



Lambing and Kidding

With lambs and kids arriving left, right, and centre it is a great time to talk about lambing and kidding.

Once the lambs/kids are born, it's important to pen them together with the ewe/doe to ensure optimal bonding.

These pens want to be cleaned and disinfected in between uses.



Navel disinfection

Navel disinfection early on is important to avoid contamination of the navel and subsequent infections such as navel infection, watery mouth and joint ill. Ideally, navels are dipped with a 10% iodine solution as soon as possible after birth, and this is repeated 2-4hrs later. Ensure the entire navel is dipped/sprayed thoroughly, especially the end which is generally the entry way for bacteria.



Colostrum is 'liquid gold'

Colostrum is the first milk a ewe/doe produces, and is full of antibodies which are important to protect newborn lambs/kids from disease. Once the lambs/kids are born, it is important to check the dam's udder and make sure she has two functional teats with a good milk supply. Ideally, you want to observe the lamb sucking within the first hour; if needed you can support them by guiding them towards the teat. If they won't drink, it's important to either bottle feed them or tube them as adequate colostrum uptake is extremely important for the rest of the kids/does life going forward. Colostrum provides antibodies required to fight all sorts of infections, and a lack of it can result in weak or sick lambs/kids and can lead to death.

Newborn lambs/kids require a minimum of 50ml of colostrum per kg bodyweight in the first 4-6 hours. For most newborn lambs this equals 200-250ml of colostrum depending on breed and size. They then need subsequent feeds of colostrum to ensure they receive a total of 200ml/kg bodyweight in the first 24hrs. The abdomen of the lamb/kid can be palpated to check if it has been drinking and feels full.

The best colostrum is the one from the ewe/doe, but colostrum replacements are available if needed. Please ask veterinary advice if a replacement is needed as not all are adequate.

Tail docking and castration

Remember this needs to happen within the first 7 days of the lambs/kids being born. A NSAID at the same time such as Metacam is recommended for pain relief.

Poisonous plants – by Meg Taylor

Poisoning events in animals can be caused by several different plants and can lead to severe illness and death. When inspecting your pastures, particularly on newly acquired grazing or haven't been grazed for a period of time, it is important to identify plants that pose a risk to your animals. Inadvertent inclusion in preserved forage is also a potential source of poisonings, especially where ragwort has been cut along with grass. Fly tipping and inappropriate disposal of garden waste can also lead to cases of poisoning.

St John's Wort

Commonly found in hedgerows and rougher grazing areas.

Easy to identify clusters of yellow flowers.

Main clinical sign is photosensitisation (particularly noticeable in white goats).



Water dropwort/ Water Hemlock

Usually found in wet, marshy areas.

Grows to 4-6 feet with hollow stems.



Acorn Poisoning

Only an issue in summer and autumn.

Be careful of grazing near oak trees during these seasons



Most Common UK Poisonous Plants:

Rhododendron

Poisoning events are difficult to treat successfully and commonly results in death.



Bracken

Common in marginal grazing areas.

Mainly common land and hillsides.

Associated with urinary and bladder problems.

Look for red/discoloured urine.



Yew

Tall plant with multiple heads of small yellow flowers.

Important to burn pulled plants and roots to prevent regrowth.



Clinical signs of poisonings include, but are not limited to:

- Diarrhoea
- Constipation and straining
- Urine discolouration – red or brown
- Breathing difficulties
- Muscle tremors, excitability, loss of coordination, excessive salivation
- Photosensitisation:
 - Abnormal reaction to sunlight due to chemicals ingested in plants. These cause inflammation and open sores that particularly affect unpigmented (white fur or bare) areas
- Sudden death

It is essential that you remove and safely dispose of poisonous plants to prevent any chance of ingestion and resulting illness. Always remember to protect yourself when dealing with poisonous plants by wearing gloves and taking care using gardening tools. If your animal has become unwell or you suspect poisoning, always call your vet for advice and to begin treatment.

Pig Vaccination – by Ellie Body MRCVS

What should be vaccinated for?

Erysipelas is a bacterial disease which is often found in the environment (particularly soil and faeces) and harboured by other animals. Pigs are especially sensitive. It can present as sudden death, “diamond” skin lesions with septicaemia or cause more chronic disease including arthritis, skin sloughing or heart disease. Plus it can be a cause of infertility and abortion. This in particular is something all pigs should be vaccinated for.



If you are considering breeding your pigs then Parvovirus, also known as “SMEDI syndrome” (stillbirths, mummification embryonic death and infertility), should be vaccinated for. Depending on the stage of pregnancy a sow is infected, the signs can vary from early loss of pregnancy to progressive mummification of the litter. If the whole litter is mummified then the sow may not show signs of farrowing.

Clostridia is a group of bacteria which can produce spores, which can survive in the soil for years, and toxins. They can cause piglet scour (clostridial perfringens), sudden death (clostridial novyi), tetanus (clostridial tetani) and botulism (clostridial botulinum). We may recommend vaccinating for this if you have seen problems with this previously.

There are various other vaccines available which we may consider if you have had particular problems in the past. It's always worth speaking to your vet to discuss a vaccine plan specific to your pig herd.

How and when should we vaccinate?

All vaccinations involve an intramuscular injection in the neck.

Eryseng

This provides cover for Erysipelas only, and can be used in to pigs from 6 months old. It involves 2x doses 3-4 weeks apart. If you're planning on breeding, we should aim for the second dose to be 3-4 weeks before mating. Then they'll need a booster every 6 months or 2-3 weeks before each time you decide to mate the sow.

Eryseng Parvo

This provides cover for Parvovirus and Erysipelas. It can be given from 6 months old and has the same timings for vaccination as Eryseng.

Suiseng Coli C

This provides cover for Clostridia (C. perfringens and C.novyi) and E.coli. The first dose should be given approximately 6 weeks before farrowing and a second dose given 3 weeks before the expected date of farrowing. Then for any future farrowings a booster dose is needed 3 weeks before farrowing.



Services offered

Smallholder visit

We will happily book you in for a smallholder visit. This involves a vet visiting your holding to assess and discuss key management areas. This discussion would include housing, nutrition, body condition scoring, vaccination planning, parasite control and other important things!

Afterwards, a Health Plan will be made specifically for your farm in the form of a calendar including month-specific reminders.

Costs: £185 plus VAT

Included:

- Visit Fee
- One hour of vet time
- Tailor made Health Plan Calendar
- One Worm Egg Count

Even if you have had a Health Plan made in the past, it is still very useful to review this and chat about any changes or questions you might have. If you've been lucky enough not to have had us out in the past year, this visit will guarantee we've seen your animals and you are able to get drugs without having an Animal Under Our Care Visit first.

Sheep shearing

This is a service carried out by Toby, one of our Vet Techs. He can be booked in both May and June to shear your sheep.

Costs: Visit Fee + £10 per animal (minimum of £30)

(If you have over 20 sheep to be shorn, the price goes down to £8 per animal)

Pregnancy scanning (goats and sheep)

We offer a scanning service for small ruminants. This will be carried out by Joe Pescod and Keir Hamilton, who will come out to your farm with their scanner and will be able to tell whether your ewe/doe is pregnant.

Costs: Visit Fee + Vet time spent on farm

Worming + vaccination assistance

Our lovely vet techs are able to assist with worming and vaccination of your animals. If you would like to have some help doing these husbandry tasks, please get in touch.

**If you are interested in any of the above services,
please contact our friendly office team to get booked in!**

Phone: 01666 823035 Email: smallholders@georgevetgroup.co.uk