

## NorCal News...



**Happy New Year!**



Wishing you a prosperous and enjoyable 2021!

From all the team at Norcal Vets.

## Pregnancy scanning and body condition in sheep

For many flocks scanning your sheep has a huge number of benefits, including identifying empty ewes and those carrying multiples to enable appropriate management of different groups. Here is a brief summary of the targets you may be aiming for and things to consider if you aren't reaching them - although some things are flock dependent, so have a chat with us for more tailored advice.

Empty rate: target <2%

This is the % of ewes put to the tup that are not in lamb. A high empty rate could be a sign of fertility problems with either the ram or the ewes. Ram problems could include lameness, poor body condition, reproductive tract issues or unrealistic expectations (i.e. too many ewes per ram). Ewe issues would include sub-optimal nutrition, trace element deficiencies, infectious diseases, stressful events or non-cycling ewes. Non-cycling ewes are typically a result of breeding very early in the season or breeding ewe lambs that are of insufficient body weight.

Scanning %

This is the total number of lambs detected at scanning out of the total number of ewes scanned. The target for this will vary greatly depending on the breed and system you are running, but lowland flocks typically aim for 180-200%. Your scanning % will be affected by your empty rate. However, if you have a low empty rate but your scanning % is lower than you would like, this could point towards insufficient energy in the ewe's diet prior to and during tupping. Increasing the plane of nutrition during this period increases the average number of eggs released during each cycle, resulting in increased rates of twinning/triplets.

So you've got your results - what now

1. Cull your empty ewes - these non-productive ewes are costing you money to keep, so the sooner you can get them off the farm the better!
2. Use the scanning information to inform your management - we would recommend doing some body condition scoring at or soon after scanning. If ewes need to gain or lose condition before lambing, the best time to achieve that is now. Once they get into the final 5 weeks of gestation, extra feed could lead to bigger lambs and attempts to reduce BCS could result in an increased risk of low birthweight and/or twin lamb disease!

Body condition scoring - target: BCS 3/5 during mid-late pregnancy and at lambing

AHDB provide an excellent guide to body condition scoring in sheep here <http://www.eblex.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/brp-manual-4-Managing-ewes080814.pdf>.

You should be aiming for a BCS of 3 at lambing - this is where the spinous processes over the loin feel smooth and well rounded. There is evidence to show that ewes with a low BCS at lambing will have reduced milk production, and their lambs will have lower weaning weights.

**In summary:**

- **From now until 5 weeks before lambing - feed according to body condition**
- **From 5 weeks pre-lambing onwards - feed according to litter size**

## NorCal Vets - now on Instagram!

For those of you who haven't found us yet - give us a follow for useful tips, interesting cases and to see what we get up to!

You can find us by searching 'norcalvets' on Instagram!



## Medicines Administration Course

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

**Zoom dates for January to be confirmed**

Limited places so **book early** to avoid disappointment

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.

Cost of the course is £35+ VAT per person

**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 call 01235 429 767**



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