

Practice News

New Premises

We have finally moved office - a reminder that our new number is 01844 260616.

TB Testing

We are holding a farmers meeting on Thursday 14th of May, 7pm at H&C Pearce. Food and drink will be provided.

The topic is:

' Changes to how TB tests are allocated. What is expected of you and what is expected of us.'

This is a really important meeting and changes will affect everyone. Please make every effort to attend.

Norcal Vets:
'Dedicated
to the
Health
of Your
Business'

HOW HAVE YOU DONE THEN?

As you come to the end of lambing 2015 it is time to take stock and see how the season has gone. Of course, it will be some time before you know the outcome of selling the products, but it is really useful to investigate how you have got on from scanning to weaning.

What are your acceptable losses? Do these meet with local targets? Are you inadvertently losing a chunk of your farm's profits through early losses? From there, ask yourself questions such as: How do you select your breeding replacements? What is your lambs' growth rate compared to local standards? And how are you going to decide your culling policy?

All of these questions are very rarely answered fully by sheep farmers analysing their own data, yet can make a huge difference to the underlying profitability of your enterprise.

Through flock health planning and investigating these figures with your vet, we can help to ensure that you are not missing profit opportunities on your farm.

The days of the flock health plan sitting in a dusty corner of the farm office are thankfully behind us, with our goal now being to generate a useful and dynamic health plan, highlighting key events in your calendar year to drive up your flock's performance.

Additionally, with schemes such as flock-check and barren-ewe check, we can use subsidised lab fees to minimise the cost to you of identifying two of the major causes of pre-lambing losses, even at this stage in the season.



This tests for Toxoplasma and Enzootic abortion, both of which can be prevented from causing you further problems in the future if we identify them now.

Please let us know if you would like to investigate these offers any further.

ARE YOUR DRY COWS FIT OR FAT?

Remember to check your cows for ketone levels in the first 21 days after calving, especially if you have animals who have an extended dry period, or a protracted calving interval.

This is very easy to do using a milk sample, which can be brought into the practice for testing, and should reduce the calving to first service interval to ensure that your cows continue to be profitable members of the herd.



TO FLUKE OR NOT TO FLUKE?

Liver fluke is no longer the preserve of the wetland sheep. Increasingly we are seeing it in our dairy cows, right across the country. Sadly, we have lost the zero milk withhold drugs which were previously available, and so it is a big decision if you are to undertake any treatment.

The other problem, is working out whether you really have a problem! Unlike in sheep, where abattoir reports on liver condemnations are useful markers for the right time to treat the stock, dairy farmers are not usually sending such animals to slaughter with any degree of frequency.

The only blood test registers exposure to, rather than presence of the fluke and so in older animals who may well have been exposed, it may only represent historic exposure, making it difficult to interpret.

The most beneficial approach to take may be to sample your youngstock at the end of their first grazing season. These animals should have no previous exposure history as it is difficult (although not impossible) to become exposed when housed. Therefore, if they are showing an antibody response at this stage, then the infection must have been active that summer, which indicates a burden on the farm.

Using this 'canary in a mine' approach to surveillance for disease on your farm follows on the heels of monitoring youngstock for the presence of BVD and high risk animals for the presence of Johne's and Neospora, so is a tried and tested method of assessing the status of the herd. At this time of year, when only adult fluke should be surviving, it is also possible to run a composite faeces sample to judge levels around turnout.

We will remind you again towards housing that sampling your youngstock would be beneficial, but in the meantime, please watch out for signs of subclinical disease – milk drop, dull coat, bottle jaw or condition loss - and ask us about collecting a faeces sample if you feel this may be warranted.



BULL MOT REMINDER

We discussed the importance of teeth, testicles and toes in detail in last month's newsletter, but we wanted to remind you - "Now is the time to get him checked out!"

With a full examination we can:

- Check his semen production and quality
- Check he is not carrying BVD in his testicles
- Deliver a thorough health check

Every year we receive a call from at least one farm who has not carried out a bull MOT, telling us that 'none of the heifers have been stopped'. This is obviously very costly, yet can be prevented with a proper examination.



RED ALERT

As temperatures have risen considerably in past weeks, sheep farmers should be on the look out for signs of infection by the parasite *Nematodirus battus*, which can cause a high number of mortalities and stunt the growth of many others.

Cold weather delays hatching of eggs containing infective larvae, so a sudden change in temperature can trigger a mass hatch. If this coincides with the time when lambs are starting to take in significant amounts of grass, the result can be devastating.

Clinical signs consist of profuse diarrhoea (black-green, pale yellow then colourless and scanty), rapid dehydration and in some severe cases, death (<30%).

Main risk factors to consider are:

- Cold days suddenly followed by a period of warm weather
- Lambs grazing pasture that carried lambs last spring
- Lambs that are old enough to be eating significant amounts of grass (c. 6–12 weeks old)
- Groups where there is also likely to be a challenge from coccidiosis
- Lambs that are under other stresses e.g. triplets, fostered, on young or older ewes

If you believe that your lambs are at risk, a white wormer drench should be sufficient to treat the disease, but please give the practice a ring for further advice.