

Black Sheep Farm Health

January 2023 Newsletter



The Field Report

AHDB Profitable Cow Meeting—Nothing Fancy, Just Functional

Friday 27th January, 10:30-2.30

Bolton Village Hall, NE66 2EE

Arron Nebras, Nebras Bros Angus in Canada is joining APHA & Aberdeen Angus Society at Aln Angus . Book online at <https://ahdb.org.uk/events/profitable-suckler-cows-nothing-fancy-just-functional-northumberland>

Meet the newest member of the team - Millie

Millie joined the Black Sheep reception team in December having recently moved to a little secluded spot up in the hills by the Cheviots. She has previous experience of both reception and sheep work, but is a bit of a newbie to the veterinary side of things.



In her spare time she loves nothing more than taking the dogs out over the hills, whether walking, running or on the quad bike.

We really appreciate your patience as we get Millie up to speed, we are sure that she will very quickly become part of the furniture!

Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Virus (BVD)

As spring born calves approach nine months of age, this is the perfect opportunity for BVD surveillance. BVD is recognised as one of the most economically important diseases of cattle; it causes immunosuppression thus increasing prevalence of disease, in addition to reproductive problems such as infertility, abortion and birth defects. The BVD CHECK test requires five animals aged 9-18 months from each management group to be blood sampled for BVD antibody.



ENGLAND



Client meeting

We are holding a pre calving and lambing clients meeting

Tuesday, 7th February at 6.30pm

In Longframlington Memorial Hall

Talks covering preparing for a successful lambing and calving and ewe abortions.

Food and Drinks provided

Please RSVP if you plan on attending.

Kindly sponsored by CEVA



Small Holder Meeting: Infectious Diseases of Goats

Continuing our goat small holder series, we will be holding a meeting about 'Infectious Diseases of Goats' on **Monday 16th January at 7pm.**

Coffee and cake provided. All welcome. Please RSVP to the practice.

On-Farm Euthanasia

We will shortly be ordering captive bolt guns for humane on farm euthanasia. If you'd be interested in ordering a captive bolt, please ring the practice. Training will be provided free of charge.

Fluke testing

With the end of the year wetter and warmer, we have been seeing some positives on fluke testing. With the fluke risk being so low during the dry autumn, many flocks did not receiving a pre-topping drench. It is important to consider how the fluke risk has changed and if treatment at scanning/mid-winter is necessary. To assess this we recommend testing a pooled dung sample for coproantigen.

This should also be considered in our wintering cattle herds, where risks may have changed since calf blood samples were taken.

Scab Testing

Blood testing tups for scab exposure after they return from ewes is a useful tool to monitor for scab on your farm. This allows treatment to only be given where necessary, avoiding routine use of ML products in adult sheep, which is important for worm resistance and the environmental effects of these products. It also allows sheep to be treated if necessary, prior to being heavily in lamb, when dipping is no longer an option.

Contract dipper: Nick 01434 608999



Geld Sheep at Scanning

Josh Oliver, a final year vet student from the University of Cambridge

An empty rate at scanning of more than 2% is considered abnormally high and this may be the first indication of flock-level problems, so warrants investigation. The main areas in which there may be issues are infectious disease, nutrition, and tup performance.

Infectious diseases

Border disease is associated with high barren rates, abortion and birth of persistently infected lambs that are often, but not always, "hairy-shakers". BDV can be diagnosed by blood sampling of empty ewes.

Toxoplasmosis is a very common disease that causes high barren rates and abortions, especially in younger ewes. Blood samples from ewe lambs or gimmers are the best way to investigate. Vaccination is available and can be used to prevent problems in future years. As cats are involved in the transmission of toxoplasma, it is important to maintain a stable cat population. Please call the practice if you'd like further information about subsidised cat neutering programmes.

Liver fluke is investigated at this stage of the year by coproantigen testing on dung samples from empty ewes. Due to the increasing concern about resistance to flukicides, this is worthwhile even if ewes were treated for fluke. Other, less common infectious causes of high barren rates include Salmonella and Tick-borne fever.

Nutrition

Poor trace element status, especially low selenium or iodine levels, may result in high barren rates. Blood samples can be used to assess the trace element status of the flock. Supplementation based on these results can prevent further issues. In future years, problems can be prevented by blood sampling for trace elements pre-tupping.

Tup Failure

Tup testing allows us to identify subfertile tups. Tup testing should be carried out at least 6-8 weeks pre-intended tupping to allow time for any problems to be addressed.

If your flock experiences a high barren rate at scanning (greater than 2%), please don't hesitate to phone the practice to arrange an investigation into the problem.

The Benefits of Johnes Testing

Johnes is an important disease of cattle (which also affects sheep) causing wasting and scour. By the time clinical signs are seen the animal is no longer fit to go as a cull cow and so often has to be slaughtered on-farm.

Animals are infected with Johnes's disease as young calves through ingestion of dung containing the bacteria. Despite being infected in the first month of life, these animals will not test positive on blood tests until at least 2 years old, and generally don't show clinical signs until they are over 5 years old.

Annual testing is beneficial as it allows animals to be removed from the herd while they retain cull value, rather than waiting for clinical signs to become apparent. There is also the potential to gain accredited status as you work towards its eradication, meaning breeding animals can be sold at a premium.

The cost of testing 100 animals through the Premium Cattle Health Scheme (PCHS) is recovered by finding just one positive animal that can be sold for slaughter before clinical signs take hold. As such, the testing can be financially beneficial. Testing is generally best undertaken in winter for spring-calving herds (often at the same time as scanning) as this allows positive animals to be isolated from the herd prior to calving. This is important as young animals are most susceptible to the infection. For more information on Johnes's testing and its control please contact the practice.