



# The GEORGE Farm Vets

## SHEEP - NEWSLETTER

September 2016

### Vaccination against infectious disease

We all know that with any disease prevention is better than cure. As farmers and vets we need to be proactive and take every measure possible to prevent disease before it happens. This will save money, time and vastly improve animal welfare.

Disease can be prevented through good stockmanship, biosecurity, regularly carrying out routine procedures (worming, dagging, tailing, etc.) and through vaccination for specific diseases.



#### Bluetongue:

One vaccine in particular is a hot topic at the moment, Bluetongue. This disease was last seen in mainland Europe 5 years ago and caused disease in many flocks.

Bluetongue is a viral disease spread by biting midges; these midges become infected by biting an infected animal, this infected midge will then pass on the virus to any other sheep and cattle it feeds on. For a virus this is a very effective means of transmission, as the midges can feed on multiple animals and travel huge distances with the aid of wind.

This is how Bluetongue enters the country even with strict biosecurity measures. DEFRA estimate that there is an 80% risk of incursion into the country with a higher risk in Southern coastal regions.

If you suspect any of your flock may be showing signs of bluetongue contact us immediately and we can come out to confirm if this is the case.

The good news with bluetongue is there is a now a very effective vaccine available and we have it in stock. The vaccine can be used on all sheep over 2.5 months old and consists of 2 injections under the skin at 3 weeks intervals. Immunity develops 3 weeks after the 2nd dose and lasts for a year.

As with many things, whether to vaccinate or not will depend on individual farm situations. To have full peace of mind we would recommend vaccinating all sheep.

### SHEEP:

- Lameness, stiffness, unwilling to move
- Swelling of the mouth, head and neck
- Nasal discharges
- Fever (up to 42°C)
- Drooling as a result of ulcerations in the mouth
- Haemorrhages into or under the skin
- Inflammation at the junction of the skin and the horn of the foot (the coronary band)
- Difficulty breathing
- Infection during the breeding season can result in a large percentage of early embryonic losses with sheep returning to oestrus at irregular intervals
- Mortality



## Abortive agents

Two other vaccines to be thinking about pre tugging are “Enzovax” and “Toxovax”. These protect against Enzootic abortion and Toxoplasmosis respectively. Together these account for 80% of all abortions diagnosed in UK sheep, with an estimated cost of £85 per aborted ewe.

Abortion rates over 2% would warrant further investigation and both these causes of abortion can be diagnosed by blood sampling.



Enzootic abortion is spread via exposure to infected uterine discharge and aborted material. Infection may not cause abortion in the same lambing period but can cause abortion next lambing season. Other than abortion ewes will show no signs of infections. Enzootic can also cause abortion in humans so pregnant women should avoid all contact with lambing sheep.

Toxoplasmosis is spread via cat faeces contaminating feed sources. It may cause low scanning rates due to early embryonic loss or abortion in later pregnancy. Due to the method of spread it is very hard to control.

General principles of control should be applied to all causes of abortion: Careful sourcing of stock, isolation of aborted sheep, removal and correct disposal of aborted material and secure storage of feed sources. However with Enzootic abortion and Toxoplasmosis the vaccines are very effective means of control when applied with the above measures.

Both vaccines are given in similar ways. Both consist of 1 injection given in the muscle at least 4 weeks prior to tugging. Immunity then lasts for 2 lambing seasons.

## Clostridial disease:

Clostridial bacteria cause many diseases including pulpy kidney, blackleg, botulism and tetanus to name a few. The most common cause of death of growing lambs is Clostridial disease.

There are many vaccines that prevent most types of Clostridial disease but they all work in similar ways. The ewes are vaccinated yearly at least 4 weeks prior to lambing; this protects the ewes and also provides protection to the lambs for the first few weeks of life through the colostrum. The lambs are then revaccinated at around 3 weeks to provide further protection.

## Footvax

Footrot is one of the primary causes of lameness in UK sheep and is caused by the bacteria *Fusobacterium necrophorum* and causes severe lameness. When sheep are inspected there is a foul smell with separation of the horn and exposed reddened corium. Treatment involves local and injectable antibiotic for individuals and footbathing for affected groups. Pasture management is also key to keep sheep off poached pasture.



For flocks with a history of footrot there is a vaccine available “Footvax”. The vaccine can be used as a preventative measure or to reduce signs in the face of an outbreak. The vaccine consists of a two 1ml injections given under the skin 6 weeks apart. Revaccination is then done every 6 months to yearly depending on prevalence. Vaccination cannot be done around lambing or shearing. It should also be noted that sheep that have had injectable Cydectin 1% wormer cannot have footvax and vice versa.

If you have any questions on any of these vaccines or would like to know about cost please give us a ring at the practice.

Cheers,

Chris

