

Black Sheep Farm Health

May 2019 Newsletter



The Field Report

What a difference a year makes. Whilst no year is trouble free, we certainly prefer the weather this time around compared to 2018.

As lambing and calving gradually wind down, now we can start to look ahead and make preparations for next year in good time. Ensuring fertility in sheep and cattle of both sexes is always a priority, and forms a theme in this edition.

If any animal health issues have emerged this spring, now is also the time to sit down for a discussion while the details are fresh in your mind.

Mastering Medicines 2019

Tuesday 11th June 18:00-20:00.

Red Tractor recommendation.

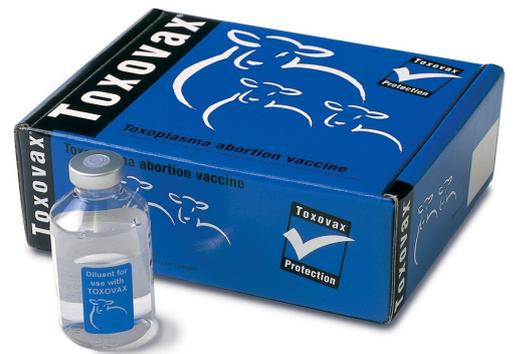
£40 ex.VAT, includes dinner and certificate of attendance. Book your place on 01669 838 288.

Toxovax: are you using it? And could you vaccinate earlier?

Toxoplasma is a widespread parasite causing high barren rates and abortion in sheep. It is estimated 90% of UK sheep flocks are exposed to the parasite. Vaccination is an effective (and cost-effective) means of protecting ewe replacements in the long term.

Despite the parasite's high prevalence, it is estimated that fewer than one in five female flock replacements actually get protected before they go to the ram for the first time.

Demand is very seasonal, with most farmers vaccinating pre-tupping. The vaccine manufacturer is keen to proactively manage demand by encouraging farmers to vaccinate earlier in the year; at clipping, for example. Therefore, **orders for vaccine that are received and delivered between 1st May - 31st August will be subject to a discount - contact the practice on 01669 838 288 for more details.**



Improving conception rates after synchronised AI: post-service care of cows and heifers

Georgie Hopgood, 4th year student at Royal Veterinary College

Care of the cow or heifer in early pregnancy is vital to ensure survival of the embryo and successful pregnancy. In the first 14 days after artificial insemination, the embryo starts producing hormones that tell the cow she is pregnant. If this process fails the embryo will die and the cow will come bulling again.

Stress, particularly changing nutrition, is one of the ways this process can fail. Therefore, keeping continuity with nutrition and minimising stress in the first few weeks of pregnancy is important. This can go wrong when heifers housed overwinter are pushed hard to turnout at unrealistic high weights and good condition (over 2.5); these overfit heifers are much more likely to undergo a turnout check. Fatter heifers have a bigger check and take longer to recover after turnout.

To minimise this, consider a couple of strategies:

- **Synchronising heifers 2-3 weeks earlier** while they are indoors and/or **keep them in longer**, only turning out once they have passed their first return date (3 to 4 weeks after AI).
- **Wintering heifers outside.** A study in America showed that heifers outwintered before synchronised AI had higher pregnancy rates compared to heifers which were housed overwinter and served to synchronised AI a day before turnout. It also showed that heifers housed overwinter suffered a significant weight check at turnout which could lead to the failure of an early pregnancy.



Vet Students

Most of you will now have come across one or more of our Spring 2019 student cohort. We provide a two week farm externship for those students with a genuine interest in going into farm practice. We are in an unusual position as we are a 100% farm practice and probably the only veterinary practice in the UK concentrating on beef and sheep medicine.



We are firm believers that this long-held tradition of the veterinary profession is a win-win-win situation. Students get invaluable experience of 'real world' farm practice. Farmers get an extra pair of hands FOC on visits. As for us - students keep us on our toes, do worm egg counts and mostly make excellent cake! At Black Sheep we ensure that students get exposure to proactive farm practice. In this way, we hopefully encourage them to enter this branch of the profession and bolster the supply of well trained farm vets of the future. [Granted, some are better than others]

Students find they are very well received in Northumberland! Transition from student to fully fledged vet is a very daunting experience; positive experiences as students can make a massive difference to whether they 'stick it out' in farm practice. Equally, every opportunity that students get to exercise their practical skills on farm pays dividends to the farming communities they end up working with, and we thank you all for making them welcome.

Bull Fertility Testing: don't miss the boat

Calving may still be ongoing but it will not be long before the bulls go back out for spring-calving herds. It takes about two months for semen quality of a bull to recover after an insult, so if there is a problem that can be fixed we should get onto it as soon as possible.

All bulls should be sound in the fundamentals:

- **Condition** (target 3.0-3.5)
- **Locomotion:** should be able to move freely. Get feet trimmed in good time to avoid 'new shoe syndrome'.
- **Libido**

Bulls should also be semen tested annually.

Previous performance is no guarantee of future success; in older age fertility tends to tail off.

Last but not least : **do not forget bulls need routine treatment** just as the cows do, including wormers, flukicides, vaccinations and trace element supplementation.

Advanced Practitioner Status - congratulations Jenny!

We are very pleased to announce that Jenny has achieved her 'Advanced Practitioner' status and now holds a certificate of advanced veterinary practice in production animal medicine. This is a culmination of 3 years of a distance learning course including lectures, presentations, webinars, case reports and examinations. Jenny joins a select few vets that hold this status and it demonstrates experience, understanding and learning within this field, but also our commitment to providing the very highest quality service to our farmers. Her certificate will join Joe's certificate in sheep health and production on our reception wall – well done Jenny.



This is to certify that

Jennifer Jo Hull
B VetMed MRCVS

has been awarded the

Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice

having successfully completed the following modules:

Foundations of Advanced Veterinary Practice	A-FAVP:1
Production Animal Practice	B-PAP:2
Youngstock Rearing and Infectious Diseases	C-C:7
Sheep - Diseases of Adult Sheep	C-S:1
Sheep - Reproduction, Pregnancy & Parturition	C-S:2
Sheep - Diseases of Lambs & Parasitic Diseases	C-S:3

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E. Ferguson
REGISTRAR