

January 2018 Newsletter



Happy new year to all! The weather is certainly posing a challenge to those out-wintering livestock. With ground conditions some-what challenging, it is inevitable that soil contamination of pasture will occur. Soil presents a risk as it can harbour bacterial spores. Perhaps the most common bacteria type we see is those causing Clostridial diseases such as Blackleg, Tetanus and Botulism. Listeria is soil-borne but tends to be more of an issue when incorporated into silage. Other less common diseases caused by soil borne bacteria are Anthrax and Q-fever. Clostridial diseases tend to occur as sudden deaths and can easily be prevented by vaccines such as Heptavac and Bravoxin. Standing water can harbour bacteria such as leptospirosis and salmonella. Again, these can be prevented by vaccination.

Heavy metals contained in the soil can also splash onto the leaves increasing the risk of potential poisoning; lead poisoning would be of particular concern to some areas.

If you are experiencing any issues with out-wintering then please speak to us to see if we can assist.

We are seeing the typical seasonal spike in pneumonia cases in growing cattle. We have a wide array of vaccines available to us nowadays so a lot of these cases can be prevented. Ideally we need a diagnosis in order to identify the viruses or bacteria involved in order to match up a vaccine program. Traditionally we have done this by using blood samples at the time of disease outbreak followed by bloods a month or so later to see if the antibody levels have risen in response to the challenge. Today we have a few other options available to actually identify the virus or bacteria directly. PCR is a relatively modern technique that amplifies the DNA of the pathogens in order to quantify the presence of the virus or bacteria. In order to do a PCR test ideally we would need a dead calf (it doesn't matter if the calf has had antibiotics) so we can swab the lungs and trachea. We can also use a nasal swab in a live calf.

The lambing season is now here; the inclement weather will severely affect nutritional intakes in pregnant ewes at grass. Body condition should be checked regularly to be sure that ewes are not losing too much weight, supplementary forage and concentrates may be useful to help prevent cases of twin lamb disease. Ewes in good condition at lambing will milk better and feed their lambs better than those in poor body condition; losing weight at this point, they will struggle to recover body condition before tupping which will then impact on lamb numbers next year. Those struggling with lame sheep may well have CODD a more aggressive form of dermatitis, which can be very hard to treat with the traditional jab of Alamycin or Betamox. We see very good response to treatment with a single jab of Zactran which is now licenced for virulent foot rot with a 29 day meat withhold.