

# Black Sheep Farm Health

August 2023 Newsletter



## The Field Report

### Swedes, Skiing, and the South Island: A Year in New Zealand

**SAVE THE DATE: Thursday 5th October  
Longframlington Memorial Hall**

With Kaz returning from New Zealand, please join us to welcome him back to Northumberland and to hear more about his travels!

Further details to follow, but keep the evening clear in your diaries!

### Health Planning Reminder

With the spring rush on livestock work now well over, this is an ideal time to assess what went well over the past year and what could be improved.

Most assurance schemes now specify that an annually updated health plan is written in conjunction with your vet, which may incorporate aspects such as an antibiotic review or justifications for some husbandry practices. This may also be incorporated into the Animal Health and Welfare Review for those who have applied.

Having said that, we find the vast majority of you understand (i) the value of reflecting and planning on animal health and productivity beyond a tick box for the assurance inspector, and (ii) you get out what you put into this sort of exercise. There is always something new to consider – a novel tool to manage disease, new funding to tackle a certain infection etc.

We can be flexible with booking and understand that sometimes when the sun is shining you need to be sitting on a tractor, so don't worry if you need to reschedule or only call when you see the forecast is for rain! Just ring the office to organise a session with one of the vets.

### Direct Debit Facility

We now provide a direct debit facility. Please contact the office if you would like to pay this way.

### Small Holder Meeting: Lameness in Sheep & Goats Thursday 14th September

Evening meeting covering foot health and disease in sheep and goats, with an overview of different causes of lameness. Ideal for smallholders and those new to keeping sheep and goats.

**Thursday 14th September, refreshments from 7:30pm for an 8pm start!**

**Longframlington Memorial Hall, NE65 8AH.**

Refreshments kindly sponsored by MSD.

Please RSVP by calling the practice or emailing [info@bsfh.co.uk](mailto:info@bsfh.co.uk)



### Cool Bag Amnesty

We are running low on cool bags again! If you have any we would appreciate you returning them.

### Tup Testing

With autumn fast approaching, it is time to begin preparations for tupping. Tup preparation should begin 10 weeks before tupping to allow time to correct any problems and possibly buy replacement animals if required. Examination and preparation of tups for breeding should centre around the 5T's; Toes, Teeth, Testicles, Tone and Treat.

New tups should be quarantined for 3 weeks. During this time tups should be monitored for signs of disease, particularly lameness, and receive appropriate quarantine treatments against worms, fluke and scab.

Fertility testing tups, involving physical examinations, semen collection and assessment, provides valuable information used to determine if tups can cope with solo mating group or would be better used in groups or not used at all.

Contact the practice to enquire about pre-breeding examinations and fertility testing for your tups.



## **Importance of Rock Salt for Cattle**

Many forages and cereals are low in sodium which is a key mineral to ensure correct water intake and to reduce the risk of acidosis and staggers; salt is important for the uptake of magnesium from the diet. Clinical signs of a salt deficiency include eating abnormal substances (pica) which contain salt (e.g. drinking urine, licking sweat or gate posts), reduced growth and weight loss. Salt should be offered ad lib to all cattle from weaning, with the exception of dry cows. Cattle will regulate their own intake and only consume what they require.

## **For Flocks Sake Vaccinate: A Sheep Abortion Vaccine Reminder**

Enzootic (Chlamydia, EAE) abortion is the most common cause of abortion in sheep – accounting for over a third of all abortion cases submitted to the lab. It is spread from aborted material and from sheep to sheep. This includes bought-in gimmers and ewe lambs. Tups can spread it but to a lesser extent. Ewes are often infected one year and abort the next. Any purchased sheep but especially breeding females that aren't already vaccinated pose a huge risk of bringing in disease to an unvaccinated flock.

A single vaccine as gimmers lasts her working lifetime which means ewes can be vaccinated and protected for as little as 35p per lamb born. In flocks that have not used abortion vaccines before, the cost of vaccination can be spread by just vaccinating gimmers each year and after 4-5 years the whole flock will be vaccinated.

Tupping always comes around quickly, so make sure gimmers and ewe lambs entering the flock have had their abortions vaccines in plenty of time. Chlamydia vaccine should be given at least 4 weeks pre tupping and the toxoplasma vaccine should be given at least 3 weeks pre tupping.

## **Trace Elements in Sheep**

Trace elements are important for production in all stages of sheep production, with cobalt, selenium, copper and iodine having key roles to play in growth, fertility and immunity. As many of us move to a more forage based system, the reduction in concentrate feeding means animals are more likely to be exposed to trace element deficiencies.

Blood sampling animals is vital to work out what deficiencies are present on your farm. But this should be combined with farm history and animal type to determine what supplementation is required. Testing should be undertaken when animals are receiving no supplementary feeding making post weaning in adult ewes an ideal time for this.

Generally, testing involves blood sampling 6 animals per breed or type on the farm for selenium, copper, cobalt and iodine. It is important that samples are taken as soon after gathering as possible as cobalt blood levels falsely elevate quickly when animals stop

Testing may also include forage and soil sampling but care should be taken as just because it's there it doesn't mean the animals are absorbing it!

This visit could also be used to complete a thin ewe screen, testing ewes that have failed to gain condition after weaning for iceberg diseases such as Johne's and MV.

Supplementation will depend on your farm but generally involves bolusing in adult ewes. We recommend ensuring that boluses used are well evidenced as there is currently no requirement to provide evidence boluses actually work before selling them. We have a few different types that we are happy are well evidenced, please do call us to discuss.