



It is that time of year again; with many preparing to start - and a lot of you already in the swing of things - lambing season is upon us!

A lot is talked about the infectious diseases that most commonly cause abortion, but hopefully this newsletter will provide a few pointers when trying to achieve a diagnosis in real time and some options to help prevent spread within your flock.



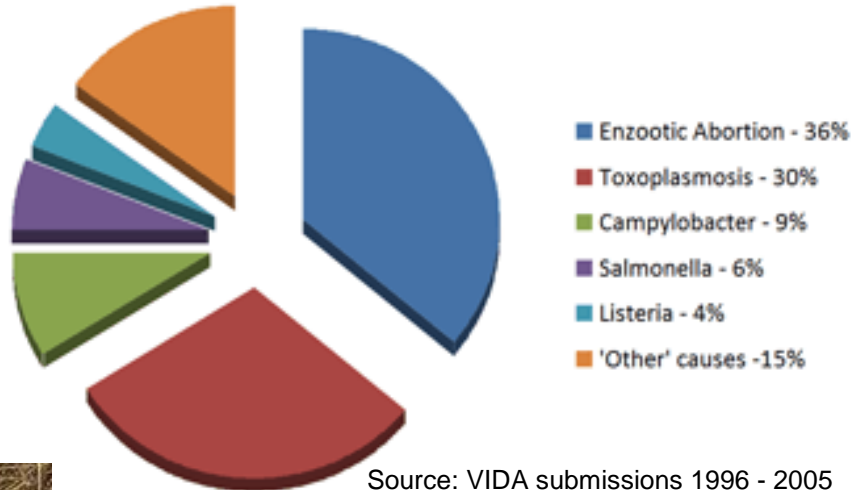
Lambing can be a very challenging and hectic period. When abortions occur, many problems can arise as time constraints make it difficult to find out what samples may be required for an abortion enquiry before material either gets disposed of or is lost/eaten by the ever faithful farm dog!

Having a Plan

For a systematic approach that will hopefully save time and help prevent further possible spread, try these steps:

1. Note down aborted ewe's identification number and isolate from remainder of flock. If possible take a blood sample in a plain red top blood tube; label and place in fridge. (If ewe has died then still isolate and store carcass and record identification number)

Most Common Causes of Abortion in Sheep



Source: VIDA submissions 1996 - 2005

2. Place all foetal and placental material in a container/bag and label with ewe identification number.
3. Remove and burn/dispose of bedding and disinfect lambing pen ewe aborted in.
4. Call the vet and for advice and arrange collection of samples for abortion enquiry.

The ballpark figure often quoted for the cost of an abortion is £85 per ewe, so prompt investigation and action does pay when faced with abortions in your flock. This is especially so if you see over 2-3% of your flock aborting as this may indicate a more sinister underlying problem that could lead to events such as an abortion storm the following year (>30% of the flock aborting).

Diagnosis can be very difficult for labs if they only have one specific sample type i.e. ewe blood sample but no foetal or placental material. It is best to try and provide as much material as possible in order to stand the best chance of a successful abortion enquiry.



Now Available

MSD are providing free lab testing for toxoplasmosis and enzootic abortion through their FlockCheck scheme, so if you have any losses take advantage of this to check exactly what you are dealing with on farm. Contact the practice for more information.

Summary

- Have a plan that everyone on farm can refer to in the event of an abortion.
- Try and store/keep as much material as possible (ewe blood sample, foetus and placenta) and keep a record of who/what/where it came from.
- Call the vet for advice and help!

Best of luck for this year's lambing period!!

Cheers,

Ben

