

PRACTICE NEWS

Evan and Clare are pleased to announce the birth of our daughter Ember Teal David born on Wednesday the 27th of April.

Both Clare and Ember are doing great and no calving ropes were required!



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MAXIMISING FUTURE RETURNS

With the spring calving and lambing season coming to its end, it is time to take stock and look to the future. And with depressed prices across all farming sectors, maximising returns by focusing on increasing productivity and reducing costs is more essential than ever.

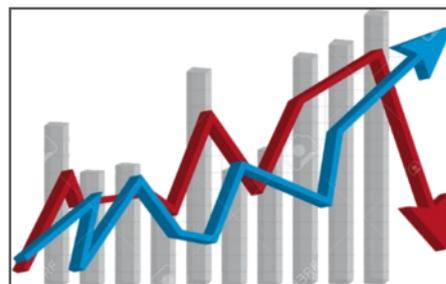
Making time to sit down and analyse this year's calving and lambing figures is an essential task for any stockman as it has the potential to illuminate problems that may have led to reduced productivity and increased costs before they are perpetuated for another year.

Just as important, is putting in place a plan to ensure that as many animals as possible, as quickly as possible, get to a point where they yield a tangible return. It may seem a way off if you encountered significant fertility problems this year, but sorting these issues now will pay dividends in the future.

If the problems stem from the bull or the condition of the cows at bulling, then now is only window available to rectify these if you are a spring calving herd.

The spring is also the time to look at how to maximise returns from the progeny. Evaluating nutrition, calf/lamb health, housing, equipment and grazing to see whether investment in these areas will pay dividends in reducing costs of reduced growth rates, losses and medicines is a must for the progressive farmer.

It can be difficult to judge what your production expectations should be, however data is available so you can see how you compare to the average UK producer. Look at <http://beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/returns/stocktake/> to see how you compare.



A NEW APPROACH TO DRYING OFF COWS

Velactis is launched. This novel product is designed to help cows reduce their milk production as soon as they go dry.



It is given by a single injection at drying off and has been shown to reduce mastitis during the next lactation, improve comfort and so lying time of cows during their dry period and to reduce milk leakage from animals after drying off, so improving the efficacy of any tubes which have been used as part of a drying off protocol. Please discuss with us how it might help you.

THE IMPACT OF POOR GRASS GROWTH

Poor grass growth and poor quality forage made last year due to the weather has led to a significant increase in metabolic disease in ewes this spring.

Many of the minerals and vitamins essential for life are usually provided in abundance by spring grass however, widespread cold and wet weather has prevented grass growth. As a result, hypocalcaemia (low calcium) and Vitamin B1 (thiamine) deficiency have been particularly prominent along with pregnancy toxemia.

Recumbent, blind or depressed ewes hanging back from the group should ideally be bled to assess calcium and ketone (a marker of energy) levels at the earliest opportunity, to ensure that treatment is being focused in the correct areas - unfortunately death is often the outcome if incorrect treatment is initiated.

Calcium, energy and vitamin B1 deficits can often be prevented from affecting others in the group by changing the feed and introducing an additional 'green' forage, hay or better quality grass or grass silage. However, vegetables with high levels of sulphur compounds e.g. brassicas should be avoided as these can perpetuate vitamin B1 deficiencies.

In acute cases, medical treatment will be required to get the ewe back on her feet. When treating hypocalcaemia, the condition of the ewe will determine whether intravenous, subcutaneous or oral supplementation is the most appropriate. If treating under the skin, it is important that the calcium injection is warmed so that it can be effectively absorbed.

Vitamin B1 is best supplemented in deficient animals by injection, but repeated treatment at 4-hourly intervals may be required for several days to maximise recovery rates. Oral drenches can be used to supplement those showing no clinical signs but known to have grazed deficient pastures.

For more information, please contact your vet who will be happy to discuss things further.



IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT BLUE TONGUES

We are all urged to be vigilant with regards to Bluetongue making a reappearance into the United Kingdom.

As we write this, the disease has only been diagnosed in the very South East of the country, but after a long, relatively warm winter, it is likely that the midge population will be higher this year. As the disease is spread by midges to both cattle and sheep, it is important to remind ourselves of the signs.

The disease affects sheep more profoundly than cattle, but in both the signs may consist of a fever, swelling of the lips and bleeding into the gums giving a red and swollen appearance to the muzzle.

There may be excessive salivation and some discharge from the nose and possibly eyes. There may well also be lameness as the virus attacks the coronary band, causing swelling here as well. However, the blue tongue after which the disease is named happens only rarely.

If you witness signs like this, especially in multiple animals, then please inform us and we will help to rule out this nasty disease.

Please also remember that, should the disease become a real threat, a number of good vaccines exist and we are assured that they are in good supply from manufacturers this year.

ASPERGILLOSIS IN BACKYARD POULTRY

Zoonotic diseases are diseases which affect both humans as well as animals. TB, Leptospirosis and Brucella are well known, however backyard poultry also harbour zoonotic diseases.

Aspergillosis is a fungal disease found in birds and most domestic species. In birds it often causes respiratory signs, as it does in humans, and it can be diagnosed on post mortem where yellow to grey nodules or plaques are found.

Morbidity is high, although mortality is low, and whilst treatment is available, prevention is more common on commercial poultry units. Given the risk to humans it is always advisable to have birds with respiratory disease investigated by the vet so preventative measures can be put in place.

