

## NorCal News...

### 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 Jono at [wantage@norcalvets.co.uk](mailto:wantage@norcalvets.co.uk) or calling 01235 429 767



## Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis (CODD)

CODD is an infectious cause of lameness in sheep that is becoming more and more common in the UK. It is caused by Treponemes, the same type of bacteria that cause digital dermatitis in cattle. Outbreaks, especially in naive flocks, can affect up to 50% of the flock and have a significant effect on lamb growth rates and ewe/ram fertility.

**Signs** - CODD starts as ulcers on the coronary band, where the hoof meets the skin, and then progresses under the hoof horn towards the toe. In severe cases, the whole hoof capsule may fall off. It causes severe lameness.

**Treatment** - CODD should be treated with a long acting antibiotic, pain relief and topical antibiotics. In the summer months it is also important to prevent maggots from getting into the wounds, as this will delay healing.

**Prevention** - the most important factor for flocks without CODD is not to buy it in – check the feet of stock you buy before you buy them! Additionally, quarantine all incoming stock for at least 4 weeks, and examine their feet for lesions before introducing them to your flock. Within a flock, isolating affected individuals can reduce the spread, as well as handling on clean ground or resting handling systems, and reducing poaching around feed troughs, mineral tubs and water troughs. Make sure you disinfect your hands and any equipment used after treating an affected sheep as the bacteria can get onto your hands and then infect the next sheep you handle.



CODD is pretty unpleasant and the best strategy is to keep it off your farm in the first place. For more advice on prevention or treatment of this disease get in touch with the practice.

## Grazing root crops

Root crops such as turnips and kale can provide an excellent source of feed for animals through the winter months. However, there are a few health issues that can arise, so here are a few top tips for preventing problems:

- Review your mineral supplementation - root crops can cause iodine deficiency, which affects fertility and causes stillbirths. They can also predispose to milk fever and other deficiencies at calving time, so take particular care with pregnant animals.
- Ensure that there is also a good source of fibre available - hay, straw or silage bales should make up at least 30% of the diet
- Wait until the root crop is mature before turning stock onto it - immature root crops can cause photosensitisation, especially in younger animals and those with white skin or patches
- Try and introduce the diet change gradually, and ensure animals don't gorge themselves on roots when they are first introduced - this can result in digestive upsets and bloat
- Due to the increased bare ground in these crops, animals are at an increased risk of contracting Clostridial diseases such as Black leg and Pulpy kidney. Ensure that all animals going onto root crops have had a full course of clostridial vaccination, e.g. Bravoxin for cattle or Heptavac P for sheep

## Selecting heifers for breeding

As service approaches, here is a quick reminder about some of the factors to consider when selecting which heifers to keep for breeding:

1. Bodyweight - heifers should be at least 65% of their mature bodyweight at the start of service (455kg for a 700kg cow), with the aim of reaching 85% of mature bodyweight by calving
2. Pelvic size - we can now use pelvic measuring to identify heifers that have particularly small or oddly shaped pelvises (relative to their size and weight) that may affect their calving ease
3. Reproductive tract - a pre-breeding exam of heifers will ensure that they have reached reproductive maturity and are cycling normally, as well as detecting any free martins that are present
4. Conformation, structural soundness and body condition score - you will have your own breeding goals and targets, so choose heifers likely to meet these and to cope well in your system

Selecting the right heifers and choosing appropriate, easy calving bulls to use on them is the most important factor in reducing your rate of difficult calvings and Caesarians. This then has a knock on effect in improving the likelihood of those animals getting back in calf again and having a long and productive breeding lifespan!

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