Black Sheep Farm Health

July 2022 Newsletter

The Field Report

Summer is most definitely upon us with the silage pits starting to fill!

Happy News

The Black Sheep Team had a lovely day celebrating with Jack and Alison at their wedding last month. Congratulations to the happy couple.

Medicine Hub and Free Hats

The medicine hub is an online tool that allows you to monitor and compare medicine use at an individual farm level. The data collected from this hub will be used confidentially and with permission to prove our credentials around antibiotic use to the public, the supply chains and with export markets.

More information about how to register can be found at the medicine hub website (http://medicinehub.org.uk) or through AHDB (https://ahdb.org.uk/medicine-hub). Make sure you give us access to your account as your vet practice, the first 10 clients to do this will receive a **free hat**.

MEDICINE HUB

Euthanasia Course

We are going to run a course on euthanasia including how to recognise when euthanasia is the most appropriate course of action, the different methods available for livestock and a practical session on the use of the different methods available including correct positioning.

The course will be £40 +VAT, if you would like to register your interest please call the practice.

Cobalt Deficiency in Lambs

Worm burden and cobalt deficiency are the main cause of ill thrift in growing lambs. Through summer lambs require a daily intake of cobalt as there is no body storage and this is incorporated into Vitamin B12 which is involved in the energy cycle within the body.

The signs of a deficiency (often referred to as Pine) include loss of appetite, reduced weight gain or weight loss, anaemia and increased worm burdens. Diagnosis is based on clinical signs as well as blood samples and response to supplementation.

There are many ways to supplement cobalt generally in either short acting or long acting forms. Short acting supplementation includes injectable B12 or oral drenches but these require repeating every 3 weeks. Longer acting supplementation can either be by bolus (often including other trace elements, generally more expensive but can be a good option in long keep lambs) or long acting injection with SmartShot (which is an imported product) that gives 5 months supply.

XL Vets Farm

Rumen Fluke

Rumen fluke is a parasite affecting cattle and sheep that was first seen in the UK in 2010 but is becoming more common. The adult fluke are found in the rumen with the immature fluke in the small intestine. The intermediate host is the same snail as liver fluke so often both parasites can be present together.

Clinical signs are traditionally associated with immature worms in the small intestine causing profuse diarrhoea, poor condition, dehydration and even death, this is generally seen in young stock.

There is no scientific evidence that adult worm burdens cause clinical disease, however this is widely debated and we have multiple clients that have seen improvements when treatment for rumen fluke is undertaken. In the autumn in sheep we have seen significant increases in scanning percentage with treatment and in cattle improved ability to maintain condition when treated.

Diagnosis of the disease is based on faecal worm egg counts using sedimentation technique, this is the same test as for liver fluke. It is worthwhile considering testing prior to autumn fluke drenches to ensure rumen fluke is not present as only one of the flukicides we use has activity against rumen fluke.

Treatment for rumen fluke is dosing with oxyclozanide. Alternative control measures are similar to liver fluke due to the shared intermediate host with strategic treatment of stock along with pasture management to reduce exposure to snail habitat.

Ticks and Tick Borne Disease

This year has been particularly bad for ticks and we have already had diagnoses of tick borne disease in the area this year. The “Ixodes Ricinus” tick is our common tick and has a 3 host lifecycle that takes place over 3 years. It spends the majority of its time on pasture. Generally tick numbers increase in spring and autumn but varies depending on climatic conditions.

Ticks can cause irritation and anaemia particularly in young lambs and grouse but the most important concern is the transmission of tick borne diseases, listed below:

Tick Borne Fever – Affects cattle and sheep causing fever, mild illness but most importantly immunosuppression making animals more prone to tick bite pyaemia, louping ill and also other infections such as pneumonia. Can also cause abortion and infertility if naïve adults are exposed.

Louping Ill – Seen in sheep and less commonly in cattle. Most animals have mild illness with fever and recover but in some cases, particularly if they also have tick born fever, animals can develop nervous signs and disease may result in death. Seen in all ages but generally when passive immunity is waning.

Tick Bite Pyaemia – Generally seen in lambs of 2-16 weeks old and is also associated with tick born fever. Causes a generalised infection with *Staph Aureus* bacteria either causing septicaemia and death or localised infection such as joint ill and spinal abscesses.

Babesiosis (Red Water Fever) – Seen in naïve animals that are generally older and brought into the herd or when disease is suddenly introduced to a herd causing severe disease with fever and red urine that often causes death. Traditionally not known to be present in this area but there has been 1 reported case near Hexham.

Control of ticks is through pasture improvement to reduce tick habitat and the use of acaricide products such as organophosphate dips or synthetic pyrethroids as spot on or pour ons. There are no products licensed for control of ticks in cattle but there are options for use of products off license.

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