

We have moved!

Just a reminder that we are now based at:

Unit 2, Rycote Lane Farm, Rycote Lane, Milton Common OX9 2NZ.

****Please send all post to this address****

(The same site as Farol John Deere, drive through car park, turn left just before main Farol gates into courtyard of barn conversions, new NorCal building is on the left)

All welcome to come and say hi and take a look at the new practice!

Acorn Poisoning

Acorns are one of the most common causes of plant poisoning in the UK, especially in the late summer and autumn, with more problems often seen after strong winds and gales.

Signs of acorn poisoning:

- Off colour and poor appetite
- Straining to pass faeces and urinate
- Constipation at first, then black watery diarrhoea
- Weakness, collapse and death
- Sudden death can occur, but poisoning usually occurs over a period of a few days.

Generally, acorn poisoning only affects one or a few cattle in a group, as cattle need to eat large amounts of acorns to be poisoned. The poisonous compound in acorns concentrates in the milk of suckler cows so fast-growing calves on milky dams may be the first in the group to show signs.

Acorn poisoning is usually diagnosed based on suspicion of these signs, and we sometimes can also find evidence of acorn consumption in the animal's stomach on post mortem exam. Blood or urine samples on live animals may be useful to rule out other diseases and increase suspicion of acorn poisoning.

There is no specific treatment for acorn poisoning, but most cattle will recover if promptly removed from fields with acorns as soon as they show signs of poisoning. Supportive therapy, such as oral or intravenous fluids, can help to reduce the severity of the disease. In more severe cases, euthanasia may be necessary. The best way to protect stock from acorn poisoning is to be aware of the risks and try and avoid exposure of cattle to acorns. This can be by fencing off the area around oak trees or not grazing fields with large numbers of acorns present.

Getting Ready for Topping

A successful lambing season starts with getting your tups ready for action!

Picking your Rams: Traditionally, one ram is required to cover forty ewes. Ram breeding ability peaks between the ages of 2 and 5.

10 weeks before: Ensure your rams are up to date with their Heptavac P vaccines, which prevent against Pasteurella and Clostridial diseases.

8 weeks before: It is advisable to check your rams for any abnormalities or suboptimal characteristics at least 8 weeks before topping, as sperm production takes approximately 7 weeks. A full MOT of your rams includes checking their body condition score, checking for lameness and a genital exam.

Body Condition Score

Rams should have a BCS of 3.5-4 at topping but this may be breed dependent. They are likely to lose condition during the topping season, but will have a reduced libido and fertility if overweight. Ideally, they should be used to a grass diet, and supplemented with any elements that your grass is deficient in; selenium, cobalt and zinc are important for ram fertility. Ensure good nutrition for rams for at least 8 weeks pre-topping, as sperm production starts then. Check your rams' teeth to ensure they will continue to eat well throughout topping.

Lameness Check

Topping is a very active time for rams, and their libido and ability to cover ewes can be impeded by lameness. You may consider vaccinating against foot rot as a preventative measure, but consult with your vet before doing this.

Genital Examination

Examination of the scrotum and testes can be done by palpation, checking for abscesses, hernias, skin abnormalities or injuries. A scrotum circumference of over 36cm may be abnormal. The testicles should be flexible and evenly sized and should not be painful to touch. Any discharge or injury of the prepuce should be noted; bloody discharge could result in the spread of infectious disease to ewes during service. Any abnormalities can be further investigated by a vet.

Semen quality can also be examined by a vet during a Ram Fertility Test in the run up to topping to assess sperm density, motility and viability – call the office to book for any queries/to book in.

Handling Facilities For Upcoming TB Tests

Now that we are coming up to a busy period of TB testing we would like to remind you all of the importance of adequate handling facilities for cattle. For all tests there should be proper handling facilities that are well maintained and in good working order – ideally a suitable race and crush.

Makeshift gates and hurdles are not sufficient and will cause increased testing time or result in the test being stopped and postponed for safety. Please have a check in the next few weeks and see that everything is as it should be!

Follow us on Instagram @norcalvets



NorCal Vets

Unit 2, Rycote Lane Farm, Rycote Lane, Milton Common OX9 2NZ
Tel: 01844 260 616
Mob: 07725 039 093 (Evan)
thame@norcalvets.co.uk