FARM FIRST NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2024

POOR GROWTH IN LAMBS

After the autumn we have had the pasture is still lush and green in appearance, and in places actively growing, but it is largely deficient in most nutritional value and really is just green stuff and water!

This, combined with the increasing risk of other diseases can result in poor growth or an increase in losses in growing lambs. This article outlines some of the key conditions to consider at this time of year in finishing and store lambs.

Worms Often parasites will have built up on pasture through the spring and summer depending on grazing and worming management through the grazing season. This can lead to very high worm burdens being identified in scouring or skinny lambs at this time of year – egg counts often into the thousands. Regular worm egg counting is key to identify these parasite problems before they start to impact growth. Pooled worm egg counts give a good estimation of the average worm burden of a group and can be run by collecting 10-15 individual samples from a group which will then be mixed by the lab prior to undertaking the worm egg count. At Farm First we can run worm egg counts in our in-house laboratory, and there is a 25% discount for samples dropped off before lunchtime on a Wednesday. Treatment for worms can then be tailored depending on the number and type of worm eggs present.

Trace elements Cobalt deficiency (pine) and selenium deficiency can both cause poor growth in lambs. Whilst this can occur at all times of year, it is often particularly severe in the Autumn when lambs are not being supplemented with feed or additional trace elements. The best way to diagnose whether there are any trace element deficiencies is for the vet to collect blood samples to measure vitamin B12 and selenium levels. Often a severe worm issue can cause vitamin B12 deficiency or vice versa so usually this is done in conjunction with a worm egg count. The issue can be further compounded by B12 deficiency suppressing appetite, so lambs eat less and therefore take in less cobalt…Should a deficiency be diagnosed there are several options for supplementation. These include drenching with a specific mineral drench, injecting a Vitamin B12 solution, or using lamb boluses. Which option is most appropriate will depend on the individual scenario and is best discussed with the vet.

Pasteurella and Clostridial Disease More commonly associated with sudden deaths rather than poor growth, both Pasteurellosis and disease caused by Clostridia are commonly seen in unvaccinated growing lambs at this time of year. Both diseases are preventable by using vaccines such as Heptavac-P and Ovivac-P – lambs require two doses 4-6 weeks apart to be fully protected, even if they are born from vaccinated ewes.

Worm and trace element problems can both cause a reduction in good immunity and resilience in lambs and increase the risk of these conditions occurring.

It is therefore important to investigate issues of poor lamb growth or lamb deaths fully to ensure there are not multiple factors at play.

Farming Connect funding is currently available for Welsh farmers to assist with the cost of investigations such as these.

OUT OF HOURS SURCHARGES

As we head towards the busy lambing and calving seasons, we just wanted to inform you of the out-of-hours charges that we add on to your normal visit charges if you need our assistance out of normal office hours.

For visits to a farm up to 11 pm the additional fee is	**£29.32+ VAT**
After 11 pm the additional fee is:	**£44.47+ VAT**
(these fees are in addition to the normal visit fee to the farm)	
For a call back to the surgery before 11 pm the extra fee is:	**£21.27 + VAT**
For a call back to the surgery after 11 pm the extra fee is:	**£35.63+ VAT**

These are the only additional fees that you will be charged - once we have arrived at the farm or surgery, all the work that we carry out is all charged at our usual daytime rates, so if you do have an animal that needs emergency treatment out of hours, please don't worry that you will be charged at excessive rates.

WE ARE OFFERING SCANNING SESSIONS FOR SMALL FLOCKS OF EWES & GOATS

CONTACT US FOR MORE INFO

HYPOMAGNESEMIA IN HOUSE CATTLE

This is an issue which we have seen on rare occasions in the past and SRUC in Scotland have recently seen a few cases. Over the past few weeks since housing, they have diagnosed and discussed several cases of hypomagnesemia (staggers) in housed beef suckler cows. While usually associated with grazing, a diagnosis of low magnesium causing death or clinical signs should not be discounted in housed animals. A diagnosis of hypomagnesemia can be made by collecting ocular fluid (vitreous) from a dead animal or bloods samples from others in the group.

It is noteworthy that in a recent study of 15 Scottish suckler herds over 30% of cows sampled one month prior to calving, had low Magnesium levels.

As a guide, rations should contain 20-25g/cow/day magnesium; half coming from the forage component of the ration and the other half supplemented. If hay or straw is a significant component of the forage ration, then this will supply less magnesium compared to grass silage. Where the forage is likely to be high in potassium (2-3%) the magnesium requirement rises to 30-40g/cow/day with more coming from the supplement.

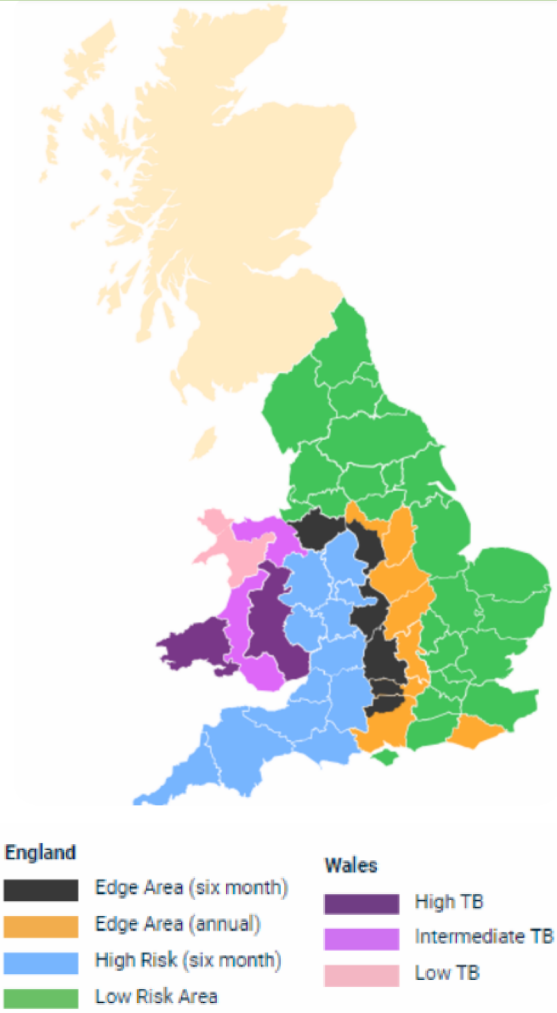
Where forage analysis is not available, silages that are likely to be high in potassium are those made from heavily fertilised or slurried ground and consequently may be cut earlier in the season.

If supplementing the ration with a high magnesium mineral, 100g of a mineral supplement containing 10% magnesium will provide 10g per day. Mineral supplements are typically between 10% and 20% Magnesium. Where minerals are being supplemented it is essential to ensure all cattle have access to them; feed space (ideally 70cm / cow) allowing all cows to feed at the same time and mixing of diet are both areas to consider. Are younger, smaller, subordinate cows receiving the same ration as a bigger, older dominant cows? Concurrent diseases that may reduce feed intake and absorption such as gastrointestinal parasites, Johne's disease and pneumonia are also risks.

To monitor if the level of supplementation is correct, blood samples can be taken from a selection of the group 4 weeks after introducing the winter ration.

SATURDAY MORNINGS

RECEPTION WILL BE OPEN ON SATURDAY MORINGS DURING THE LAMBING AND CALVING PERIOD FROM 8.30AM TO 12.30PM. THIS WILL RUN FROM SATURDAY 3RD FEBRUARY TO SATURDAY 27TH APRIL.



NEW TB RULES- POST MOVEMENT TESTING

1. All bovine animals that move into herds in the intermediate TB areas (ITBAs) from the high TB area of Wales, the HRA of England and from Northern Ireland on or after 1 February 2024 will need a post-movement test (PoMT).

2. Welsh Government is making this change in response to an increase in the spread of TB into the ITBAs, some of which is due to movements into these areas from higher risk areas of the UK.

3.The PoMT must be no sooner than 60 days and no later than 120 days after their arrival on the holding in the ITBAs.

4. Bovine animals requiring a PoMT may only be moved off the holding before their PoMT in certain limited circumstances, for example, if the animal is sent to slaughter.

5. It will be the keeper's responsibility to book and pay for the PoMT with their private vet. A government-funded routine surveillance test, e.g. the annual test of the whole herd will count as a PoMT provided it is carried out 60 to 120 days after the movement on.

6. A government-funded post import test carried out after an animal is imported from Northern Ireland will count as a PoMT provided it is done between 60 and 120 days after the animal arrives on the holding in the ITBAs

7. If any test finds a reactor or inconclusive reactor, movement restrictions will automatically and immediately be applied to the whole herd.

8. APHA will write each month to keepers who have moved on bovine animals that may require a PoMT. It is the keeper's responsibility to arrange testing of all eligible animals and to ensure it is completed within the required timeframe, even if this information is not provided by APHA.

9. Welsh Government is writing to all keepers in the ITBAs in early December to inform them of this policy change so they can plan animal movements and any tests required appropriately.