



The
GEORGE
Farm Vets

Pre-Flight Checks - September 2022

Hello all,
The challenging weather conditions experienced across the UK mean that, with tupping just around the corner, it is more important than ever to check the tups and ewes thoroughly before being put to work.

The Ram

Sub-fertile and/or infertile rams will significantly impact your lambing percentage and flock productivity. Ram checks are best carried out at least 8 – 10 weeks pre-tupping:

'The 5 T's for Topping'

Toes: assess mobility and leg/foot health. Refractory cases of footrot (cull if treated more than twice) and any cases of CODD should be isolated from the other tups (cull if treated more than once.)

Teeth: check dentition (check for loss of teeth, gaps, malocclusion and infection)

Testicles: normal testicles should be firm with no lumps/bumps. For a comprehensive check, we can provide a ram fertility examination that includes semen analysis.

Tone: tups should be between body condition score 3.5-4 before being introduced to the ewes.

Treat: carry out any treatments indicated from these checks. Ensure all vaccinations are up to date and carry out a worm egg count and assess fleece etc. for any signs of parasites.

As mentioned, the hot weather we have experienced has made maintaining condition of stock difficult. Heat stress can significantly affect sperm production and viability.

If body condition score is low (<3.0) feed a protein supplement for 6-8 weeks pre-tupping (maximum 0.5kg/ram per day).

MEDICINE HANDLING COURSE
@ THE PRACTICE ON
FRIDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER
11AM TO 1PM



Please reserve your place with the office



The Ewe

Give yourself enough time (ideally 8 – 10 weeks pre-tupping) to select the right ewes for breeding. This allows you to assess their health status in time to implement any management changes or treatments needed.

Similar to The 5 T's for Topping, a checklist can be used when looking at your ewes:

Body Condition Score (Post-Weaning)

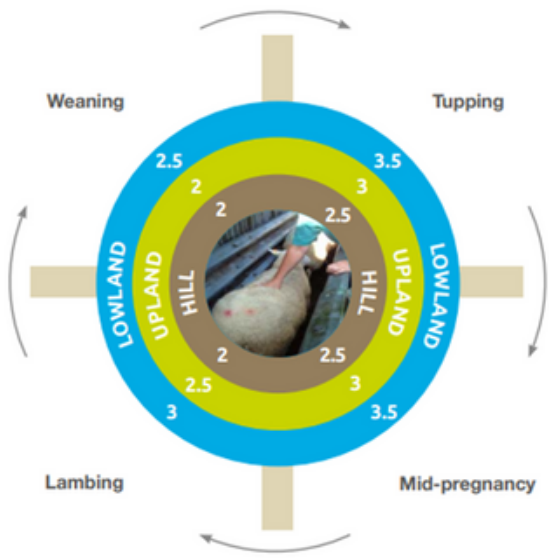
Under-conditioned = BCS <2.5 (and fail to gain half a condition score in 4 weeks following post-weaning score)

Over-conditioned = BCS 4.0 – 5.0 (check records to see if ewe reared lambs last year)

It takes 6 – 8 weeks on high quality grazing to gain one body condition score. Separate ewes according to BCS and place on appropriate pasture.

Flushing should not be seen as a short-term fix and it will have little impact on ewes which are below BCS 2.0 and above BCS 4.0 (for information on flushing see **Flushing** section below)

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



Udder Health

Culling stock that has had repeated cases of mastitis and/or has hard/lumpy udders will ensure that lambs are not malnourished or exposed to possible disease. Udder and teat size and conformation may also help you decide whether a ewe is fit to go to the tup.

Reproductive Health

Ewes should not be kept for breeding if they have had the following:

Ringwomb, cervical/uterine prolapse, difficult lambing and/or abortion.

Lambing Score

Records of difficult lambings and poor mothering ability should also be used when selecting replacements.

Toes, Teeth and Treat

Follow same advice as the rams (see **The 5 T's for Topping!**)

Ewe Fertility

Managing your flock for an earlier lambing time and shorter lambing period will reduce labour costs and maximise returns from spring grass.

Ovulation Rate

The ewe's reproductive cycle lasts about 17 days and the fertile period lasts 2 – 3 days. The ovulation rate can be influenced by age, breed, stage of breeding season and nutrition/BCS.

Younger ewes tend to have lower ovulation rates and ovulation rate will be reduced as the breeding season continues.

Flushing

Increasing nutrition with forage/concentrates at least 2 – 3 weeks pre-topping increases ovulation rate in ewes and sperm production in rams.

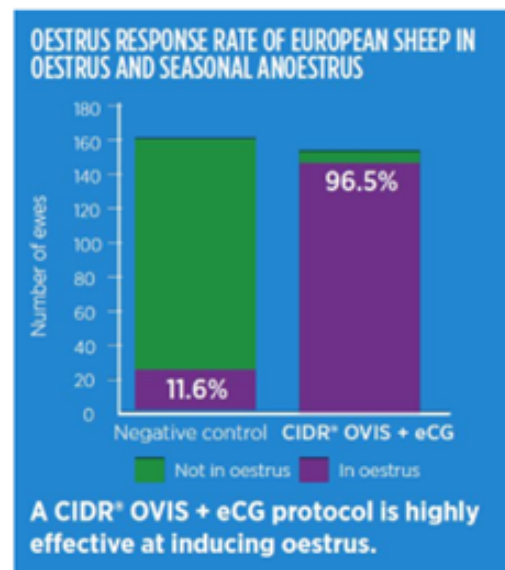
Do not flush on pastures containing red clover as it contains oestrogens that will affect ovulation rates (keep ewes away from red clover pastures for 45 days either side of topping)

Ram Effect

Proximity to rams will stimulate ewes to ovulate 3 – 4 weeks earlier than usual. Vasectomised or teaser rams can be run with ewes from 17 days before topping is planned to start. After 15 – 16 days, teasers can be removed and replaced by entire rams.

Synchronisation

Using CIDR OVIS and eCG can dramatically increase the number of ewes that come into oestrus/heat in a short period of time.



If you have any worries or wish to discuss anything further please do not hesitate to call and speak to one of the team.

Wishing you all the best,

Ben Sellick

