

Black Sheep Farm Health

April 2021 Newsletter



The Field Report

Calvings and lambings are in full swing. The lamb price appears to have focussed minds somewhat as we are getting plenty of advice calls for sheep—which is great and what we are here for! Remember the first 48 hours is key for turning that scanning % into something more tangible.

A mixed bag this month—a call to arms for the next round of medicines courses, a reminder on the (still underutilised) anti-inflammatory drugs available, a discussion on a straw alternative, an app recommendation and finally some feedback on your feedback! Enjoy...

Mastering Medicines returns!

Kaz is tentatively putting together some course dates together for June/July when (hopefully) we will be able to meet in person. It is a recommendation for Red Tractor assurance members for someone on the farm to have undergone training in the handling of medicines, but we have had great feedback so far to suggest that all attendees have gone away with practical changes they can implement the next day on their farm.

The course is £40 ex.VAT per attendee and lasts for two hours, with a break for some refreshments. Materials (workbook, notepad, certificate) are included. Prizes are available to incentivise decent participation!

Please message Kaz on 07557092760 or kaz.strycharczyk@bsfh.co.uk to register your interest.

Use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatories at lambing and calving

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) use in sheep and cattle is often overlooked due to a perceived lack of pain alongside a lack of time at lambing and calving. However, the benefits of a dose of NSAID following a difficult lambing/ calving can be substantial for both dam and lamb/calf comfort, as well as post-lambing productivity. It has been shown that a dose given to a ewe following a difficult lambing can encourage a ewe to return to the feeding troughs earlier and for longer, increasing their intake and their milk production. Similarly, a dose in a lamb following a difficult lambing decreases pain sensation and so increases the strength of the suck reflex and as such increases milk intake and lamb viability in the vital first few days of life. NSAID use at castration, dehorning and tail docking has been shown to enhance feed intake and growth rates in the days immediately following these procedures and a more rapid increase in bodyweight.



In cattle, NSAIDs are widely used in treating mastitis, lameness, respiratory disease and joint infection in young calves. However, use is often overlooked after difficult calvings, castration and dehorning because of the lack of perceived need for pain relief. NSAIDs are particularly effective against acute pain, increasing comfort and feed intake in dams following difficult calvings. Newborn calves that experience stress and trauma during birth often have a slow start and a dose of NSAID has been shown to improve vigour over the first few days of life.

Currently our NSAID of choice is meloxicam (brand name 'Metacam', 'Recocam'). It is administered under the skin at a rate of 1ml/40kg in cattle. One dose lasts 2-3 days. There is no licensed NSAID for sheep, although meloxicam products are licensed in different countries at a dose rate of 1ml/20kg. Flunixin products are slowly returning to the market after an issue with one of the excipients. 'Zeleris' is a combination of meloxicam and florfenicol. Although blanket use is not advisable, there is scope to use NSAIDs more regularly and usefully around calving and lambing to increase both animal comfort and production.



A straw alternative? Wood shavings for lambing pens



In years when straw is expensive, many of our clients look to adapt by trying alternatives as they know simply using less straw would generate more disease—watery mouth, scours, joint ill, and mastitis included. One of the more successful alternatives is wood shavings.

Although not necessarily any cheaper per tonne than straw, some users say it goes further. Once used, the shavings can go straight on the muck heap to be spread at a later date.

We would recommend finding a supplier of *pine* shavings as research from the equine world has suggested these specifically appear to have antibacterial effects, when compared to chopped wheat straw, hemp or Sitka spruce shaving.

Regardless of the bedding used, the most important point is that it should be refreshed very frequently to ensure clean and dry conditions. If bedding is visibly wet or dirty, it should be replaced or refreshed. The other trick is to **make your bedding supply go further by keeping it dry:** use disinfectant

powders which also desiccate pens (e.g. Stalosan or Hydramix lime), remove cleansings as soon as possible, and secure water troughs to avoid spillages.

Unsure about medicines? Get the NOAH Compendium App

One of the points from our feedback survey asked if we could add withdrawal times to our bills, along with batch numbers and expiry. After discussion, we have decided not to—because these withdrawal times change periodically and do not want to run the risk of catching people out.

Instead, we recommend everyone download the 'NOAH Compendium' app. NOAH is the National Office of Animal Health and compiles an annual compendium (the app is updated more regularly) which lists the data sheet for all veterinary medicines on the market. The information in these data sheets includes:

- Which condition(s), and which species, the drug is licensed for.
- Withdrawal times.
- Dose rate.
- Route of administration.
- Duration or schedule of treatment.
- Any 'contra-indications' i.e. scenarios in which the drug should not be used.

(as well as lots more useful material)

Drugs can be found by either entering the name or by scanning the QR code on the bottle or box.

Compendium of Data Sheets
for Animal Medicines

2021

Feedback Survey—what you said and how we are responding

Firstly, thank you to all of the respondents to our feedback survey. We are always keen to improve our offering and your feedback is vital to do that. Well done to Megan Byatt from Philhope who won the Clulite headtorch.

To our pleasant surprise the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and we greatly appreciate this. The support of our clients goes hand in hand with providing an excellent service, so thank you.

Remember the survey isn't your only opportunity to feedback as we will run it again later this year.

In the meantime, you know where to find us. At an independent vet-owned practice like BSFH there is no long chain of command; just pick up the phone to a vet and you are speaking to 'the boss' (at least on paper—sorry Hazel!).

Some common themes were:

- **Asking for a small animal service:** we do currently provide a basic 'first-opinion' service to farm clients including vaccinations, stitch ups and euthanasia. At the moment we do not have the facilities to provide more of a diagnostic or in-patient service, and we want to maintain our focus on our farm service without adding extra complexity! We are considering running a monthly 'vaccine run' for farm dogs—let us know if that is something you would be interested in.
- **Asking for withdrawal times to go onto the bill:** See left to the article on the NOAH Compendium app.
- **Asking for bills to be electronic:** Most of our bills and newsletters now are! Just let Hazel know and she will switch you from paper to email.