Preparation for lambing

Continued from front page

- Fine muscle tremors of the head
- Weakness and recumbency
- Death

If, despite your best efforts you have an abortion rate above 2%, or a lower lambing percentage/high number of empty ewes, then this may indicate an infectious cause (toxoplasmosis, Enzootic Abortion, Campylobacter) or other disease e.g. Liver Fluke. We would advise that you have these investigated. A fresh aborted lamb and clinical signs of pregnancy toxaemia (listed as the disease progresses) are ideal for abortions or blood test for empty ewes.

A successful lambing is the cornerstone of a profitable sheep flock, with more clean afterbirth (with cotyledons) are investigated. A fresh aborted lamb and clinical signs of pregnancy toxaemia (listed as the disease progresses) are ideal for abortions or blood test for empty ewes.

...to identify lean or over fat ewes and BCS at four to six weeks pre lambing to allow changes to be made and to done as soon as possible after scanning, between 2 and 3.5. This should be an early indication of how successful your breeding season has been. Perhaps this is something to consider for next year if the opportunity has passed for this year’s crop.

The nutrient demand depends on the length of the feeding period, the size of the ewe, the expected number of lambs and the current body condition score. Depending on the size of the ewe, nutrient demand can more than double as lambing approaches. A useful tool to perform is body condition scoring (BCS) to assess the amount of muscle and fat the ewes are carrying pre-lambing. Aim for a BCS of 3-3.5 at lambing with 90% of your flock...
Genomic Testing Your Dairy Herd

Genomic testing is changing the way dairy producers make management, selection and breeding decisions on the farm. Using genomics, a heifer’s genetic potential is revealed early in life, genetic progress can be accelerated with confidence and herd profitability is enhanced by capitalizing on improved performance across a number of traits.

Genomic testing reveals more about the actual genetic potential of the animal than simply measuring an average of the parents’ estimated genetic makeup. For a number of traits, testing delivers 60% to 70% reliability as opposed to 20% to 30% for parent average. For example, for the trait Fertility, testing can provide for parent average. For reliability as opposed to 20% to 30% traits, testing delivers 60% to 70% genetic makeup. For a number of average of the parents’ estimated animal than simply measuring an the actual genetic potential of the Genomic testing reveals more about across a number of traits.

welfare and productivity is directly related to the breeding decisions made on farm we are delighted that over the coming months we will be able to offer clients access to a Veterinary Genomics package that aligns breeding decisions with Herd Health goals. We look forward to bringing you more news about this exciting offering and details of the training modules over the coming months. In the meantime, speak to Darrell or Owen for more information.

Coccidiosis in sheep is caused by an intracellular protozoa parasite which affects the digestive system. Eimeria crandallis and Eimeria ovinoidalis is the most commonly diagnosed pathogenic strains of Eimeria in the UK sheep flocks.

The parasite primarily targets the cells of the ileum, caecum and proximal colon, impairing absorption of nutrients and water. Clinical symptoms include diarrhoea (often blood tinged), dehydration, weight loss and anorexia. Disease is most commonly seen in 3-8 week old lambs but can also occur in lambs up to 6 months of age.

Ewes can act as a primary source of the infection but most infection is due to contamination of the ground from older lambs. Lambs are usually protected in the first few weeks of life by colostral antibodies and they then develop a solid immunity. However, in situations of high stocking densities, stressed lambs are exposed to a high environment level and succumb to the disease.

The period between an animal becoming infected until they are shedding oocysts themselves is 2-3 weeks; the oocysts are very resilient and survive well in the environment. Early born lambs often contribute significantly to environmental contamination and are an important source of infective oocysts to those lambs born later. Clinical disease is often preceded by a stressful event such as adverse weather, weaning or sudden dietary change. Coccidiosis is a disease of intensive husbandry and there is a direct correlation between environmental build up and severity of the disease, both in clinical signs and prevalence.

Diagnosis of coccidiosis is most commonly based upon history (age of lambs and intensive rearing system) and clinical signs. Misdiagnosis through identification of high faecal Eimeria oocyst counts alone can occur so we recommend identification of pathogenic species to confirm a diagnosis. Treatment should be administered as soon as several lambs are displaying clinical signs, if treatment is withheld until a large percentage of lambs are ill thrifty, production parameters can be affected for months. Treatment of acute outbreaks is usually through whole group treatment with drugs such as diclazuril (1mg/kg) and toltrazuril (20mg/kg) given orally to all the lambs. A coccidiostat called decoumate can be included into creep feed to help prevent the disease. Prevention should primarily be aimed at reducing environmental build up. This can be achieved by improving husbandry standards via hygiene protocols and appropriate stocking densities. Additionally good nutritional management makes animals less susceptible to disease. Faecal contamination should be limited on bedding and pasture and prevented around troughs and areas of feeding. It can be a good idea to keep early and late born lambs in two separate groups, to stop infection spreading from the early group. Alternatively, for lambs at pasture, frequent rotation will limit the burden of parasites.

It is advisable to establish prevention measures and treatment plan in the veterinary flock health plan to limit the economic effects of coccidiosis. For more information on how to reduce the risk of coccidiosis in your flock speak to your vet or call Mark Pass at Beeston Animal Health.

Calf tracker update

We still have a few places available on the calf tracker program if you would like to sign up. In brief the project involves a comprehensive assessment of current performance and management practices. This includes sampling to check colostrum quality, the success of transferred immunity and growth rates in the first 100 days. We will also sample any scouring calves and review treatment protocols for poorly calves.

Following this initial visit we will generate a couple of practical action points with the aim of improving performance. A second visit a couple of month later will measure the impact of the changes in management and where appropriate move on to others areas which need addressing. Contact Laurence for more details.

GO KARTING

We are pleased to announce that we have booked this year’s event.

Wednesday 16th March
Warrington Speedkarting
6.50 pm
Please telephone Hartford to save your place on 01606 723200

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