

March 2025

NEWSLETTER



Lambing Course

Theory in the morning, followed by a practical lambing skills session in the afternoon.

Tuesday 18th March 2025, 10am-4pm

Netherwitton Village Hall, NE61 4NU, with practical on a nearby farm.

Lunch and course notes provided.

£50 plus VAT

To book a place, email emili.ch@bsfh.co.uk or call the practice on 01669 838288.

Use of Metacam in Neonates

A study of dairy animals found that 6% of new-born calves from unassisted births had fractured ribs and that these animals had significantly reduced daily live weight gains (DLWG). Dystocia, or difficulty calving, makes rib fractures more likely.

There is evidence that the use of anti-inflammatories such as Metacam, given immediately post birth, leads to greater calf growth in early weeks of life, likely due to reducing pain related to rib fractures or other calving-associated injuries, allowing for increased colostrum intake.

For this reason, we would recommend that any calves or lambs who require assistance at birth are given pain relief. When giving pain relief to lambs or calves, make sure that you have an appropriately small syringe to give a correct dose.

Small Gloves!

For anyone else who has struggled with using large rectal gloves during spring, we can now source small rectal gloves.

Emili and Claire have found these smaller gloves to be a game changer! Worth trying if you are a lamber with smaller hands.

** BLUETONGUE UPDATE **

As temperatures warm through spring, the bluetongue risk will increase. Both the activity of the biting midges that spread BTV and replication of the virus within midges are dependant on warm temperatures.

It is important to take action to report any signs, and always, remain vigilant and monitor livestock closely. Familiarise yourself with the signs associated with bluetongue.

There are vaccinations available against BTV. These vaccines act as insurance. The vaccines reduce the severity of clinical signs seen and reduce mortality levels in sheep; in the Netherlands mortality in unvaccinated flocks was reported at 70%, and this dropped to 10% in vaccinated flocks.

Please get in touch with one of the vets with any questions or queries!

BTV SIGNS IN CATTLE:

- Crusty lesions around the nostrils and muzzle
- Redness of the mouth, eyes, nose
- Redding of the skin above the hoof / lameness
- Nasal discharge
- Reddening and lesions on the teats

BTV SIGNS IN SHEEP:

- Lethargy, reluctance to move
- Crusty lesions around the nostrils/muzzle/teats
- Discharge of mucus and drooling from mouth and nose
- Swelling of the muzzle, face and above the hoof
- Redness of the mouth, eyes, nose and skin above the hoof

Selective Worming at Lambing Time

Traditionally, most flocks have wormed ewes at lambing. This practice was designed to combat the 'periparturient rise' - the drop in immunity ewes experience from around 2 weeks before lambing to 6 weeks afterwards. This drop in immunity results in ewes outputting more worm eggs, onto the pasture that will be grazed by their lambs. Worming at lambing aimed to reduce the levels of pasture contamination for new susceptible lambs.

Evidence suggests that **sufficient protein in the diet protects ewes against this drop in immunity** and therefore prevents this rise in egg output.

When worming at lambing time, it is **essential to leave at least 10% of ewes untreated**, and these untreated ewes should be spread between different grazing mobs ie if singles graze separately from multiples, it is not enough to simply leave singles untreated.

Body condition is now seen as the best indicator to assess if a ewe will need a wormer dose at lambing ie **treat younger and leaner, and triplet-bearing ewes, leave fit ewes untreated**.

Feeding Heavily Pregnant Ewes: Sustainable Alternatives to Soya

Adapted from SAC newsletter

Sufficient protein provision in late pregnancy in the ewe is important for fetal growth, colostrum and milk production, and ewe immunity, and can therefore contribute significantly to the early success of a lamb crop.

Soya has many benefits as a protein source in late pregnancy, with high levels of rumen bypass protein compared to other protein sources (soya crude protein 53% DM with rumen bypass protein DUP 20%). There are, however, significant concerns about the sustainability of feeding soya, with soya production associated with large scale deforestation and the production of emissions to import the product.



There are some closely equivalent- but locally grown- high protein feedstuffs:

- **Rapeseed Meal:** Untreated rapeseed meal is typically around 12 MJ/kg ME and 40% CP, with around 11% DUP. Rapeseed meal can also be heat pressed and treated to increase the DUP inclusion providing a close alternative to soya.
- **Distillers Grains:** Distiller's grains provide good levels of rumen available protein to the diet. There can be a large variation between sources; wheat distillers are typically lower in energy at around 13.4 MJ/kg ME but higher in CP at around 34% compared to maize distillers that are higher in energy at 13.6-15 MJ/kg ME but lower in CP at around 29%.
- **Field Beans & Peas:** Beans and peas both provide good levels of starch and rumen available protein. A typical beans analysis provides around 13.6 MJ/kg ME and 26% CP with peas analysing around similar levels.
- **Forage:** a good quality silage with a protein level of above 14%, or green grass, can also go a long way to reducing the need for bought in concentrate in the ration.

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