

Newsletter February 2017



Tibbs and Simmons

Farm Animal Veterinary Surgeons

Many of you have now started lambing in time for the bad weather! There have been a few reports of typical Smallenberg Virus affected lambs being born. There is currently no vaccine available for use in this country as the manufacturers chose to withdraw it from the UK market due to poor uptake. For this reason, Defra (APHA) are subsidising the testing for virus on any affected lambs or calves if dead animals are submitted then the charge will be £20 per submission. It may seem odd that we are seeing a recurrence of cases several years on from the initial outbreaks. This may be for a number of reasons; the midge conditions were ideal for early lambing flocks around mid September to October when ewes were early pregnant, also there will now also be a significant number of ewes in flocks that have not been exposed (and mounted an immune response) to previous outbreaks and the similar virus – Akabane found in the Pacific, tends to have re-emergence every 4-6 years. The higher risk flocks are those with very condensed lambing period, early in the season. It is a concern that we may have some tricky calvings on the horizon as they will follow a month or two after the affected lambings.

In terms of prevention there is very little that is practical other than vaccination that is currently unavailable. If there are enough diagnosed cases then it is possible that it may be brought back into the UK or we may be able to apply for an import licence to bring it in from the EU.

We now have widespread cases of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (AI) in both wild birds and farmed poultry. This strain of AI caused 99% mortality in a few days in the Lincolnshire turkey farm. The spread of cases shows that it is important to maintain good Biosecurity in order to protect your birds. A prevention zone has been created for the entire country ordering all farmed and back yard birds are protected from wild birds. Importantly, wild birds should not be able to have shared access to water or feed, or be able to contaminate it with faeces. Footbaths should be used to prevent you from contaminating their runs. Defra asks public to report findings of dead wild birds especially wild ducks, geese, swans, gulls or birds of prey and where more than five birds of any species are found dead in the same location on the Helpline (0345 9335577).

A fact that is often overlooked during the winter is that if you are using a 5% formalin solution in a foot-bath to control digital dermatitis that it will not work when the temperature falls below 7°C. At this temperature, the formalin forms an inactive precipitate in the footbath. It is worth considering an alternative such as 2% copper sulphate. Don't forget that the more you can do to keep cows' feet clean and clear of slurry the less chance there is of them becoming infected.

All Dairy clients should have now received a letter regarding their individual mastitis tube usage. To follow this up we are holding a meeting to review mastitis and the transition period and also to discuss the novel immuno-stimulant, Imrestor. This will be at the New Inn at Cross on Monday 20th February at 7pm. Please call the office to book your place.