

It has been a fairly quiet month. Amy and I have been busy making teaser rams ready for August and September tupping. These teasers can help to tighten the lambing season by bringing the ewes into season earlier, so long as the ewes are totally isolated from rams (and their smell) for 6 weeks prior to this. Amy and I have also been on a ram pre-breeding examination course, see below for more information.

Unfortunately we had to do several caesarean sections on 14-15 month old beef heifers and we had 2 cases where injections for mismating had not worked. As was proved this time, injecting pregnant heifers with Estrumate is not a "Get-out-of-jail card". There will be circumstances where the use of a misalliance injection is appropriate, but using it as a management tool should be avoided for welfare reasons and the chance that it might not work. Often tightening of the calving pattern is key and this is something we can help you to achieve. Keeping the bull in with the cows (and their calves) for only 10-12 weeks reduces the chances significantly of heifer calves "stealing" the bull. When pregnancies are not detected until later, timing of calving

can be controlled with inductions so a caesarean section can be planned and performed in daylight. These elective caesarean sections not only improve survival rates of heifer and calf but also improve chances of future breeding. However, this should only be done in exceptional circumstances.

On a more positive note we have reviewed our fees. Since we started the practice in 2008 we have raised our fees only once, 2½ years ago. Although the cumulative effect of inflation is also affecting us, in contrast to other practices in the area, we don't feel it is fair to increase our fees in the current climate with lamb and milk prices as they are today. Therefore we have decided to see if we can find areas where we can make efficiency savings within our business. Also our medicine pricing structure remains unchanged; we have always promised to match online pharmacies for medicine prices.

Our "Summer BBQ" will be held on Thursday 10 September Lydling Farm at kind invitation of Angus Stovold. More details will follow soon. **Maarten**

Effect of cooling on heat stressed cows (Ben)

Topical for this time of year is a recent study comparing production levels of cows suffering heat stress compared to those that aren't. In this particular study the experimenters cooled cows by running chilled water (4.5°C) through a water-bed on a cubicle. Now I can't imagine many of you are going to run out and try this particular technique, which seems a somewhat complex method, but the impact on production of preventing heat stress is worth noting. For the experiment all the animals were exposed to a Temperature-Humidity Index (THI) of 79 – for UK humidities this level would be achieved at around 28°C for outdoor cattle and 26°C for housed cattle so definitely a level of heat stress that our cows have seen this summer. The cows that were cooled decreased rectal temperature by 1.0°C, decreased respiration rate by 18 breaths/min (i.e. stopped panting), increased milk yield by 5%, and increased DMI by 14% compared with the controls. Fertility wasn't measured as the study was quite short, but one would expect a pretty big impact if the stress is reduced by that much. Food for thought as you look at the return on investment of measures to alleviate heat stress. Also reassurance for many of you who have invested in cow-cooling that it should pay off in the long-term.

New TB Interactive map (Sarah)

This month DEFRA have launched a new interactive mapping service to show the location of current TB hotspots, as well as resolved breakdowns from the last five years in England. Anyone can now go to the website <http://www.ibtb.co.uk/> and search by either a postal code or CPH number. The points shown on the map are the main address of the holding, so may not directly relate to the exact location of a breakdown and will not reveal any farm details such as name, address or holding number.

This will be a great tool for clients to identify risks to their own holding, as well as becoming a vital decision making aid when considering purchase/movement of cattle from other areas. As a practice, we will still be unable to confirm/deny any rumours as to the exact location of breakdowns. The website will be updated monthly, so it is not a live streaming service. It currently only shows cattle breakdowns, but it is believed that it will be updated with additional features over time.



NOTICE BOARD



the
liVeStock partnership Ltd

Market Square, Petworth
West Sussex, GU28 0AH

Tel: 0845 3138434

info@livestockvets.co.uk

Artificial Insemination (Claire)

We are looking to run a full and refresher artificial insemination (AI) course in October. The full course will be run over 3 days and cover all theoretical and practical aspects of artificial insemination from flask to cow. Refresher courses are one day and can be a general reminder of the process or trouble shoot particular problems. If you are interested please contact Claire on Claire@livestockvets.co.uk or phone the practice on 08453138434.

Ram MOT (Amy)

Last week Maarten and I attended a course on Ram Pre-breeding Soundness. Both of us currently examine many bulls prior to mating but only a handful of sheep farmers to date use us to check their rams pre-tupping, and so we thought the course would give us an insight into how we might be able to improve flock reproductive performance from the ram angle.

I hear you say 'So why not just turn out 3 rams with 100 ewes and see what happens? Between the 3 of them surely they will get good enough results?'

Well, what does each ram cost per lamb reared?

Ram lifespan

Purchase cost of ram	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year
£300	£4.29	£2.14	£1.43	£1.07	£0.86
£500	£7.14	£3.57	£2.38	£1.79	£1.43
£700	£10.00	£5.00	£3.33	£2.50	£2.00

Rams should work for around 4-5 years and serve around 60-80 ewes a year. If you are not achieving this, you can see the huge amount this will be costing you in the table above. For example, if your rams cost you £500 to buy and are only lasting 2 years this is costing you £3.57 per lamb reared but if, with good ram selection and care, you can get them to last 4 years the ram cost is only £1.79 per lamb reared.

So how can you get your rams to last longer?

Expect the ram to serve more ewes – to know he can do this he needs an MOT (and possibly a semen exam)

Buy rams that live for longer – choose rams that are fit for purpose (all too often rams bought are overweight and have joint problems etc)

Rear more lambs per ewe – you need to sort out all other management issues, health planning can help here

Each ram should manage to get 85% of a group of 60 ewes in lamb in the first 17 day cycle. When the rams are removed after 6 weeks your empty rate should be less than 2%. If you are not achieving this please come a talk to us and see how we can help you do this.

Ram MOT's should be part of **all** flock health plans. This is where we clinically examine rams and also measure and visually examine external genitalia. In addition to the MOT, in some circumstances semen assessment may also be appropriate. This may be where single sire groups are run, where ewes are synchronised and where flocks have high numbers of ewes. We can do this by electroejaculation. This is a 5 minute procedure and we can collect semen and examine it under the microscope on farm there and then. This is always done after the full MOT exam and a ram that produces a good sample should be very fertile (99.9% accuracy).



A study of 280 rams on 20 farms, in 2013, showed 84% of rams to be of adequate fertility for breeding. This means in a group of 20 rams, 3 are likely to be infertile or sub-fertile, highlighting further the importance of checking you rams, after all they are 'half your flock'! If you would like to know more about the pre-breeding soundness examination please contact Maarten or myself for more information.