Is coccidiosis in your lambs costing YOU money?

Coccidiosis (or cocci as it is commonly known) is a disease which mainly affects lambs between 3-8 weeks of age. Exposure to high numbers of cocci eggs (oocysts), in combination with other factors such as stress can lead to clinical signs. These can be visible signs (clinical), or subclinical where the effects cannot be seen.

Signs of clinical disease include:-
• Diarrhoea (with or without blood)
• Straining
• Anorexia
• Weight Loss
• Dehydration
• Death

Subclinical disease:-
• Weight Loss
• Pasty faeces
• Reduced weight gain

The effects of clinical coccidiosis are obvious, but it is the longer term effects of the gut damage that can cost you money with reduced weight gains, lambs taking longer to finish and essentially require more feeding and being sold when the lamb price per kilo is falling! Lambs are also on farm for longer which also has a knock-on effect on next year’s pasture, with less grass available for your ewes over winter, meaning you either purchase additional forage or concentrates, or take on more land to cover the shortfall.

Diagnosis
By the time you see scouring lambs, the greatest amount of damage has been done to the guts. Identification of lambs which aren’t growing as well as possible should make you think of coccidiosis. A faecal egg count (FEC) for worms and cocci would help you identify if there is a problem. A high cocci count does not necessarily mean disease and speciation is required for accurate diagnosis (Eimeria crandallis and Eimeria ovinoaidalis are the pathogenic species), together with clinical signs.

Treatment
There are a number of various treatments, being diclazuril (Vecoxxan) and toltrazuril (Baycox), which affect the lifecycle of coccidiosis based on different parts of the guts. The choice of drug will depend on previous farm history, as well as current lamb and grazing management, as well as attempt to reduce future challenge, therefore it is best to speak to your vet or SQP for the best advice. Fluid therapy of severely affected animals is also recommended. Re-treatment of lambs is sometimes required when multiple cocci species or incorrect treatment timing occurs.

Control
Once cocci is diagnosed on your farm, then it is very difficult to control. Avoiding high risk fields (such as those used for lambing etc.), as well as previous years history should aid management decisions. The use of decoquinate in feed and buckets for lambs may aid in control, but does not allow immunity to develop in young lambs thus problems with coccidiosis can still arise using this control method. When older lambs ingest and multiply cocci, they then shed high numbers of oocysts onto the pasture, which then makes young lambs more susceptible to a higher cocci challenge. Careful rotation of paddocks, grouping of lambs according to age, as well as prevention of poaching can help reduce the risk of cocci from the environment. Good nutrition of ewes and lambs will also reduce pasture challenge and aid immunity. A parasite treatment plan or health plan drawn up by your Vet or SQP should aid to reduce the effect of coccidiosis in your flock and maximise productivity and profitability.

Client meetings
We were delighted to see so many of you turn out to our meetings last month and engage in the various topics. We are especially grateful to Dewi Jones from Boehringer Ingleheim Vetmedica for his input to these events and for bringing us a timely reminder of the costs and need to control milk fever in the dairy herd. After the update on how TB has spread locally during 2014 we hope that 2015 will bring some positive news about the control of TB in our region! We would also encourage you to speak to your regular vet if you would like to see an InterHerd+ report for your herd.

Vaccines
As we move away from winter and firmly advance into spring don’t forget to keep those herd vaccination and worming plans up to date. If you haven’t already sorted it you need to get organised and get you Huskvac for lungworm control in your heifers. Lepto start-ups and boosters, BVD start-ups and boosters, and IBR boosters. Speak to one of the vets or, SQP of the year, Mark Pass at Beeston Animal Health for assistance.

CHOLMONDELEY CHARITY CLAY PIGEON SHOOT
10am-2pm at Park Farm, Cholmondeley SY14 8HN
By kind permission of Andy Latham
Teams of 4/100 Clays
Individual £20 / 50 Clays
CASH PRIZES!
All proceeds to Air Ambulance and Hope Hospital Childrens Hospice
Refreshments available
For more info please call Kit 07803 267789 or Phil 07971 088245
Please use fibre wad only
**BVD Refresher**

**Introduction**

Bovine viral diarrhoea virus (BVDV) is one of the most prevalent and economically important pathogens of cattle worldwide. In Ireland, Animal Health Ireland (AHI - the organisation implementing the national eradication programme) has estimated the return on investment for eradicating BVD to be 10 gained for every 1 spent. BVDV is divided into two genotypes, BVDV 1 and BVDV 2, and various subtypes. Having protection against one type may not give protection against infection from another.

**Clinical Signs**

BVDV infection has a wide range of clinical signs including fertility issues, milk drop, pyrexia, diarrhoea and foetal infection. However, clinical signs are frequently mild and infection very hard to spot. Foetal infection is of most consequence as this can result in the birth of a persistently infected (PI) calf. The effects of foetal infection with BVDV are dependent upon the stage of gestation at which the dam suffers acute infection (Figure 1).

PI animals are the most important source of the virus, continuously excreting a viral load one thousand times greater than transiently infected animals.

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**Future of BVD in the UK**

Of great concern is the presence of BVDV 2 in Europe; reports demonstrate increased severity of clinical signs and higher mortality associated with certain strains of BVDV 2 infection compared to BVDV 1. A number of outbreaks have occurred in the UK as recently as 2013 and this increased severity of signs is not always seen, so cannot be used to differentiate between the types of BVD virus. Unless vaccine protection includes immunisation against BVDV 2 even vaccinated animals are at risk from this emerging disease, as cross-protection from BVDV 1 vaccines is insufficient.

**Eradication and Control**

The mainstay of eradication is the identification and removal of persistently infected animals. Re-infection is then prevented by vaccination and high levels of biosecurity, supported by continuing routine surveillance.

**References:**

- AHI (2015) www.animalhealthireland.ie
- Doll & Holsteg (2013) Cattle Practice 21(3): 216
- Courtenay et al. (2007) 160: 706-707

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Simon Jones had a pleasant surprise at Cheshire Agricultural Society’s Annual Stewards Dinner when he was presented with the Westbrook Award. The award is given annually to an individual for the support they have given to Cheshire Show.

The award was presented to Simon by Mrs Elisabeth Forster, 2014 Patroness of the show.

Simon joined the Veterinary Committee, arranging vet services for the show 26 years ago. He has been on the show vet rota all this time and was always assigned to the early shift as he practically lived next door to the Tabley showground.

In addition to advising the Show Committee on veterinary matters, Simon has the role of Biosecurity Officer and ensures that the show complies with the requirements of APHA regarding animal gatherings and formulating the plans to deal with a disease breakout and emergencies.

“I was absolutely shocked when my name was announced”, said Simon, “I feel very proud and honoured to receive this award especially as there are so many other deserving people”. 