NorCal Veterinary Services

Newsletter

August 2023 - Sheep Fair Special!

We will be at the Sheep Fair on Thursday 3rd and Friday 4th Aug

Come and say hi and enjoy a hot drink and sausage roll/cheese pasty :)
We'll also be offering free faecal egg counts :)

Hope to see you all there!

Quarantine Worming Sheep

It is more important than ever to have a quarantine plan in place for sheep brought home today and in the future, especially now with many of you using the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway to check your own farm's worm resistance status.

Why do I need to yard sheep on arrival?

- Yarding for minimum 48 hours minimises the number of worm eggs dropping onto pasture from the incoming sheep AND allows time for the treatment to work.
- It also gives you time to think about what actions to take for sheep scab and liver fluke.
- In addition, you can check them over for other conditions such as lameness, orf and CLA.

Why do I need to turn these sheep out to dirty pasture?

- Important because if any resistant worms do survive we don't want them to have free rein on a clean pasture.
- Turning out to pasture that has carried sheep previously means any survivors will be diluted by other worms as the incoming sheep pick up the worms present on the pasture.
- Remember it is the resident flock we are protecting from the threats.

Best practice protocol

1. Yard all animals for 48 hours
2. Administer Zolvix
3. Isolate from flock for 28 days
4. Turn out onto fields grazed by main flock if available for 3-4 weeks during isolation time
5. FEC 14 days post treatment
6. After 28 days animals can join home flock

Flushing Ewes

Flushing ewes in the final three weeks before tupping can help to boost ovulation, increase heat expression, and improve scanning rates. Flushing involves feeding ewes on an increasing plane of nutrition, particularly focusing on increasing the energy and protein levels in the diet to increase ovulation rate. Flushing is needed for at least one cycle (2-3 weeks) to influence the ovaries to release more eggs.

At tupping ewes should be at a condition score of 2.5 – 3. Maintaining this score will mean the ewes' reproductive system is prime for maximizing lamb production. Ewes' ovulation rates can be severely affected if BCS is less than 2 at tupping. Flushing ewes that are in the correct body condition (3-3.5) at tupping time will not have any impact - they will already be producing quality follicles. Flushing older ewes and prolific breeds will increase the number of triplets - not always desirable in these groups. Younger ewes tend to have lower ovulation rates.

Targets to aim for:

- ideally 75% of ewes holding to the first cycle.
- 98% holding to the first 2 cycles.
- Less than 2% barren rate.

Possible Methods of Flushing Ewes:

- Good quality pasture (if you've got it!)
- If not available then high quality hay and a small amount of grain.
- Additional High energy lick buckets e.g. Crystalyx
- Molasses
- Boluses/Drenches for minerals
- Root crops

Do not flush on pastures containing red clover as it contains oestrogens that will affect ovulation rates. Keep ewes off red clover pastures for 45 days either side of tupping.

Although needed in very small quantities, deficiencies in certain trace elements can impact on **fertility**.

- Cobalt plays a key role in egg development and in the development of the early foetus. Supplementation of cobalt at tupping time can also result in ewes giving birth to more active lambs.
- Selenium deficiency can have an impact on reproductive performance, with increased risk of early embryonic death
- Copper deficiency can limit fertility however excess copper can be toxic and so supplementary copper should only be given if deficiency is confirmed
- Zinc can improve hoof quality. This will help ensure that both ewes and rams stay sound during tupping, increasing the likelihood of a successful mating season.
- Phosphorus - too much can increase the risk of embryo loss

Finally, during the first two weeks or so of pregnancy when implantation of the embryo into the uterus is taking place it is important to make sure that stressors are kept to an absolute minimum with no sudden changes in diet or forage quality or any rounding up of sheep.

Syncing - Progesterone (Sponges and CIDRs)

Sponges and CIDRs are used to advance and synchronise your sheep out of their normal breeding season. They are placed into the vagina using an applicator and removed about two weeks later (please refer to data sheets for protocols). PMSG can be used to advance your season (and are out of the normal breeding season). PMSG is injected at the time of sponge/CIDR removal. The ram is put with the ewes 24-36 hours later and removed after five days. The ram is then replaced for the next cycle with a different colour raddle. Please give us a call to discuss which protocol would suit your flock best.

Ram Vasectomies

Vasectomised rams (teasers) are a really useful tool for ensuring a successful sheep breeding season. Teasers are particularly useful for:

- Early lambing flocks, to encourage ewes to start cycling early in the season
- Ewe lambs, to encourage them to start cycling before the rams are introduced
- Teasers can also be used to synchronize ewes at the start of the breeding season

To be safe to use without risk of unwanted pregnancy, teasers need to be vasectomised a **minimum** of 6 weeks before they are introduced to the ewes, so the sooner you can get them done the better!
Most rams or well grown ram lambs are suitable to be vasectomised - when choosing them consider that although they aren't serving ewes, you are investing in them for the future and their effect relies on them behaving and interacting like rams. It's therefore important to pick sound sheep with good teeth and feet, and adequate bodyweight and testicular size.
Finally, it is advisable to permanently identify (e.g. management tag) teasers as the time of surgery - this will help to avoid the chance of any mix-ups that could be costly!

Autumn Lamb Health

Thinking ahead to Autumn the most common diagnoses we make in lambs each year are *Pasteurellosis, Parasites - worms, fluke and Pine (cobalt deficiency).* These common conditions can be related and found together.

- *Pasteurellosis* can present in two ways - pneumonia or systemically. Systemic pasteurellosis is common in 4-9 month old lambs between September and December. The bacteria responsible is found in healthy lambs' tonsils however during periods of stress (e.g. transport, mixing groups, weaning, diet and weather changes) causes disease. Usually, lambs are found dead and we make the diagnosis on PM. However, if caught lambs are lethargic, not eating and have a fever due to septicaemia. Control is best with this disease in lambs and can be done by using Ovivac- P- a combined clostridial and pasteurella vaccine more suitable for lambs.

- *Worms* as always are a concern and if we get mild and wet conditions in Autumn this will extend their season. No surprise (!) - faecal egg counts and targeted treatment to reduce resistance to wormers is the recommended approach.

- *Acute Fluke* is more common in sheep and usually peaks between July and December depending on factors such as the weather - usually occurring after a warm, wet summer. Sudden death, secondary clostridial infections due to the migration of the fluke in the liver, lethargy, abdominal pain and reduced grazing can all be signs of a fluke infestation. Unfortunately, there are different tests to detect fluke at different stages/different ages of sheep therefore it's important to consider this/talk to us about fluke on your farm. For example, a faecal sample to detect fluke eggs will not pick up on immature fluke which will cause sudden death in lambs however a blood test is not suitable for older ewes as it shows fluke infection occurred at any stage in the sheep's life. Your lambs are therefore ideal as an early warning as they can only have picked up liver fluke this season. For monitoring exposure during lambs first season grazing blood testing is recommended - gold standard would be once monthly from August to December for those who know fluke is an issue on their farms. As soon as they sero convert (i.e. become positive) the whole flock should be treated with a product that targets immature fluke. It is important to note that different products target fluke at different stages of their development. Remember that fluke treatments have no persistency and therefore do not protect animals against re-infection. If sheep are treated before peak infection has occurred and they stay on flukey pasture they are still at risk and treatment will have been unbeneficial - drug meat and milk withdrawal days that you see on bottles are not the same as persistence.

Reminder - Vaccination for Toxo and Enzo Pre-Tupping

For the ewes it is time to think about ordering vaccines early to prevent abortions especially as there have been so many supply issues with other vaccinations this year.

- Enzovax controls enzootic abortions - a 2ml injection at least 4 weeks before tupping.
- Toxovax controls toxoplasmosis - a 2ml injection at least 3 weeks before tupping.

Together toxoplasmosis and enzootic abortion account for 70% of sheep abortions in the UK so an effective vaccination strategy is a very good investment compared to the cost of keeping a ewe all winter.
(Toxovax and Enzovax can be administered at the same time however they should be administered at different sites). Please call us to order/for any questions you may have.

Pre-tupping checks

Pre-tupping checks can rule out common problems and can give you an indication of whether you should have a tup semen tested. Up to 30% of rams are thought to be subfertile.

Checking over eyes, mouths, feet and body condition scoring is important as well as palpating scrotums and examining the prepuce. Checks should be done at least 8-10 weeks before they are needed as sperm production takes 6 weeks allowing time for problems to be addressed.

A fit, fertile ram will get more ewes in lamb in a tighter time period and will also last longer in your flock.
If you have any doubts about a tup it is best to give us a call and arrange a fertility exam where we examine a semen sample under the microscope.

Post movement testing – NEW RULES!

From **1st August 2023** any cattle moved to herds located in annual surveillance testing parts of the Edge Area from **higher incidence areas of England** and from Wales will require **compulsory post movement testing (PoMT) between 60-120 days after their arrival.**

Higher incidence areas include: Six monthly surveillance testing parts of Edge Area of England and the High Risk Area of England and Wales.

This policy change applies to **direct movements** of cattle from one holding to another and to **indirect movements** of cattle **via markets and shows**. Compulsory PoMT must be **arranged and paid** for by the **keeper**. Cattle requiring a PoMT cannot be moved off the holding until the test has been completed with negative results. You will receive notification from APHA at the beginning but ultimately it is **your responsibility** to arrange the test and ensure it is completed in the required time frame.

NorCal Vets

Farm, AI Service, Smallholder & Game Birds

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Suckler Herd Group/Beef Benchmarking 2023

Just a reminder to bring in your filled in questionnaires and to let us know if you are able to attend the farm walk on 14th September – those of you that signed up would have received an email with details – please get in touch if you have any queries.