



Key performance indicators and Schmallenberg update

- March 2024

Following Zoe's excellent September 2023 newsletter, Using data to drive management decisions and improve productivity, I am keen to emphasize the metrics you can record over the coming lambing period and beyond. For those that use the back of old envelopes, birthday cards, used feed sacks and George Farm Vet bills (yes, I have seen all of these used before!) as your data recording notebooks, please do consider using this newsletter as an alternative.

As Zoe discussed, there are many different parameters you can choose to record. Keeping it simple can help improve the chances of reliable and accurate data being collected.

See a suggested template below:

KPI	Number	Percentage
Ewes empty at lambing		
Assisted births		
Stillbirths		
Lamb losses: 24 hours to turnout		
Lamb losses: Turnout to weaning		
Lamb losses: Post-weaning		
Birthweights (single/twin/triplet)		
Colostrum quality		

Planning Ahead

The data you record is only as useful as you make it. Taking the time to analyse and learn from your flocks performance will help inform future management, breeding and culling decisions. AHDB have some useful online resources, including this KPI review table:

Key Performance Indicators		Performing well	Room to improve	Review performance
Lambs reared	Outdoor lambing ewes and shearlings only	170-155%	155-135%	135-125%
	Outdoor lambing ewes, shearlings and ewe lambs	160-145%	145-125%	125-115%
	Indoor lambing ewes and shearlings only	175-160%	160-140%	140-130%
	Indoor lambing ewes, shearlings and ewe lambs	165-150%	150-130%	130-120%
Ewe mortality		0 - 2.5%	2.5 - 5%	5 - 7.5%
Ewes sold		1-16%	16-22%	22-31%
Flock replacement rate		25-15%	15-10% 25-30%	10-0% 30-45%
Lamb losses from scanning to reared		10-12%	12-20%	20-30%
Daily liveweight gain - Reared lambs		500-350g/day	350-150g/day	150-100g/day
Full economic cost of production	Per lamb reared	£50-60/hd	£60-80/hd	£80-100/hd
	Per liveweight kilo of lamb reared	£1.25-1.50/kg	£1.50-2.00/kg	£2.00-2.50/kg
	Per deadweight kilo of lamb reared	£3.15-3.70/kg	£3.70-5.00/kg	£5.00-5.90/kg

KPI definitions can be found at <https://ahdb.org.uk/key-performance-indicators-kpis-for-lamb-sector/>

Time constraints often form a barrier for thorough data analysis and interpretation. We often see flocks gathering information through a lambing season that could be used to help make better decisions for the following year, but a lack of time means management decisions are not as informed as they could be. I would urge you to build in to your year planner dedicated time slots to routinely review flock performance with your vet. Suggested periods for review would include **pre-tupping**, **pre-lambing**, **post-lambing** and **post-weaning**. These reviews with your vets may appear as a substantial short-term cost, but using us to help inform those decisions for the future of your flock will improve flock profitability through reductions in emergency interventions and 'hidden' losses.

T: 01666 823035 Option "1" for visits or enquiries, "2" for medicines or shop, "3" for TB testing

Schmallenberg Virus

Vets and post-mortem centres are experiencing a significant wave of Schmallenberg cases this year. High numbers of deformed lambs have occurred already and testing has confirmed 22 cases of the virus in **Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, Oxfordshire, Herefordshire, Shropshire** and **Cheshire**. Some flocks report having as many as 25% of their lambs with typical Schmallenberg deformities.

Clinical signs:

- High barren rates

Lamb deformities:

- Arthrogryposis (joint deformity)
- Vertebral deformities including kyphosis (exaggerated rounding of the back)
- Micromyelia (reduced size of spinal cord)
- Brachygnathism (underbite/parrot mouth)
- Cerebella hypoplasia (characterised by an abnormal walking pattern)
- Hydranencephaly (the skull appears larger than usual and is filled with fluid)*

***Lambs found to have hydranencephaly should be reported to us for consideration for Bluetongue testing.**



Schmallenberg virus positive lamb with arthrogryposis (joint deformity) of all four limbs and spinal kyphosis (exaggerated rounding of the back) [APHA Newsletter February 2024]

What to do if you suspect Schmallenberg:

Retain any deformed lambs (fridge/freezer) and contact us. This year it has been reported that testing **brain stem samples** has been the most successful method of detecting the virus.



All the best,
Ben Sellick



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