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Practice News

Currently we are still catching up with the backlog of TB and BVD testing with an ongoing low level of pneumonia cases still grumbling on. Primarily we are seeing late autumn/winter born calves affected now.

Comprehensive investigations into a number of outbreaks in late 2019 have yielded interesting results. We did not identify viral pneumonia in any correctly vaccinated cattle but did find evidence of Bacterial pneumonia on several units with *Mycoplasma* confirmed on another 3 farms. This is harder to prevent with currently available vaccines but is usually easier to treat.

Maximising Live Calf Crop Meeting

SRUC are hosting a meeting at Dewars Centre, Glover Street, Perth, PH2 0TH on the subject of maximising your live calf crop. The results of three recent trials will be presented. The meetings have 5 eminent speakers drawn from SRUC, the universities, Moredun and industry and will address the common causes of calf losses and how to prevent them.

The meetings are free, commence at 10.30 and include lunch. What's not to like! To reserve your place please contact Val.Angus@sac.co.uk or call 01835 823322

Pre Calving Boluses

There are a huge range of products on the market but they are not all equal. Last year we saw the introduction on a large scale of the new Vetalis range of boluses. These contain meaningful amounts of Selenium, Copper, Cobalt, Iodine and Zinc, last for 8 months in a single bolus and are sensibly priced. We also stock the tracesure, Cosecure and Coselcure boluses.

Please contact the surgery to discuss the best option for your cattle.

8 Top Tips For A Successful Lambing!

Get Ewes In The Right Body Condition

- As a minimum, ewes should be body condition scored in mid-pregnancy (scanning time) and close to lambing. Ewes not hitting targets should be managed separately.
- Aim for a BCS of 2.5-3 out of 5 from mid-pregnancy onwards.
- Ewes in the correct BCS at lambing experience fewer problems either side of labour, their lamb's survival will be greater and their lambs will wean heavier.
- The AHDB "Better Returns" manual has some excellent advice on condition scoring of ewes, and we'd be delighted to help with practical advice.

Provide The Correct Nutrition

- Think of all the diseases you're likely to encounter during lambing - watery mouth, prolapse, twin lamb disease etc. Almost all disease encountered at lambing time has a nutritional component to it, get nutrition right and most of these diseases cease to be a problem.
- Get your forage analysed.
- Seek independent advice to formulate a nutrition plan. We would be delighted to create a ration plan for you, and have been doing so successfully on a number of units in the recent past.
- Check the ration is doing what it's supposed to be doing - a "metabolic profile" involves blood sampling a small number of ewes approximately three weeks prior to lambing to look at energy and protein levels. We carry this out on many sheep farms each year and often small problems can be identified and the diet adjusted to offset issues. Occasionally we identify big issues!
- Make sure the sheep have enough space to eat the ration without competition - a large ewe will require 50cm of trough space for concentrate feeding, 25cm cm for restricted forage feeding or 15cm for ad lib forage feeding. Each ewe should have approximately 1.2m² lying space in a straw pen. Ensure access to fresh water at all times.

Pre-lambing Treatments

- All ewes should be on a clostridial vaccination schedule and receive a booster pre-lambing. The exact timing of this will depend on the product you use and your vet will be best placed to advise you which is the right vaccination for your system.
- Most ewes don't need worming at lambing time, provided they are in good body condition and on a suitable plane of nutrition. However, ewe lambs, gimmers, thinner sheep or those carrying triplets may require a wormer as their immunity dips around lambing time. Adding a high-quality source of protein to the diet will also help ewes fight off any worm burden.
- Any trace element deficiencies should be corrected well in advance of lambing time. A bolus provides the most reliable source of trace element supplementation, but not all boluses are the same. Don't be tempted by the cheaper options and take independent advice on which bolus is best. If in any doubt about the trace element status of your farm, arranging some blood sampling will highlight any deficiencies.

Stock Up On Supplies

- You'll want to ensure you have a supply of medicines close at hand in case you need them. Make sure they have not passed their expiry date and are stored correctly.

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- As a minimum, it would be advisable to carry a broad spectrum antibiotic injection, anti-inflammatory/painkiller injection, calcium/glucose injection, twin lamb drench.
- Remember to check stocks of other essentials such as lubricant, gloves, iodine solution, ropes, prolapse retainers, needles and syringes.

Colostrum Is Gold!

- A lamb that has had a belly full of colostrum is infinitely more likely to survive and grow than one that hasn't. Lambs require 50ml/kg bodyweight colostrum per feed, amounting to 200ml/kg in the first 24 hours.
- Mothers own is best, but have a back-up. Frozen surplus colostrum from other ewes in the flock is ideal. Avoid buying in from other flocks because of the risk of diseases like Johnes or Maedi Visna.
- Powdered colostrum should be a last resort but it is probably worth having some in storage. There is a huge variation in quality of powdered colostrum, again, your sheep vet should be able to advise on the best quality brands.

Have A Protocol For Abortions

- A low level of abortion in lambing ewes is normal, however two or more abortions on any given day or more than 2% abortion in total should prompt investigation, if these thresholds are breached, phone your vet for advice.
- It is important to remember many of infectious causes of abortion can also cause disease in humans so appropriate hygiene and using personal protective equipment when handling an abortion is very important. Pregnant women under no circumstance should come into contact with lambing ewes.
- Ewes that abort should be isolated from the rest of the flock, marked and should not have female lambs fostered on to them.

Ensure You Have Enough Help

- There is good evidence to show that lamb survival is correlated with the degree of labour available on farm at lambing time. The quantity and quality of labour available can have a big impact on the success of the lambing period.
- Make sure you plan well ahead to secure enough help.
- Vet students are a fantastic source of enthusiastic help, but their diary often fills up as much as six months in advance. The NSA Lambing List is a great resource to pair students with farmers.

Look After Number One

- After all that effort getting ready to look after the sheep, don't forget yourself!
- Ensure there is a decent supply of whatever keeps you going when times are tough - jelly baby, flapjacks and chocolate bars are never in short supply in the lambing shed at home.
- Make sure there's enough easily cooked meals in the freezer and your warm clothing is up to the job!
- Lastly, lambing can be a really stressful time, especially if there are pre-existing worries with the business, family or health. If you ever feel the need to talk there are lots of organisations out there who can help such as The Samaritans or RSABI, or indeed I'm sure your vet would be delighted to be invited in for a cup of tea after their call and lend a sympathetic ear.

Have a fantastic lambing 2020 everybody!