West were- as you can see EAE and Toxoplasmosis account for nearly 60% of all infectious abortions in the Willows area.

Summary

• Many infectious causes of abortion can also infect humans (zoonotic infection)
• An abortion rate in excess of two per cent is suggestive of an infectious cause and veterinary investigation is essential (testing lambs and blood sample ewes)
• All aborted ewes must be isolated immediately
• Aborted material and infected bedding must be removed and destroyed to prevent spread of disease on your farm
• Maintain a closed flock wherever possible
• Purchase all flock replacements as maiden sheep whether ewe lambs or gimmers
• Never buy old pregnant ewes - they are seldom a bargain and always a great disease risk
• The cost of abortion is ranges from £20 to £65 per aborted ewe
• Vaccinate all flock replacements against EAE and Toxoplasmosis
• All feed must be stored in vermin-proof bins
• Sheep should be managed in clean environments
• Water should be supplied from a mains supply with ponds and surface water fenced off
• If possible pregnant sheep should be managed separately from cattle.

If you need any further info please speak to one of the vets.