

Newsletter March 2017



Spring is here!! Lambing is well underway; generally lamb numbers have been good, but we have seen a number of abortion outbreaks. The major causes of abortion are toxoplasmosis and enzootic abortion (EAE). There are vaccines available for both of these causes that can give protection for the productive life of the ewe that are widely used. If you have had problems or disappointing lambing averages then please talk to us about abortion vaccines. These should be given around 1 month prior to tugging.

Watery mouth tends to become an issue as lambing progresses. It is caused by an infection of E.Coli bacteria that colonise the gut. The lambs appear full as the stomach fills with gas and will rattle if shaken. The best course of action is to give supportive nursing; stomach tube with milk, keep warm and oral antibiotics such as Spectam may be helpful. Good hygiene and colostrum are essential for control of watery mouth, typically, the 'bugs' build up as lambing progresses and disease starts to kick in after a month or so. Blanket use of Spectam is not recommended and should only really be used as a stop-gap for those lambs at higher risk such as triplets or lambs not receiving enough colostrum.

We continue to see significant numbers of TB reactors within the practice. It is not unusual to see cases in youngstock and calves. Where this occurs we often see large numbers of reactors. Waste milk feeding is often to blame, where an infected cow sheds TB in the udder into her milk which is then fed to large numbers of calves. Raw waste milk feeding is a high risk cost cutting exercise and we would strongly discourage this practice. On-farm pasteurisers are becoming more widely used these days and will certainly help in reducing the risk of TB spread as well as helping in Johne's disease control. If feeding concentrates/blends then consideration should be given to badger exclusion from feed stores and bunkers. Farms where little concentrate and supplements are fed tend to be at a lower risk of having TB reactors. It therefore makes sense not to tempt fate by attracting the local badger population into your farmyard.

It is time to start thinking about bulls for those calving in the early spring. We are carrying out a greater number of Pre-breeding examinations of bulls to ensure their health and sperm quality. It is certainly not un-common to see sub-fertile bulls that drag out the calving period. Checking them in the coming month will allow plenty of time to source a replacement prior to mating should one be required.