

Haemonchus (Barber Pole Worm) in Sheep

This week saw our first confirmed case of barber pole worm on a post mortem this season.

Important things to consider with this abomasal blood sucking worm are:

- Ewes are affected just as severely as lambs
- Affected animals do not scour generally unless there is an infection with other parasites - anaemia (shown by pale mucous membranes)/collapse and often times just sudden death are the main signs you will see.
- Less acute cases will appear like fluke - weight loss, bottle jaw and lethargy
- This worm is a prolific egg layer so a presumptive diagnosis can be made by a high worm egg count. However a post mortem exam gives a definitive diagnosis.
- 5000 haemonchus eggs are capable of drinking 250ml of blood daily while each female worm is capable of producing up to 10,000 eggs per day therefore animals can succumb to infection very quickly.

Please contact us for advice if you suspect a Haemonchus burden in your animals.

Grass Tetany (Hypomagnesaemia) in Sheep and Cattle

Grass tetany (hypomagnesaemia/grass staggers) is an acute and true veterinary emergency which we have confirmed in a number of cases of sudden death the past few weeks 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.

Please also cover the head if left in the yard to protect eyes from predation from birds so we can sample them!

Tick Season for Farm Dogs

Peak season for ticks has arrived and with working dogs regularly moving through high risk areas where ticks thrive we recommend preventative treatment in the summer at a minimum

We advise using Bravecto which in a tablet form provides three months protection or a year long lasting injectable version which is comparable in price with 4x yearly tablets. Bravecto also kills and prevents fleas.

Ticks can transmit serious diseases to dogs (and humans) therefore prevention is best to prevent infection particularly in long haired dogs where they are not easily seen.

Red Tractor requires that farm dogs are wormed regularly with appropriate products. Farm dogs can play an important role in the transmission of certain parasites particularly tapeworm in sheep which can be avoided through regular worming. Dogs pick up tapeworms by eating infected carcasses and then shed eggs in their faeces - these can survive for 6 months on pasture. Sheep that ingest these eggs can develop cysts leading to carcass condemnation at the abattoir.


As many of you will know the RCVS introduced rules last year which require us to examine dogs and cats at least once per year and make a note on your pets account in order to prescribe POM-V medication which includes many flea/tick and worm treatments.

Flystrike

Many of you will have had early cases of flystrike with the hot weather last week. As many sheep are yet to be sheared the option of applying Clik is limited so some tips to help prevent:


1. Managing worm burdens resulting in less scouring and resulting dirty fleeces
2. Regular dagging out to prevent faecal buildup
3. Reducing and treating early scald and footrot attracting flies
4. Ensure any wounds are promptly treated to avoid attracting flies

Sheep Meeting At StowAg Thame

FREE EVENT: Managing Haemonchus in Sheep (Thame store) 

Join us for an exclusive evening on managing Haemonchus in sheep, with expert advice from leading vets and animal health specialists.

Where and when? Our StowAg Thame, Oxfordshire OX9 2NZ. Tuesday 3rd June, 5.30pm–8.30pm.

 Tickets are limited, RSVP to secure your spot here: <https://form.jotform.com/251173416178356>

Sudden Death in Young Lambs

This time of year frustratingly leads to picking up dead lambs which appear to have dropped dead for no apparent reason. While one is usually considered bad luck and overlooked it is important to investigate by post mortem and rule out common reasons which can be easily prevented either through vaccination or targeted treatment.

1. Clostridial Disease

Clostridial bacteria naturally inhabit a lamb's gut but changes such as feed type or increased feed intake can lead to multiplication of these bacteria, production of toxins and death. The most common diseases we diagnose are pulpy kidney and lamb dysentery. These can be prevented by vaccination using Heptavac-P, Ovivac, Bravoxin etc

2. Pasteurella

The bacteria responsible for pasteurella are also found in a healthy lamb in their tonsils. However stress can lead to manifestation of Pasteurellosis. Again these bacteria multiply, invade the lungs and enter the bloodstream causing septicaemia and death. Vaccination again is the prevention. Look for vaccines with the letter "P" included e.g. Heptavac-P, Ovivac P and Ovipast - Bravoxin does not include pasteurella cover.

3. Nematodirus

This worm can lead to sudden death without the usual tell tale sign of dirty bums. Generally affecting lambs aged 6-12 weeks old this worm is weather dependent with the hatch needing a chilled period followed by a warmer period. Please monitor the SCOPS forecast which advises on the risk in your area/ If you are able to graze lambs on a field not grazed by lambs last year this is ideal. However if not the best option is to worm lambs at 4 weeks old (particularly twins and triplets eating more grass) and then again at 8 weeks using a white wormer.

4. Coccidiosis

Coccidia can occur a bit earlier than Nematodirus with cases appearing as early as 3 weeks of age. Faecal samples can return a quick and easy diagnosis. Please call us to discuss the best course of treatment.

While these are the most common they are obviously not the only causes of lamb deaths.

Postmortem exams are the best tool we have to get on top of an issue before more deaths occur. Please keep any dead lambs as cool as possible and call ASPP to ensure an accurate diagnosis on postmortem.

New Forest Eye in Cattle

The increase in flies is also resulting in an increase in the number of bad eyes in cattle. Infection can be seen initially as tear staining. However, if left untreated this will rapidly progress to corneal ulceration and permanent damage to the eye resulting in partial or even full blindness and potentially requiring the eye to be surgically removed.

If infection is caught early when tear staining is first observed, infection can usually be resolved with an eye tube such as Orbenin or Opticlox.

However, if ulcers are seen injectable antibiotics and anti-inflammatories will be required. For isolated cases we recommend Alamycin LA 300/Oxtra DD (1ml/10kg IM) and Emdocam (1ml/40kg SC). In severe outbreaks where infection is rapidly spreading in a group the use of the longer acting antibiotic Tulaject (1ml/40kg SC) can be used however please give one of the vets a call to discuss how best to manage.

Prevention is key and we would recommend cattle be treated with a pour on to deter flies now. This will also help prevent cases of summer mastitis.

Bluetongue Update and Vaccination

Bluetongue pre-movement testing exemptions have been extended from 15 May and now apply until 12 June 2025, unless you are notified otherwise.

This means livestock keepers do not have to test non-breeding animals over 60 days old before moving them out of the restricted zone. Keepers must apply for a specific movement licence to move animals out of the restricted zone.

The following animals are considered higher risk and will require pre-movement testing as a condition of a specific licence to move out of the RZ:

- entire males intended for breeding
- females that are pregnant or have unknown pregnancy status
- youngstock that are under 60 days old at the time of movement – these animals require a single test before they can be moved – unless they are travelling at foot with the maternal dam, in which case you can just test the maternal dam by PCR and ELISA
- animals being moved for germinal product collection (ova, semen or embryo).

They have also changed the length of time that pre-movement test samples are valid for, from 21 days to 10 days from 27th May.

If you would like to discuss Bluetongue vaccination, please give one of the vets a call.

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