



FARM FIRST NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2024



SCHMALLEMBERG

Lambing is already upon us, with many farmers busy in the lambing sheds. For some farmers there has been a very difficult start with lambs showing the typical deformities of Schmallenberg, including fused joints, twisted necks and twisted spines. Schmallenberg virus (SBV) gets its name from the town in Germany where the virus was first identified in 2011, before it spread across Europe.

Schmallenberg is transmitted by biting midges. The effects of the disease are only seen as lambing and calving begins. It is thought that large outbreaks tend to occur every 3-5 years. The risk will be higher in warm years with high midge numbers, and in years where the national herd seroprevalence (previous exposure) is low. In the future it looks likely that there will be regular epidemics every few years, due to climate change and the fact that older immune livestock are replaced with young stock that have no natural immunity.

In adult cows there can be clinical signs of fever, diarrhoea and reduced milk production and last autumn there were links to poor fertility. Adult sheep and goats generally do not show signs of clinical disease, although early embryonic death has been suspected. In pregnant animals the virus can cross the placenta to affect the growing foetus. The most susceptible stages of pregnancy for foetal deformities are days 62-180 in cattle and days 25-50 in sheep. If the ewe is bitten later in pregnancy the lamb is often born normal, as the foetus can make an immune response and clear the virus themselves. Individual herd or flock losses of neonates due to Schmallenberg vary, but on average SBV affected flocks report an extra 3% lamb mortality compared to unaffected flocks. However, some flocks experience 50% losses due to SBV. Malformations observed include bent limbs, fixed joints, brain deformities and damage to the spinal cord. Some animals are born with a normal appearance, but have nervous signs such as blindness, ataxia, recumbency, an inability to suck, and seizures. In sheep and goats there may be only one lamb out of a multiple birth affected, with the others normal. Birth defects can also be caused by other diseases. Ewe deaths can also be an issue due to dystocia problems

APHA are currently offering free testing for the virus for lambs, kids and calves that are born with deformities, so contact your local vet for more information. There is still a lot unknown about Schmallenberg, so APHA and the universities are investigating this year's outbreak. Sadly, there is currently no treatment, or prevention for this disease. While several vaccines were released after the initial outbreak these are not currently commercially available. Application of insecticide may help reduce the numbers of midges biting individual animals but hasn't been successful in controlling midge numbers at a large scale. Delaying mating until later in the season for sheep flocks; or tupping flocks in more exposed, windy areas with few midges are probably the most practical solutions for minimising Schmallenberg. However, midge numbers can remain high in warmer weather with a late onset of frosts.

Farmers have faced many challenges recently due to flooding and Schmallenberg. There are some fantastic charities who can offer specialised help with both personal issues and those on farm. For anyone currently affected by SBV, or struggling with personal challenges of their own, please reach out for help and support. The Farming Community Network is a voluntary organisation and charity that supports farmers and families through difficult times. Call the helpline on 03000 111 999. Calls will be answered in person from 7am-11pm every day or call into the Monmouthshire Rural Support Centre at Monmouthshire Livestock Market – 07300 794340.



CALF & LAMB SCOUR TREATMENTS

As we head into calving and lambing, here is an update on some of our newer products for scouring calves and lambs. **We would always advise taking samples in a scour outbreak**, so that the cause can be identified, and prevention strategies put in place.

Benefits of HydrFAST:

- Contains high levels of glucose, which drives water absorption into the calf's tissues and provides an energy source while the calf has a reduced appetite for milk.
- Contains glycine, an amino acid which further facilitates water absorption.
- Buffers counteract the high acid levels found in scouring calves without interfering with the digestion of milk.
- Provides maximum rehydrating power, energy provision, and acid buffering to support recovery from scour.

HydrFAST should be administered alongside milk feeding, with a three-hour gap left between milk feeding and HydrFAST. HydrFAST is designed to be given twice daily, reconstituted in two litres of clean water each time. It is best teat or bucket fed, but it can be tube fed if required.

For scouring lambs, we recommend the use of Rehydion-the dose is 2 ml dose/ lamb and we can supply special pumps to dispense this.

Charcovet Gel The Activated Charcoal in Charcovet Gel adsorbs gas and binds the liquid fraction of diarrhoea, helping the animal produce a more normal stool. This may reduce bloating and cramping, improving the animal's demeanour and willingness to drink. Charcovet Gel is an ideal adjunct for the management of neonatal scour and may be used safely regardless of the cause of the diarrhoea. **Calves:** one tube per day **Lambs:** 2ml/kg per day
Can be split and given twice daily if preferred. Administer for as long as required.

The administration of Charcovet Gel should be given separated by at least 2 hours from either milk or oral rehydration solution. Rehydration with an oral rehydration solution, such as HydrFAST, supplying electrolytes and energy, remains an essential part of supportive management of calf scour.



MEETINGS

Thursday 8th February- SHEEP LAMENESS MEETING

Learn about the clinical signs, transmission and diagnosis of the common causes of sheep lameness focussing on infectious causes and biosecurity. Clients must be registered with Farming Connect.

MONMOUTHSHIRE LIVESTOCK MARKET, RAGLAN NP15 2BH

Starting at 7pm.

Thursday 22ND February Q-FEVER MEETING

Q FEVER CAUSES INFERTILITY, ABORTIONS, AFFECTS HUMANS & IS PRESENT IN OUR HERDS.

FREE of charge for all dairy farmers. CEVA are sponsoring the meeting. **LOCATION-** Crawley Hall, Old Raglan Road NP15 2JG. Hot Meal Provided. Starting at 11.30am **(1 hours talk followed by lunch).**

Friday 23rd February LAMBING COURSE- PERFECT FOR BEGINNERS & SMALLHOLDERS

Recognise the signs of lambing, find out when to intervene, how to deal with abnormal presentations and care for the new-born lamb and ewe. £60 + VAT, or £100 + VAT for two people from the same household. Refreshments Provided. Starting at 2pm to 5pm.

MONMOUTHSHIRE LIVESTOCK MARKET, RAGLAN NP15 2BH

Please call the office to book your place. Tel 01873 840167.

BUCKET COMPETITION

We're giving away a bucket full of lambing essentials to one lucky winner (over £100 worth of products).

If you would like to be in with a chance of winning please go to our Facebook page, leave a comment & tag a friend. The winner will be picked at random and announced on Friday 23rd February 24.

Special thanks to Agrihealth for their sponsorship.



STAFF NEWS

Beth Williams- Roberts will be leaving us at the end of this month. We are sorry to see her go, but she has decided to look for work in a more dairy-intense area.