

Black Sheep Farm Health

August 2021 Newsletter



The Field Report

July brought some great weather, and it was heartening to see stock thriving. We hope all of our clients managed to make hay (and silage) while the sun shined, and that spells of dry weather continue for those of you with combines to sit on! Read on for some seasonal news, and don't forget to check the 'Dates for your Diary' section!

Dates for your Diary

Northumberland Beef and Lamb Monitor Farm Launch

Thursday 5th August, 10:00—14:00, @Alnham Farm, Alnham, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 4TJ. FREE

We are delighted that Alnham have succeeded in their bid to become a monitor farm. The farm's first meeting will provide the opportunity for farmers and industry to learn more about this exciting new Monitor Farm, discuss key priorities and input into future meetings.

For a programme and to book a free place, visit: <https://ahdb.org.uk/events/northumberland-beef-lamb-monitor-farm-launch-event>

Mastering Medicines

Thursday 2nd September, 18:00—20:00, @BSFH Rothbury. £40 ex. VAT. Certificates and refreshment provided. Lively discussion guaranteed.

Either ring the practice at 01669 838 288, or email kaz.strycharczyk@bsfh.co.uk, to book your place.

Westhills Annual Sale of Hampshire Down Tups

Thursday 2nd September, (socially distanced) BBQ at 17:00 and auction at 18:00, @Westhills Farm, Rothbury NE65 7XF.

Your chance to purchase easy finishing, fast growing, outdoor born and reared most in top 10% ebv Hampshire down shearlings. Hampshires while not to everyone's taste did very well in the AHDB RamCompare 'days to slaughter' category.

BSFH Social Evening

Friday 3rd September, 18:00—21:00, @Westhills Farm, Rothbury NE65 7XF. FREE

We've missed seeing you all so we thought we would put on a do - no presentation, no spiel, just some food, drink and chat! Of course if you have any veterinary queries, then we will all be on hand to answer them. Otherwise it will be about catching up and having something to eat. There might even be a quiz and some quots...

Using abortion vaccine? Be prepared and order ahead

For users of 'Toxovax' and 'Cevac', now is the time to order. As this is such a seasonal product, supplies can hit a bottleneck if everyone orders at the last minute.

Both vaccines are licensed to be administered in the 4 month period prior to tugging. 'Toxovax' should be given a minimum of 3 weeks before mating, while 'Cevac' should be given a minimum of 4 weeks before mating. In both cases, if vaccinating ewe lambs, these can be jabbed from 5 months of age.



Autumn Calving Jobs

Autumn calving will shortly be upon us. Here are a few jobs that will stand autumn calvers in good stead.

1. Refresh the calving kit - colostrum, iodine etc.
2. Consider drying off cows with 'dry cow tubes' to reduce incidence of mastitis.
3. Consider previous history of grass staggers and supplement with magnesium accordingly; an autumn flush of grass can trigger outbreaks.
4. Organise pre-calving treatments: this may include a trace element bolus, or clostridial/calf scour vaccines.
5. Monitor body condition score for your records, but remember this is not the time to try and strip condition off fat cows - better to keep them on an even keel and maintain colostrum quality and quantity. The target at calving for autumn calving cows is 2.5-3.0 on a 5 point scale.
6. Kick back and wait for those calves to hit the ground!



Changes to Red Tractor Beef and Lamb Standards

Red Tractor has updated its standards to 'equip British Farms for the future', and these changes will apply from 1st November 2021. Thankfully, we think most of our farms are doing most or all of this already!

A full press release for the changes including a summary and industry reaction can be found here:

https://assurance.redtractor.org.uk/contentfiles/Farmers-7316.pdf?_=637624688990649891

The beef and lamb changes are:

- Following recommendations from the Farm Animal Welfare Council and European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), **tethered housing systems, for stock of any age, will not be permitted on Red Tractor Farms.** In the short term, derogations will be offered, and visits will be made to the small number of members still tethering their cattle.
- **Farms will be asked how they are taking action to eradicate bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD).** This needs to be documented in a health plan and implemented. This new recommendation will become a full standard from October 2022, allowing members a lead time for a change in system or testing routine, where necessary to control endemic disease.
- **All farms with workers must have a written Health and Safety policy** – this is a slight advance on the legal baseline which only applies to businesses with more than five employees. Given high fatality figures in the industry Red Tractor believes it is essential to check policies are in place and communicated to workers.
- Efficient and meaningful health planning builds on management techniques for continuous improvement and encourages a move to a proactive management system. **The health plan now needs to be signed, dated and reviewed annually by a nominated vet who should visit the farm at least once a year.**
- **At least one person on farm must have undertaken medicine training** to help raise awareness of antimicrobial resistance and drive medicine use best practice. This is currently a recommendation and follows similar change to Dairy sector in 2019.



Synchronisation for sheep (and goats): is it for you?

Farmers have long understood the utility of synchronising sheep, historically through the use of teaser tups. If you need some teasers this year, then now is the time to organise vasectomies! Lambing can be tightened even more dramatically through manipulation of the oestrus cycle through direct use of hormones; lambing can be reduced to a few days in length!



Understandably there is a limit to how many sheep a sane person would want to lamb over this condensed period. We think synchro programmes are particularly applicable to:

- **Flocks within flocks** - these may be pedigree flocks attached to commercial flocks, which you may want to commit more attention to, or lamb at a separate time.
- **Flockmasters who work away** - for those of you who work elsewhere, by condensing your lambing you can minimise the stress of trying to work two jobs at once, and use annual leave more effectively!
- **Smallholders** - ditto as above re: annual leave, and to co-ordinate lambing with specific dates e.g. half term.

As well as the time benefits, you will end up with a more evenly aged crop of lambs. As for teasers, you will need great tup power per ewe: 1:10 is frequently used as a benchmark, and we would recommend giving these tups a physical 'MOT' at the very least, with further investigation of any which are flagged for physical abnormalities.

In terms of drug costs, between an intravaginal device (a 'sponge' or 'CIDR') and an injectable hormone, it typically works out at around £5 per ewe. We can help with insertion of the intravaginal devices as although straightforward it can be daunting. If you'd like to discuss how synchronisation may work for your sheep flock or goat herd, don't hesitate to get in touch with one of the vets.