

Black Sheep Farm Health

July 2023 Newsletter



The Field Report

Finally a spot of rain!

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

SAVE THE DATE: Thursday 5th October

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!

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

Evening meeting covering foot health and disease for sheep and goats, with an overview of different causes of lameness.

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

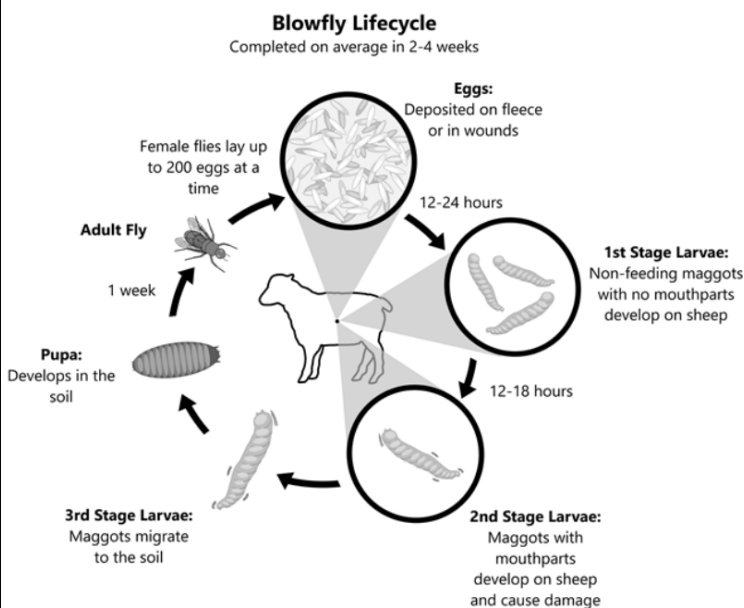
Longframlington Memorial Hall, NE65 8AH.

Refreshments provided. Please RSVP by calling the practice or emailing emili.ch@bsfh.co.uk

Blowfly Strike Alert

After the late start to the blowfly season, recent hot weather has increased the strike risk substantially throughout the UK. Dry weather will tend to make animals generally less susceptible to strike but, now that the fly population is growing, any rainfall will further increase the strike risk quickly, particularly in lambs.

Early signs of strike include irritation, nibbling, swishing of tails, rubbing and discomfort. As strike progresses, signs include damp or discoloured fleece, fleece loss, separation from flock, sick animals and death.



Many ewes will now be sheared, and the short fleece should offer some protection until it regrows.

Please get in touch for information about products available to aid in the prevention of strike.

Teasers

Teasers, or vasectomised tups, are used to synchronise ewe cyclicity and tighten lambing periods.

The ideal candidate for a teaser is a well grown, sexually mature shearling with good feet and teeth. A potential teaser should also be easy to identify, often a different breed to the stock rams. Homebred animals are often considered good candidates as they avoid the risk of introducing disease.

A vasectomy is a simple surgical procedure. To ensure effectiveness, the tup should ideally be vasectomised at least 6 weeks before intended use. Teasers should be introduced to ewes at a ratio of no more than 1:100.

An important consideration when using a teaser is that greater 'ram power' will be required— ie as a greater proportion of the ewes will be cycling together, a greater tup to ewe ratio is required— 1:30.

In addition to this, thought should be given to the workforce available at lambing time— a teaser should result in a greater portion of ewes lambing in the first cycle.

A teaser can be expected to work for 2-3 years, but effectiveness declines with time and they will need to be replaced to maintain a teasing effect.



Lead: The Bother with Batteries

We sporadically see cases of lead toxicity. There are a number of ways in which lead toxicity may present. Cattle most commonly present with acute neurological signs, including blindness, salivation, grinding teeth, twitching, tremors, seizures and death. These signs tend to progress quickly, and even with treatment, may prove fatal. Also seen is a 'subacute presentation', where the animal displays gastrointestinal signs, such as anorexia, gut stasis, colic, constipation or diarrhoea, before progressing to neurological signs. Less commonly, chronic lead poisoning may be seen, associated with poor fertility and recurrent aspiration pneumonia associated with impaired swallowing reflexes.

Cattle find lead sweet and palatable, and so continue to ingest from a source. As the source of lead is more often than not an old, discarded battery, it highlights to us the importance of, not only removing batteries from pasture, but also removing the vegetation and topsoil too, and fencing around the area, if you suspect that the battery may have leached. In addition to batteries, sources of lead may include lead paint, lead shot, lead flashing, lead pipes and old mine workings.



Due to concerns about public health, APHA must be informed when lead toxicity is diagnosed, so that they can determine if or when the meat, offal or milk may enter the food chain. Animals and/or their produce may need to be tested to investigate whether lead residues are present and also to monitor whether a withdrawal period has been adequate or whether the offal should be removed and condemned after slaughter.

Tapeworm Segments in Sheep

Tapeworms are flat, segmented worms that live in the intestine and have a head with hooks that attach to the gut wall with a body in the gut lumen composed of segments. The segments contain eggs and are continually breaking off and being passed in the faeces. Occasionally a strip of segments breaks off and is visible as a white ribbon on the muck, sometimes moving immediately after it is passed, seen particularly in lambs.



The presence of these segments in sheep faeces can sometimes cause alarm, but infection is generally asymptomatic and lambs can carry a heavy burden without any effect on daily live weight gain (DLWG).

There are other types of tapeworm that can affect sheep, namely the dog or fox tapeworm. Pasture becomes contaminated by dog or fox faeces, and sheep ingest eggs from the pasture and develop cysts in their muscles. Meat infected with dog or fox tapeworm cysts is condemned in the abattoir due to concerns about the appearance of the meat and to avoid infecting dogs and perpetuating the cycle. With this type of tapeworm infection, segments will not be seen in sheep and cattle faeces.

Changes to TB Notifications

Cattle keepers will no longer receive reminder notifications for post movement TB testing., when moving cattle from TB1 to TB4. Reminders for routine herd screening remain in place, but it is worth ensuring that deadlines for post movement testing, where required, are not missed.

What is likely of more importance is sourcing stock in such a way to reduce the risk of buying in TB and, where possible, avoiding the requirement for post movement testing by buying cattle from herds that are also on 4-yearly testing.

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