THRUMS VETERINARY GROUP

Thrums News

September 2019

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Practice News

The last few weeks have been difficult for those of us with crops to harvest, but stock at grass seem to be faring well. Fly associated problems seem to be on the decline now with the first few frosts in the glens, but it has been a savage season for flies and all the problems they bring. This year we have seen our fair share of summer mastitis, and have dealt with some unusual cases including bulls and suckling calves being affected. The wet weather has however provided a great chance for many to sit down and create or review a health plan, which always focuses the mind and usually throws up a few opportunities for improving production or saving a pound or two.

On the sheep front the minds are now focussed on the impending breeding season with ewe condition checks, appropriate trace element supplementation, abortion vaccination and tup fertility testing the corner stones of a successful season to come.

Pneumonia Vaccination

Housing may still feel some time away, indeed we all hope for a good, open back end, but it is best to start preparations well in advance and recent changes to some vaccine indications and availability are reminders that planning well in advance is always the best policy.

The IBR vaccine Tracherine will shortly be removed from the market permanently. We have a small supply of Tracherine available still that is available on a first-come, first-served basis. There are a number of alternative IBR vaccinations available and if moving away from Tracherine to an alternative it is always best to speak to us first to plan what is best for your unique farm situation.

One of the IBR vaccines now has an indication to mix in the same syringe as a BVD vaccine, making for much easier handling and an (almost!) fool proof vaccination protocol. There are also now vaccines available for some of the less common causes of pneumonia such as Histophilus and Mycoplasma, which have had good results on units where these have been the diagnosed culprits.

Pneumonia vaccination is often very farm specific so please give us a call to discuss what protocol is likely to work best for you.

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Semen Sampling Tups: A cost/benefit analysis

1 in 6 tups are sub-fertile. That's national statistic that is very much consistent with our own experiences, last year 17% of tups tested failed to pass the minimum standards required for adequate fertility.

Often the effects of working sub-fertile tups goes unnoticed due to running multi-sire mobs or a low tup:ewe ratio. However, we believe that by identifying and removing these tups by semen sampling, significant costs can be saved, as demonstrated in the example below.

In this example, imagine a flock of 500 ewes, running 15 tups, over the last few years they average a scanning of 170% with a 5% barren rate.

Cost of semen sampling all tups: £360

2 sub-fertile tups are identified and removed, as such there is a modest 1.5% reduction in their barren rate. Accepting a 15% lamb mortality rate, this means there are 11 more lambs on the ground at the point of sale, which equates to an extra £880 in the bank.

As such there is a **net profit of £520** by simply semen sampling all tups.

In addition, your tup replacement costs are likely to significantly reduce. If not semen sampling, you may run with "ram power" of 1:30, just to be safe. Semen sampling tups will give you the confidence to run a much higher ratio, maybe 1:60 or even higher under certain circumstances.

If the above flock of 500 ewes runs 15 tups to achieve a 1:30 ratio, they will likely have to replace 3-4 tups/year at a cost of £1200-£2000. If, by semen sampling, they can increase their ratio to 1:60 they may only have to replace 2 tups/year at a cost of £800-£1000, **potentially saving up to £1200/year on replacement costs.**

In the above example, this flock **could save up to £1500** by simply performing a full fertility analysis on all their tups.

In addition, a more compact lambing will be achieved resulting in easier disease management and more lambs finishing early.