

First cut silage has been in the clamp for a few weeks on some farms thanks to a sunny week in early May and the grass has started to shoot back up already. As we all know a major key to a low cost of production is feed efficiency and one of the main drivers for this is forage quality. Making the best quality grass silage will help keep costs low over the winter and keep fertility tip top. Choosing when to cut will affect the quality of the silage (quality is affected by growth so there will be a compromise between high quality and high yield – but high producing livestock need quality....). And choosing how to cut - aim high (2.5-3 inches) and dry (in the afternoon) as well as choosing how long to spread and wilt (24hrs) will help make the most of the quality in the grass. Then good clamp management (fill fast and even, with good compaction, the correct additive and an excellent seal) can make a difference of 3 litres of milk a day

if done well. Finally silage will ferment with the help of good bacteria so to give these guys a chance we must reduce the number of bad bacteria in the clamp. So leave grass at least 8 weeks after slurry spreading (and know how much NPK is needed) or 2 weeks after injection, cut high to avoid soil and slurry contamination and set rakes and tedders correctly to avoid ground contact. We all know how to make good quality grass silage but it is always good to review best practice each year as mistakes can creep in and these mistakes can be costly in terms of lost milk production and reduced fertility. *Sally*



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Bluetongue in Cattle & Sheep (Raj)

Bluetongue is a viral disease that effects; sheep, cattle, deer, goats and camelids (alpacas, llamas etc.). It is currently a notifiable disease in the UK, but it has been slowly spreading north from Africa since 1999. The government believes there is a high risk of Bluetongue serotype 8 (BTV-8) reaching the UK by the end of this summer. The predicted route is from France to the South-East of England.

The virus is spread via biting midges, which were up until the last couple of decades, confined to Africa. The virus is not able to be spread between livestock, i.e. midges must be present. The midge population is at its greatest around late summer and autumn, so these are the highest risk periods. An individual midge can travel 1-2km a day by itself, but with wind assistance they can reach distances of 200km and more.

Clinical signs of Bluetongue in Cattle and Sheep:

- High rectal temperature, up to 42°C
- Eye and nasal discharge
- Drooling, mouth swelling and ulcerations in the mouth
- Swelling of the head and neck
- Lameness, with inflammation at junction of the skin and coronet
- Swollen teats
- Decreased production
- Increased mortality rate

Foot and mouth disease is the most crucial disease to differentiate bluetongue from.

In cattle Malignant Catarrhal Fever (single animal usually) and Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis are also potential diseases with similar signs. The clostridial disease "bighead" in sheep can have a similar presentation, but fewer animals will be affected and they will likely be unvaccinated.

Treatment of Bluetongue is supportive and limited to antibiotics to control secondary bacterial infections. Control and prevention of the disease is also very challenging, because of the nature of transmission and the different serotypes of the virus. Presently the best methods of controlling and preventing bluetongue are;



Strict biosecurity on and off farm

Careful consideration/testing if trading animals from outside of the UK

Vaccinating animals to protect against the disease

Vaccination is thought to be quite effective, but it is important to remember that different serotypes will require different vaccines.

Bluetongue is a very important notifiable disease that has the potential to have a large impact on the agricultural economy. A government source predicted an outbreak in Scotland could potentially cost 100 million pounds. This summer will be an important time look out for midges and any clinical signs of the disease. If you have any questions regarding bluetongue, or you would like to report a notifiable disease please contact us at the clinic and/or AHPA.



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Veterinary Waste Disposal (*Emily*)

We have recently made some changes to our waste disposal procedures and are now using Agriclin Ltd (Harry Hawkins). Agriclin Ltd are also providing a service to our clients. New pharmaceutical waste and sharps bins can still be ordered through the practice in the usual way (or direct from Agriclin Ltd), but collection and payment will need to be arranged with Agriclin Ltd direct (07796 173 348; harry.hawkins@agriclin.co.uk) - details of which will be printed on the bins in future. Please note that **vets will no longer be collecting full waste bins from farms**, as we cannot take responsibility for consignment of waste that we have not generated. If you still have PHS 'doop' bins that we have supplied (the costs of which includes disposal), collection can be arranged by calling the number on the bin (01204 704633). If you have any further queries, please ring the practice for advice.

Ram Management (*Claire*)

Although the breeding period on many intensive sheep farming enterprises may only extend to five or six weeks, effective management of rams necessitates all year round attention. Routine vaccinations and anthelmintic treatments apply equally to rams as to the ewe flock.

Parasite management—The timing of anthelmintic treatments - should be detailed in the farmer's own individual flock health plan. While there are good general guidelines detailed in sustainable control of parasites in sheep (SCOPS), the PGE control programme must be tailored to the needs of individual farms and regularly reviewed. The introduction of a new class of anthelmintic (monepantel, 4-AD) affords the opportunity to further update the PGE control measures on your farm in consultation with your veterinary surgeon.

Foot care—Footcare is essential to maintain ram soundness. Routine foot paring is not now recommended for the treatment and control of footrot. Prompt detection and antibiotic injection are now proven to be more effective than. Regular footbathing can have an important role in prevention of footrot provided that the facilities are well maintained and that sheep have a dry stand after exiting the footbath. Walking/standing sheep in mud/slurry immediately after footbathing will have no benefit whatsoever.

Body condition—Rams must be in good body condition prior to the mating period (typically 3.5; scale 1 to 5) which may necessitate a prior period of concentrate feeding. Supplementary feeding is critical during the mating period when many rams often lose considerable body condition. Debility following weight loss during the mating period, especially during bad weather, may render rams more prone to respiratory disease and other infections. Daily feeding (about 0.7 kg-of concentrates) during the mating period is rarely undertaken but has many benefits.

As a consequence of high concentrate feeding ahead of sale, rams are prone to several conditions. These conditions can be prevented by careful nutritional management with veterinary advice as necessary supplied in the flock health plan.

Urolithiasis (Partial or complete urethral obstruction)

Correct ration formulation with appropriate mineralisation is the basis for prevention of urolithiasis in intensively-fed sheep. Rams should be fed proprietary concentrates to avoid mistakes in ration formulation. Fresh clean water must always be available. Do not use ewe minerals in rations intended for rams.

Copper poisoning

There is considerable breed variation with respect to copper absorption with Texel and Suffolk being two of the more susceptible breeds. The copper concentration of proprietary concentrates is strictly regulated in the UK to levels below 15 mg/kg as fed in complete feedingstuffs. Home mixing and mineral supplementation must be very carefully considered.

Acidosis (barley poisoning; grain overload)

Acidosis results from the sudden, unaccustomed ingestion of large quantities of carbohydrate-rich feeds, typically grain or concentrates but may also occasionally result from a sudden change or interruption in feeding following sale. Mature rams must not be fed more than 1 kg of concentrates at any one feed.

(Information from Nadis)

New Client Survey (*Maarten*)

In 2014 we asked clients to participate in a survey to find out if there were areas we needed to make improvements in as a practice. As 2 years have now passed we decided to do the exercise again as we wanted to hear from clients who have joined us in the last 2 years.

New clients have come to us either from a practice in Hampshire that decided to stop its farm work or from a multi branch nationwide practice locally. Despite initial reservations about the location of our office and the impact this could have on availability of medicines and travelling time of vets, new clients in Hampshire have been very satisfied and have not seen the forced change as disadvantageous. The remaining new clients have been overwhelmingly positive and have perceived the personalised service as an improvement. We are very pleased with these results and will endeavour to maintain this standard of service and look forward to continuing to work with you all.