

Grass Tetany

Grass tetany (hypomagnesaemia/grass staggers) is an acute and true veterinary emergency which we are starting to see the past few weeks with this rain in lactating sheep and cattle at grass. It is caused by a deficiency in blood magnesium levels.

Any reduced intake in grass in times of bad weather, bulling, transport, dietary changes, or other concurrent disease can predispose to grass tetany as cattle and sheep need a constant daily intake especially during high milk production. Lush fast-growing grass as well as grass heavily fertilised with potassium or nitrogen also lead to low magnesium blood levels.

Signs commonly seen are staggering, high head carriage, muscle tremors which progresses to seizures with characteristic paddling. Immediate treatment is needed with Magniject No 9 injected under the skin. Prevention is key so call us to discuss possible options such as mineral licks, rations containing magnesium, magnesium boluses and adding magnesium to water. If you suspect an animal has died from grass tetany, call us ASAP if you would like a confirmed diagnosis as magnesium levels, we collect from the eye are only accurate for a limited period after death and we can put a plan in place to protect the rest of the flock/herd.



Nematodirus Reminder

We covered nematodirus in detail last month but a reminder to be vigilant regarding high-risk grazing when turning out ewes and lambs and to check the SCOPS forecast. If this is not possible our best advice is to worm all lambs with a white drench at 6 weeks old. Please also be on the lookout for coccidiosis and give us a call/drop in a sample if lambs (and calves) are seen to be scouring. As always prevention is better than treatment.

Twin Lamb Disease

Most of you are in the middle of lambing by now but for those of you who have just started or about to begin twin lamb is something to watch out for with us vets being called daily regarding cases. Twin Lamb Disease is a severe form of ketosis that occurs in ewes in late pregnancy due to the high energy demand of the growing foetus/s through increased requirements from twins/triplets, poor quality/feed with not enough energy, stresses causing the ewe not to eat.

Symptoms:

Early symptoms are inappetence/isolation which quickly progresses to dullness and and collapse.

Treatment:

Successful treatment is time dependent and affected ewes need to be treated aggressively quickly. Ewes should always be treated with three products:

1. Propylene Glycol (Twin Lamb Drench)
2. Calcium subcutaneous (as ewes with twin lamb usually have concurrent hypocalcaemia)
3. Emdocam (improves survival rates as twin lamb has an inflammatory process)

Treated ewes are more likely to have problems lambing including dystocia, dead/weak lambs or retained cleansing so prevention is key.

Listeriosis

This springtime we have noticed an increase in the numbers of listeria cases - undoubtedly related to do with the wet weather we're all fed up with.

Listeria is a bacterial infection infecting sheep (mainly), cattle and goats. The bacteria is everywhere in the environment being found in soil, sewage, bedding, water and food - and replicates on poorly kept silage. Disease is therefore more commonly seen in winter months when more silage is being fed.

Clinical signs can vary with most of us on the lookout for classical circling. Other typical symptoms include inappetence, drooling, one sidedness particularly in the face with drooping eyelids, lip, ear, head pressed into corners and disorientation and abortions.

Treatment needs to be swift and aggressive, we recommend high doses of Engemycin, steroids (if not pregnant), emdocam and B vitamins intravenously. Supportive treatment of fluids and electrolytes will help those animals struggling to drink and feed.

Control involves good silage management avoiding feeding any spoiled forage particularly to pregnant animals, keeping feed and water troughs clean avoiding soil and faecal contamination. There are also additives that can be added to silage to alter the pH and reduce Listeria replication.

Compulsory Registration For all Birdkeepers

Defra have announced new rules coming into force from 1st October 2024 with the aim of improving disease control measures.

All kept birds, not just poultry, will need to be registered with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA); the threshold number of birds kept requiring registration will be reduced from 50 to one; and all keepers of birds will be mandated to review their records annually. There will be no requirement for birds such as budgerigars, parrots, or canaries that are kept in a birdhouse within a dwelling to be registered.

This will affect quite a lot of you who own backyard flocks, birds of prey and pigeon enthusiasts. You can do this now by visiting.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-as-a-keeper-of-less-than-50-poultry-or-other-captive-birds>

Animal Health and Welfare Equipment and Technology Grant

The next round of grants is open for applications through the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund (FETF) 2024. These grants go towards the cost of items on a list that help to improve animal health and welfare. The deadline to apply is midday on the 1st of May so please have a quick read before then to see if anything could help.

Details can be found at:

<https://defrafarming.blog.gov.uk/2024/03/20/animal-health-and-welfare-grant-now-available>

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