

## NorCal News...

### Please be aware!

As we are moving over to email invoices / statements, we are experiencing some glitches, resulting in invoices not being sent or processed. To overcome this problem, we will be sending out statements if it looks like a missed payment has occurred, apologies if you have been affected.

If you have requested email invoices please add [thame@norcalvets.co.uk](mailto:thame@norcalvets.co.uk) to your email contacts to prevent them from going into the junk/spam folder.

## Red Mite in Poultry - new treatment available - EXOLT

Red mite is a common disease of both commercial and backyard chickens and turkeys. The mites live in crevices and corners of poultry houses, emerging at night to feed on the birds. This means they can be hard to detect, especially when numbers are low. However, red mites can cause feather pecking, loss of body condition, reduced egg production, pale combs and wattles, and in severe cases can even cause anaemia and death.



Red mites are difficult to treat as they aren't always present on the birds, and mites living in housing are hard to reach and will reinfest treated birds once treatment has worn off. Mites can survive for several months in housing without birds being present.

Traditionally, red mite control has been focussed on killing the mites in the environment - this is achieved by thoroughly cleaning out housing, and then treating the internal surfaces with products such as creosote.

More recently, a treatment called **Exzolt** has become available that is given to the birds in their drinking water, and kills mites on the birds. Until now, this product has only been available in large quantities suitable for commercial use, making it an extremely expensive way to treat red mite in smaller flocks. However, **Exzolt** is now available in a smaller sized bottle, and in addition we will be keeping an open bottle in stock at the practice so that we can dispense exactly the amount needed to individual clients - making it far more cost effective for smaller flocks!

**Exzolt** needs to be given twice, seven days apart. However, we would also advise continuing to clean and treat poultry housing regularly to reduce the environmental burden, as once the treatment wears off mites will be able to reinfest the birds. If you are interested in using Exzolt or want more information on red mite control give us a call.



## Get Prepared For Topping Time

Topping time may still feel like months away, but there are some important things to consider in advance:

- **Ram power** - have you got enough rams, and equally importantly are they fertile?
  - It is important to set realistic expectations of how much ram power you need. As a general rule, 1 ram per 40 ewes is appropriate for unsynchronised ewes, and 1 ram per 25 ewes if the ewes have been synchronised. However, this is breed and system specific and some flocks may be able to use rates of 1/80-100.
  - There are lots of factors that can affect tup fertility including testicle size, lameness, teeth, body condition, general disease and specific diseases of the reproductive tract. Infertile or subfertile rams can have severe effects on production for the whole year, so consider having ram's fertility tested now to leave plenty of time to address any issues.
- **Teasers** - vasectomised 'teaser' tups are useful to encourage ewes to cycle and can be used to synchronise groups to create more compact lambing times. Teasers need to be left for **at least 6 weeks** after surgery before they are introduced to the ewes, so time is running out to get them done!
- **Ewe body condition** - you should be aiming to tup ewes at body condition score 3 - 3.5. Splitting ewes by body condition score at weaning can make it easier to manage this. Prioritise good grazing for thinner ewes, and consider supplementary feeding if you don't have the grass. In addition, plan your grazing to save some good quality grass to flush the ewes in the three weeks prior to topping - this will improve ovulation rates and increase your scanning percentage.
- **Vaccinations** - if you are vaccinating breeding sheep for enzootic abortion and/or toxoplasma, this needs to be done between 4 months and 4 weeks **before** the start of topping. If you are unsure whether you need to be vaccinating or would like more advice about abortion or poor fertility in sheep, have a chat with one of the vets.



## Medicines Administration Course

We now have a Red Tractor Approved medicine administration training course that can be delivered in person or online via Zoom!

It is a Red Tractor requirement that all medicines are administered by a competent person, and a recommendation for beef and sheep farmers that competency is demonstrated by completing an approved course.

Our course covers all aspects of medicines use, including storage, administration, disposal and record keeping to ensure you are up to date with all the Red Tractor requirements. Once completed, all participants will be issued with a certificate of attendance.

If you are interested in completing the course please get in touch with the practice.



Follow us on Facebook



NorCal Vets Thame

Pearces Yard, Aylesbury Road,  
Thame, OX9 3AS  
Tel: 01844 260 616  
Mob: 07725 039 093 (Evan)  
thame@norcalvets.co.uk

NorCal Vets Wantage

Unit 8a Elms Farm Business Park, Grove Road,  
Wantage, OX12 7PD  
Tel: 01235 429 767  
Mob: 07711 923 909 (Jono)  
wantage@norcalvets.co.uk