

# Black Sheep Farm Health

January 2021 Newsletter



## The Field Report

Welcome back! 2021 is picking up where 2020 left off. Remember that we are here for you in this lockdown, as we were before. If there is any way we can help, please just ask. Some good news on the international trade front - avoiding the WTO tariffs on lamb and beef which would have been very challenging for producers.

Plenty to discuss in this issue: sheep-heavy with a focus on scanning, as well as a new type of health scheme for vendors of replacements.

Finally, we are three! We wish a huge thanks to every single person who has supported us so far. We will continue to provide the service we know you want, need and deserve.



## The Sheep Scab Scan Search!

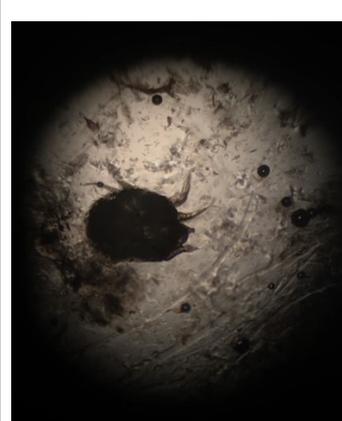
Sheep scab was eradicated from Great Britain in 1952, before its reintroduction in 1973. It was nearly eradicated again in the 1980s, before deregulation of dipping rules led to its resurgence. Unfortunately, sheep scab seems to have increased in prevalence over the last few years on our patch, and we risk ending up like other areas of the country where it is out of control. The required measures are straightforward but require concerted and co-ordinated action. Unless your flock is totally closed, requires contractors to sterilise before handling sheep, and has watertight double-fenced boundaries, it is at risk of scab. **Remember, sheep do not need to be itchy to be carrying scab.**

The good news is that there is a recently developed test that can detect scab in flocks before clinical signs such as itching and loss of fleece become apparent. 12 sheep from each management group are blood sampled to give an indication of whether they have been recently exposed to the parasite.

**We think that this blood sampling should be part of the annual sheep calendar, with OP dipping in the case of positive result.** OP dip will also take care of lice and ticks, and contract dippers have taken a lot of the hassle out of dipping. Repeated annual use of long acting injectables will lead, and has led, to resistance in both the scab mite and gutworms.

Sheep coming in for scanning represents a great opportunity to collect samples because:

- Sheep are **already coming through the pens.**
- In the case of a positive result, all sheep on the farm must be treated; **sheep numbers for the year are typically lowest pre-lambing.**
- **If treatment is needed, doing it between scanning and lambing pre-empts an outbreak of itchy sheep (i) at lambing and (ii) during the summer** when product withdrawal times will impact your ability to sell fat lambs.



- **If treatment isn't needed, you can avoid using long-acting injectable clear wormers**, thus saving time, money, hassle and reducing risk of resistance to these products in both scab mites and worms.

- **Do not use OP showers or jettors to control scab—they do not work.**

In any case, remember contractors are a potential source of infection - it's worth enquiring what their cleaning and disinfection protocols are. A thorough steam cleaning, into all the cracks and crevices, is a suitable means of cleaning.

Don't hesitate to get in touch to discuss scab and rooting it out from your flock and our area.



## Selling replacement ewe lambs of gimmers? New commercially focussed disease accreditation schemes for sheep

SAC, who already run the Premium Cattle Health Scheme (PCHS) and Premium Sheep and Goat Health Scheme (PSGHS), introduced two new sheep health schemes at the end of last year:

- Maedi-Visna (MV) Monitored
- Johne's Monitored

These schemes use more targeted testing to offer buyers more security when sourcing replacements, although are not as rigorous as the gold standard of MV or Johne's 'Accredited'.

For both diseases, the annual screen is of far fewer animals than the 'Accredited' schemes.

- 12 thin ewes (if <500 sheep) / 20 thin ewes (if >500 sheep) + 5 stock tups + bought-in animals (12 female replacements from each source, and all added tups).
- Vet to assist in selecting animals: e.g. low body condition score, ideally 2 or less; thin or unproductive for no apparent reason; thin ewes on good grass failing to gain weight after weaning, ewes failing to rear twins, lagging behind flock when handled and swollen joints.

These schemes offer a trade off between lab costs and work collecting samples, and providing a degree of security to buyers who should place a premium on flocks that are taking steps to monitor for MV and Johne's, both of which can have significant economic impacts in affected flocks.

Don't hesitate to get in touch to discuss how these schemes could work for you!



### Pre-calving cattle jobs

This is an important time to get the 'house in order' before the busy calving and lambing periods take over.

- BVD vaccination
- Flukicide
- Pregnancy diagnosis if not done already
- BVD check testing
- Condition scoring cows
- Pre-calving mineral bolus
- Pre-calving scour vaccines
- Forage analysis +/- metabolic bloods in cows to determine energy and protein levels
- Deep clean and disinfect calving pens
- Get calving supplies together

We can help you with all of this! Just get in touch with the office, or one of the vets directly.

### Does scanning sheep pay its way?

In a conventional 1000-ewe flock, housed at lambing, with a 2% barren rate, the costs of scanning include:

- Scanning charge @£0.50 /sheep: £500
  - Labour over a couple of days to help gather sheep @£10/h: £120
- = £620

Income brought in includes:

- Sale of empty ewes @£70 each = £1400
  - Saving in variable costs (feed, bedding, medication) @£15\* each: £300
- = £1700

In addition there are less tangible benefits, such as the knowledge of which sheep are having singles and so which need a lamb fostering on. It also acts as an early warning system in case of high barren rates. Finally, it allows for more precise management of singles vs twins vs triplets, to avoid the pitfalls of both undernutrition and overnutrition.

\*a conservative estimate - this will vary considerably farm-to-farm.