



Farm Newsletter - October 2017

MVC Annual Farm Department Social and Skittles

Wednesday 8th November 7:30pm —The Bell Inn Chittlehampton



It is that time of year again when we would like to say thank you to all our loyal clients and give something back to you all. Our autumn skittles night has been very popular over the last couple of years and this year it has been kindly sponsored by MSD.

As always refreshments will be supplied afterwards. Please feel free to come as a team (4-6) but don't worry if not we will sort numbers out on the night.

We will also be providing a little bit of information on the BVD free scheme which we have now signed up to.

For more information or to put your names down for a place please contact us at the surgery on 01769 572176. Look forward to seeing you all there



SUPPORTER





Management of Lameness in Sheep



Lameness control in sheep flocks was the topic of our latest sheep meeting, held at the end of August, which was kindly sponsored by MSD Animal Health. Lameness treatment and control is one of the most important health and welfare issues affecting sheep farmers in the UK. It is also a government priority, with a target of reducing the national flock lameness incidence to less than 5% by the end of 2016 (which has generally been achieved) and to less than 2% by March 2021 (still a way to go to reach this target....).

Lameness is common, 40% of farmers in a recent survey reported a 3-5% incidence of lameness in their flock at any one time. Poorly controlled lameness in the flock leads to decreased flock performance and is costly in terms of labour, treatments and culling.

Correct diagnosis

The key to effective lameness management is to know what type of lameness the sheep are suffering from, as only then can appropriate treatment be administered. Lameness can be suffering from more than one cause of lameness simultaneously.

Although footrot is the most common cause of lameness in UK sheep flocks (strip and footrot are caused by the same bacteria and are progressive stages of the same disease), it is not always easy to identify the different lameness conditions. If you are in doubt, ask one of our vets to examine some of your lame sheep so we can diagnose the problem, helping you treat your flock more effectively.

It is important to remember that in sheep >85% of lameness cases are infectious, i.e. they can spread to other sheep via the ground surface.

When tackling lameness control in a sheep flock, we need to consider both treatment of acute disease i.e. the lame sheep that are present in the flock now, and preventative measures for maintaining a low level of lameness in the long term. Therefore considering lameness is important for all sheep farmers whether their flock currently has a low or high incidence of lameness.

The 5 Point Plan for Sheep Lameness Reduction

During the meeting we discussed the sheep industry led initiative called the 5 Point Plan which has been devised to help farmers to be able to control lameness both during an acute outbreak and in the longer term.

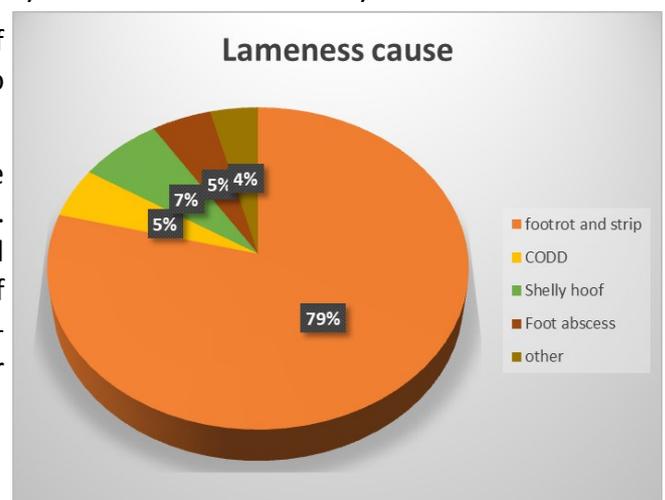
Whilst the original plan was designed for the control of footrot, it is also effective at reducing the incidence of other infectious diseases such as CODD.

A summary of the 5 points are as follows:

Treat Clinical Cases Early

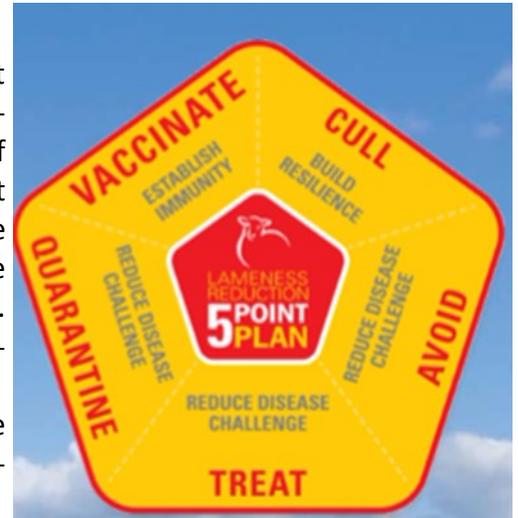
Prompt treatment leads to faster healing times, and also decreases the potential for infectious bacteria to spread to other sheep in the flock.

Sheep must be treated appropriately for the disease they are suffering from – always make a diagnosis and use treatment as detailed in your lameness plan or ask one of our vets for advice.



Quarantine Incoming animals

Keep purchased stock separate from the main flock for at least 4 weeks, it is very easy to buy in infectious lameness in carrier animals. Before purchase ask the lameness history of the flock. Before purchase if possible, or on arrival, inspect every foot and every coronary band of every animal. Isolate suspect animals and treat appropriately. Run the whole group through either a formalin or zinc sulphate footbath. Monitor for lameness throughout the entire quarantine period. Check every foot and every coronary band again and repeat the footbath before joining your flock at the end of the quarantine period.



Avoid Spreading Infection at gathering and handling

Clean and disinfect handling pens and high traffic areas to prevent transfer of infection. Lime can be used in gateways and around troughs for this purpose. Separate sound and lame sheep and treat/handle the lame sheep last. Wherever possible isolate lame sheep from the rest of the flock until they are sound, this is especially important at housing time and if you have CODD. Run sheep through a zinc sulphate footbath immediately prior to housing to disinfect the feet. Keep bedding dry during the housing period, apply lime to heavily used areas. Footbath solutions are deactivated by organic material e.g. soil and faeces, so run sheep through a water bath first and replenish the solution frequently. Sheep must stand on concrete for at least ½ hour after foot bathing. Poor foot bathing facilities can lead to a worsening of lameness, so if you do not have suitable facilities do not footbath. Routine foot trimming is not necessary, and trimming diseased feet slows healing. Transfer of infectious bacteria on foot shears is common – they must be disinfected between feet. Wear gloves when handling lame sheep and change them after treating an infected foot, to prevent disease spread.

Cull Repeat offenders

Record the affected foot, ear tag and diagnosis of each sheep treated. If the same foot is treated more than once in the same season, she should be culled. Sheep with chronic misshapen feet should be culled as they tend to carry infectious bacteria.



Vaccinate to stimulate immunity

Vaccination against footrot helps raise the flock's immunity to footrot, and improves the effectiveness of the other 4 parts of the plan. Vaccination is most effective when carried out in anticipation of a period of risk, e.g. prehousing. Whilst the vaccine does not cover CODD, the preventing damage to feet due to footrot can decrease the incidence of CODD in a flock by 30%. Footrot vaccine must not be administered to sheep that have ever received 1% moxidectin injection, and this wormer must not be used in flocks that use footrot vaccine. For more information about this vaccine and its use, please speak to one of our large animal vets.

To follow up from this meeting, I am in the process of contacting everyone by telephone who signed up for the lameness meeting to carry out a lameness questionnaire and discuss lameness on your farm. I will then be able to use this information to advise on how to make lameness treatment and prevention more robust on your farm. If you would like to take part, but did not attend the meeting, or to discuss sheep lameness, please contact Rachel at our South Molton surgery.



Preparing for Topping



Body condition at topping is important. Ewes in good body condition at topping ovulate more eggs and are more likely to have a multiple pregnancy. Thin ewes have a delayed start to the breeding season and are more likely to have only a single foetus or be barren. Overfat ewes are also poor ovulators. For lowland ewes the target body condition score at topping is 3.5.

Under conditioned ewes will benefit from “flushing” – grazing on a good quality pasture with a high energy supplement for 2 weeks prior to topping and throughout the topping period. Ewes on target condition will not benefit from flushing but should graze a 4-6cm sward throughout the topping period and for at least 4-6 weeks afterwards to ensure implantation of the fertilised eggs. Do not graze red clover swards at topping time.

The use of raddle marking is recommended to monitor the rams working, and to give an approximate lambing date. Start with a light colour and use progressively darker colours. If harnesses are to be used, ensure they fit well, and the ram is accustomed to them before topping begins. They must be regularly checked to ensure sores do not occur.

The colour should be changed after 14-16 days in order to identify returns. If there is a high proportion of returns seek veterinary advice.

Toxovax orders

Please note that there is currently a minimum of 2 week lead time between order placement and delivery of Toxovax. Please plan ahead and order well in advance. Please speak to Michelle to place an order.



Challenge Sheep

Challenge Sheep is a new AHDB funded project which aims to understand the consequence of the rearing phase on the lifetime performance of ewes. Both ewe lamb and 2-tooth replacements will be followed in this seven year project.

Unfortunately there are no farms in north Devon participating in this project, however there are 2 farms within the south west area as a whole. Introductory meetings are being held during October and November and will be of interest to anyone looking to improve the performance of their female replacements.

The meeting closest to our area are:

11th October – Dorchester 11am – 3pm

14th November – Axminster 11am-3pm

For full details, please visit the events page on the AHDB beef and lamb website.

Staff News

As some of you will already know Louise have left us for new challenges. We would like to take this opportunity to thank her for all her hard work over the last few years and wish her all the best for the future. Michelle will now be the main point of contact for any farm enquiries.