

Black Sheep Farm Health

January 2019 Newsletter



The Field Report

January is dark and cold, with none of December's festive consolation. But the days are getting longer, and before long spring will be upon us. Now is the time to prepare for lambing and calving 2019. It was great in 2018 to have so many of you attend training courses; see below for this spring's offering.

On a different note, 8th January 2019 marks one year in business for Black Sheep Farm Health. It has been a great first year, and we owe it in no small part to our first clients. Time to kick on for Year Two...

Dates for your Diary

BSFH Farmer Meeting: Pre-Calving Evening with the University of Edinburgh

21st January 2019, 19:30 Coquetvale Hotel

Rachel Bragg (Senior Clinical Training Scholar in Farm Animal Health and Production) will discuss pre-calving suckler cow nutrition. Some of you have been involved in her work! The BSFH team will also be presenting on general calving advice and a new calf scour vaccine we will be stocking.

Kindly sponsored by Virbac.

Gear up for Spring 2019: Upskill with Black Sheep Farm Health

The BSFH team already know that Northumberland is home to many of the country's finest stockpeople. To help keep it that way, we're offering a series of courses this spring. Even the best saw needs sharpening!

Practical Lambing: Novice (1 Day, 13th February)

An introduction to the fundamentals of lambing. Ideal for beginners, and for lambing assistants who have done a season or two who want to hone their skills. The course covers: The normal birthing process and assistance during lambing, Preparing the lambing shed, Basic nutrition, Common diseases in lambs and in ewes around lambing: how to treat and prevent, Standard husbandry procedures for lambs.

Practical Lambing: Advanced (1 Day, 14th February)

The advanced course recaps the material covered in the novice course. In addition, it takes a 365-day approach to a successful lambing. As such the course covers: the economics of the lambing period, Ewe nutrition and the lambing environment, Colostrum management and responsible use of antibiotics at lambing, Management and prevention of abortion outbreaks, Replacement strategies and management of first lambers – ewe lambs or gimmers, Advanced practical techniques.

Practical Calving (1 Day, 27th February)

The calving course is intended for cattle keepers of all types, from smallholders to experienced stockpeople, who want to refine their approach to the calving period and the calving cow. The course covers: An introduction to bull and heifer selection, Management of the cow pre-calving and post-calving, The normal birthing process, Effective and safe intervention, Management of the new-born calf.

All courses include handouts, certificates and lunch. Places are limited to ensure small group teaching so be sure to book in good time. For more information on any of these courses, or to book a space, telephone the office on 01669 838

288. Clients and non-clients both welcome.

Kaiwaka Stormforce Waterproofs

The feedback from those of you who have bought trousers, bib overtrousers or jackets has been overwhelmingly positive. We're glad you are enjoying work-wear which is fit-for-purpose! If anyone is keen to get themselves a late Christmas present then just let us know your size and we can order them in for you to try.



New Black Sheep Farm Health service: Freezebranding

In addition to sheep scanning, we have recently added freezebranding to our repertoire. This method of identification is used widely for beef cattle in North America, South America and Australasia, as well as for the British dairy herd.

They are easily read from a distance, and provide an insurance against tags falling out. Cattle can be freeze branded as adults or when selecting replacement heifers to join the breeding herd. Cattle with thick coats can still be freeze branded – for best effect the brand can simply be clipped before calving to aid identification.

The position of the brand can be tailored to how the cattle are kept. If housed loosely or calved at grass, a brand on the side of the thigh may be best while for cattle kept tighter or frequently run through races, a higher brand may be more appropriate.

Cattle should also be branded in good time as it can take up to 3 months for brands to grow out with white hair. To discuss freeze branding and pricing, just telephone the practice on 01669 838 288 or email Kaz on kaz.strycharczyk@bsfh.co.uk.



Insights from a Scottish BVD update

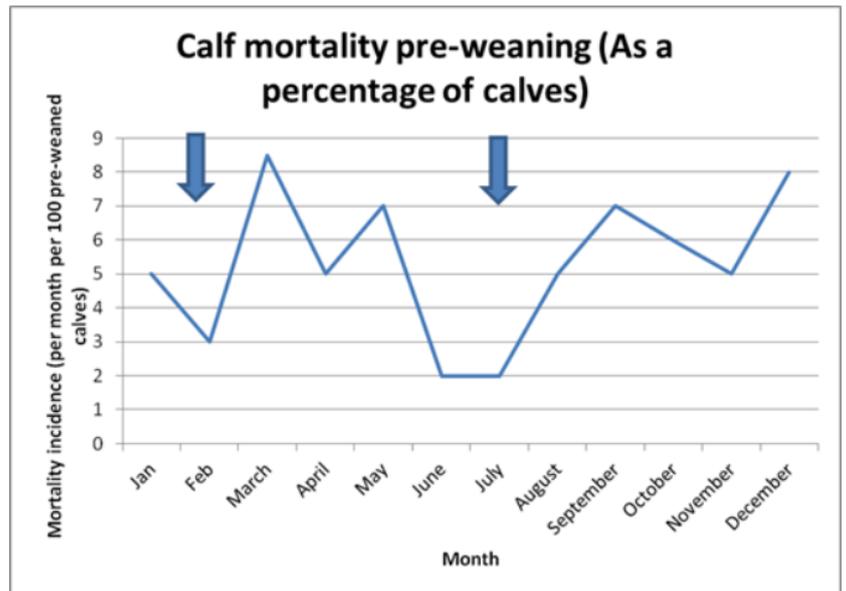
SAC provides periodic 'state of the nation' reports on various disease issues over the border. Scottish cattle holdings are subject to compulsory BVD testing and so sourcing from cattle from Scotland is often seen as a safe option.

On balance, it is low-risk but not no-risk. As of October 2018, there were 319 BVD PI animals on 102 Scottish holdings listed on the ScotEID database. 43% of these holdings had a single PI animal and a further 23.5% had two PIs on farm. Four holdings were harbouring 10 or more PIs.

In naïve herds, introduction of a PI risks a dramatic abortion storm and generation of more PIs. Once established, reproductive losses rumble on, plus increasing the risk of pneumonia and scour in the calf crop. The graph opposite illustrates how calf mortality was affected by introduction of PIs on a Scottish dairy farm. On a suckler farm, where calves are born over a tighter period, these effects may be even more dramatic.

This illustrates just how important it is to:

- 1) **Establish and monitor your BVD status.**
- 2) **Identify and remove PI animals quickly.**



↓ = Birth of a persistently infected calf

BVD Stamp It Out update: Don't forget your check test!

Most of you with breeding cattle are now signed up to BVD: Stamp It Out, which entitles you to a fully funded visit for a BVD check test. Last year's spring calf crop will now be coming up to the correct age (9-18 months) so don't forget to get us in to blood sample 5-10 of these.

And if you're not already signed up then let us know — we'll drop by with the paperwork when we're passing!