

April 2019

## THE UPDATE

Don't forget to come and have a drink with us at

### The OBH Point-to-Point

At Lockinge, Nr Wantage  
Easter Monday 22 April

## SMALLHOLDERS CORNER

### Atresia Ani in Newborn Lambs

Atresia ani in lambs – Something to look out for in newborn lambs that don't seem to be doing well is a condition called atresia ani. This means the lamb is born without an anus and therefore cannot defaecate. It is relatively rare and is usually a congenital problem meaning the lamb's large intestine hasn't developed properly in the womb. The lamb will become quite dull within a few days of birth and will stop suckling and its eyes will become sunken. You will also generally notice that its abdomen becomes very swollen and it may seem to be straining. It's very easy to have a quick look under its tail. This condition can sometimes be surgically corrected, depending on how much of the intestine is missing. Sometimes, there is simply a piece of skin covering the end of the rectum. In these cases, we can give some local anaesthetic and create an anus which we will then stitch open. In other cases, it is not possible to correct, and these lambs will need to be put to sleep to avoid prolonged suffering. This is not a common problem, but it is easy to check for if you're concerned about a lamb.

## Abortion Investigations in Sheep

We've been seeing quite a few cases of abortions now that a lot of people have started lambing or are just about to get started.

Losing the odd lamb to abortion is normal but if you're starting to get quite a few it's probably worth looking into it. To do a full investigation we need the aborted lambs along with their placenta if possible. It is also very useful to have a blood sample from the ewe that has aborted.

Like last year, MSD Animal Health are offering the free Flockcheck Project LAMB. This means that we can send blood samples from 6-8 ewes which will be tested for enzootic abortion and toxoplasmosis for free. These tests are only useful if your ewes are not vaccinated with Toxovax or Enzovax.

When selecting which ewes to take blood samples from, any that have aborted are a good option along with any that were barren this year. Remember, up to 8 blood samples can be tested for free so you might as well send that many.

Spring is here...



## Twin Lamb

Most of you are in the middle of lambing by now but for those of you who have just started or about to begin twin lamb is something to watch out for!

What is it?

- Severe form of ketosis that occurs in ewes in late pregnancy due to the high energy demand of the growing foetus.
- Affects ewes with insufficient energy due to:
  - Increased requirement from twin/triplets
  - Poor quality/not enough feed
  - Stresses causing inappetence

Symptoms?

- Early symptoms are inappetence which quickly progresses to dullness, and an inability to stand. Ewes tend to be very thin and some may abort.

Treatment?

- Most likely to be successful if caught and treated early. Treatment is based around provision of glucose and calcium as ewes susceptible to develop hypocalcaemia. Give us a call if you see any symptoms to discuss the best treatment option.
- Treated ewes are more likely to have problems lambing including dystocia, dead/weak lambs or retained cleansing so prevention is key.

Prevention?

- Prevented by good nutritional management of ewes
  - Start ewes on an increasing plane of nutrition 4 weeks pre tupping and aim for BCS 3.5.
  - Separate singles/twins/triplets into groups and feed accordingly, those with twins/triplets will need to be fed more.
  - Regular monitoring of BCS will ensure you are feeding correctly
- Sufficient trough space to maximise feed intake, good quality, ad lib forage
- Stress and movement esp very late in pregnancy are also triggers as they cause a reduction in feed intake.
- If you are worried you can blood test a group of pregnant ewes (e.g 10) 3-4 weeks pre lambing to check blood ketone levels. This will give an indication for the risk of twin lamb in the group and whether any diet adjustments may be warranted.

## MEETING

- **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> April**, Tb Advisory Meeting, 11am @ The Two Brewers in Marlow SL7 1NQ. To book your free place call 01306 779 410 or email [info@tbas.org.uk](mailto:info@tbas.org.uk)
- **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> April**, 7pm Start, @ Wynnstay, Topics: 'Beefing up fertility', 'Beef Benchmarking' & 'CHECS TB Information' **Refreshments provided, Open to all!**

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