

Well spring is trying to be sprung, but I think Winter is currently winning! In previous April newsletters we have been discussing the brilliant grass growth for Spring calvers and ideal conditions for lambing. Not so relevant for this newsletter! We take our hats off to you lambers who are coping really well finding ways to accommodate lambs hitting the deck in the snow and ingenious ways all farmers have been coping with the struggles of the cold weather. An industry to be proud of when everyone else is having a 'snow day'! We have a 'Mastering medicines' meeting coming up in the West on the 4th April, a topic that is becoming important for the Red Tractor scheme whether it be compulsory or only a recommendation for the time being. A further meeting will be held East of Petworth on 26th April. There is also a full artificial insemina-

tion course being held on w/c 23rd April in the East. Please contact Claire in the office if you are interested.

More excitingly, Elena has organised a fantastic trip for dairy clients (or anyone with an interest in dairy) to Italy! Flying into Verona and out of Venice from 11th to 13th June. The agenda includes trips to local dairies, wineries, a buffalo farm, cheese producers, lunch at Lake Garda and ice cream! If you are interested please let Claire know.

Stay warm and here's to next month's newsletter being all about the copious amount of grass we have growing!

Claire



How do we know if it is 'twin lamb' or 'milk fever'?



As lambing has been progressing I have been trying to ask as many of you as possible about how you decide what is wrong with your 'dopey' or 'down' ewes. This is because I, along with some well regarded sheep vets, will confess to struggling to tell the difference clinically between early cases of twin lamb or hypocalcaemia (milk fever) in ewes. Even more so when they are only described down the phone! As always in the sheep sector there is little known about the true prevalence of hypocalcaemia (milk fever) in UK flocks. What is troubling me is the number of 'twin lamb ewes' we treat that are not actually twin lamb cases, those ewes that don't respond to treat-

ment. Or rather did they get the wrong treatment? Again this is complicated by there being a number of treatments used by you all.

So here is my revision of **Hypocalcaemia**: usually seen 3-4 weeks pre lambing (when the lamb's skeleton develops), especially if on a high volume concentrate diet of poor quality/ have a change in pasture quality/stress event. SIGNS: isolated from the flock and, although able to extend the pelvic limbs, are unable to raise themselves from their knees and assume sternal recumbency again, often with their heads on the floor. In 2-6 hrs hours the ewe becomes dull, weak, and unable to stand even when supported, rumen stasis +/- bloat and may see rumen contents at nose/jaw...death will occur if not treated. TREAT: ideally if many ewes affected IV calcium by vet. Otherwise 50 -80ml Calciject No 6 WARMED, split into mini-mum 2 sites, under skin, +/- oral calcium and energy drench. *Unfortunately there can be a poor response to SC calcium so again if you have a number affected get in touch to discuss a different approach to treatment I have available and am keen to try.

Twin lamb: anytime in the last 6 weeks of pregnancy, when ewes are on a poor plane of nutrition/adverse weather restricting intakes/severe lameness etc any factor that can reduce feed intakes for a prolonged period at this time. SIGNS: isolate themselves, stuck in corners of fields/pens, 'staring' vacantly! appear blind (do not blink when you wave a hand in front of them gently), recumbency. TREAT: if mild treat as for Hypocalcaemia! Plus 50-60 mls of propylene glycol repeated in 12-24hrs CARE!!! Dosing with higher amounts or more often can cause scouring and can be harmful! Other drenches for 'twin lamb' can be used as directed. Tempt with molassed food/ chopped sugar beet. If severe/non responsive may need to perform a c-section/induce the ewe. *if you are keen to try drenching your sheep we may have a new product for you to try, so please give the practice a ring.

If you feel you are having poor responses to treating your 'twin lamb' ewe please give us a call as there are other things it could be, some of which I will detail next month!

Sarah

NOTICE BOARD

Cow joke alert!
Why was the cow afraid?
Because she was a cow-herd!



Colostrum is gold

Now I am not particularly one for social media and all that but I hope many of you have noticed the #colostrumisgold initiative this spring. As part of the wider campaign to reduce the amount of antibiotics used in farm animals there has been much noise about the role that the provision of good quality colostrum to young calves, lambs and piglets has to play in achieving this aim. In addition all red tractor-compliant health plans need to provide a section on how you are going to ensure good colostrum provision. I am not going to go into massive detail about all the elements of a good colostrum plan but I wanted to shed light on a couple of aspects of them.

After doing a caesarean the other night I thought I'd better practice what I preach and instead of scuttling home to my warm bed straight away we decided to do the job properly and make sure we got some colostrum off the heifer for her new calf. Now, I was pretty careful getting this colostrum but I couldn't help notice how many small particles of dust and shit ended up in the jug. Now, seeing as we had got the colostrum off and were feeding it straight away it wasn't too much of a problem but what if we had left it sitting around for an hour or two? The reason that colostrum is so important is that it contains something called IgG, which is an antibody that binds to bacteria to stop it causing any harm. Now, if we allow colostrum to sit around at warm temperatures and get those bacteria to grow we cause 2 problems; 1 - Those bacteria will 'mop up' the IgG, reducing the amount available to be used by the calf to prevent disease over the coming days and weeks and 2 - some of those bacteria may be capable of causing disease themselves, despite the fact they are delivered with the colostrum. Even if it has high bacterial numbers and may cause a danger the colostrum will still potentially test as good quality with a colostrometer or refractometer so beware....

If you can:

- Harvest the colostrum a lot more cleanly than I managed to(!) by cleaning the teats first
- If possible, feed it straight away before any bacteria can multiply
- If you're not feeding it straight away then either refrigerate, freeze or pasteurise it - don't leave it sitting around for ages
- Store it in a sealed container - we use dry cow/sealant tube buckets to great effect on several farms as they have lids and are generally not very useful for anything else!
- There is loads of good information at <http://www.farmantibiotics.org/ideas-hub/colostrumisgold/> so have a visit to get some further ideas



Ben

Biosecurity part 2. Reduce and Restrict

REDUCE RISK FROM NEIGHBOURING HERDS

To prevent the transmission of diseases between cows, cooperation with your neighbours is important. Find out what your neighbours health status is and try to arrange different times to use grazing at boundary fields, or work together on a local disease control strategy, which may be easier than trying to double fence all your boundaries! If you decide to double fence your farm boundaries, you should keep a distance of 3 metres and when a permanent double fence is not feasible, you can use a temporarily electric fence. You should avoid sharing equipment or vehicles with other farms as livestock lorries and tractors are at high risk for contamination. To find out what is the TB situation in your local area, I strongly recommend to check the local TB outbreaks data online at www.ibtb.co.uk

RESTRICT CONTACT BETWEEN WILDLIFE/OTHER DOMESTIC ANIMALS AND CATTLE

Sometimes we are so concentrated on badgers that we forget about the footpath crossing our fields and the people with their dogs walking on it. Consider that the badgers are not the only potential risk to transmit disease to cattle: birds can carry Salmonellosis, dogs can shed Neosporosis and sheep can carry fluke and Leptospirosis! Generally, we need to prevent faecal contamination of feed or forage from dogs and cats, minimising the animal access to feed stores and fields where the cattle are grazing, to avoid co-grazing with sheep and to prevent all animals accessing carcasses and cleansings. For bovine TB for example, it has been studied that there are few direct contacts between wildlife and cows, plus cattle usually avoid badger's faeces and setts as part of their natural behaviour - In this disease, indirect transmission is more important than the direct one and the infected secretions, whatever the source is, can cause disease in both cattle and wildlife. So we need to make our farm as much unattractive to wildlife as possible in order to keep healthy wildlife and a healthy herd. First of all, we need to find out if wildlife visits our farm: identify badger activity, map the setts and the latrines on farm and identify regularly these high risk areas for the farm, bearing in mind that they can change. Later we can decide to introduce barriers (fence with sheet metal on outside of the gate (1,5m high), electric wire at 10,15,20 and 30 cm, roller shutter doors...) to prevent badgers accessing cattle barn and limit the access of cattle to badger latrines and setts (fences); you can find more information in the bovine tb biosecurity information sheets on www.tbhub.co.uk

Elena

Let us remember that as the situation stands currently, controlling wildlife is not the man stay of control in this area. Whilst it doesn't harm to understand the wildlife which live on your farm; breakdowns are attributed to cattle movements. Know your risk when trading cattle and follow strict biosecurity measures. **Megan**