

# Black Sheep Farm Health

June 2019 Newsletter



## The Field Report

With lambing and calving coming to an end, now the real work begins! Parasites are starting to pick up pace, including ticks, flies, cocci and gut worms.

Once you have caught your breath, the summer is good time of year to reflect on the previous twelve months. Bear in mind many farm assurance schemes including Red Tractor now require an annual health and performance review.

## Mastering Medicines 2019

**Tuesday 11th June  
18:00-20:00.**

Fulfils Red Tractor recommendation.

**£40 ex.VAT, includes dinner and certificate of attendance. Book your place on 01669 838 288.**

## Correct use of Worm Egg Counts to ensure your lambs thrive

Worm egg counting is used to monitor adult worm burdens in youngstock, with results reported as 'eggs per gram' (epg) of faeces. This gives you an idea of pasture contamination and helps decide whether worming treatment is required. This is not only cost effective in terms of time and money but also can monitor whether previously used treatments have worked and prevent anthelmintic resistance. Where burdens are low, avoiding unnecessary treatments saves you time, money and hassle. Worm egg counts are already covered for clients on a plan.



### Practical Aspects of Sample Collection

- Fresh samples should be taken from either 6 individual animals, or pooled from a group of lambs, of approximately the same age and grazing the same pasture.
- If taking a pooled sample, gather the animals and let them stand quietly for 5-10 minutes before allowing them to disperse and collecting the freshly passed faeces.
- Collect samples in an airtight container or plastic bag with a minimum of 3g in each - approximately a good teaspoon full.
- Protect yourself by wearing gloves during collection and washing your hands afterwards.
- Keep the samples cool but not frozen during storage and transport and submit them as soon as possible, as if the sample is too old then some eggs could have hatched and the reported count will be underestimated.

### Collection Times

First samples should be taken when lambs are 6 weeks old and rechecked at 4 weekly intervals

### Checking Wormers Are Working

The time between treatment and sampling to see if the wormer has worked effectively depends on the wormer used:

- Levamisole / Morantel (LM yellow wormers): 5-7 days post treatment
- Benzimidazoles (BZ white wormers): 10-14 days post treatment
- Avermectin / Milbemycin (ML clear wormers): 14-16 days post treatment
- Monepantel e.g 'Zolvix' 4-AD (orange) or Derquantel e.g 'Startect' 5-SI (purple): 14 days post treatment



## Getting the Most out of Medicines: Storage

Medicines represent a significant investment to the farm business. In order for medicines to work properly it is essential that they are not only used in the correct manner, but they are stored correctly too. Medicine stewardship is often part of farm assurance schemes such as Red Tractor.

**Location:** Medicines should be kept in a secure cupboard, or fridge for chilled items such as vaccines. These should be away from household, office or public areas and not alongside human or animal food and drink. Some medicines, such as oxytetracycline (e.g. 'Alamycin'), are light sensitive and should be kept in the dark. Access should be limited to staff who have been trained in using them correctly.

**Temperature:** Preventing exposure to extremes in temperature is vital. This is particularly important for vaccines which should be refrigerated between 2-8°C; ineffective vaccines result in unprotected animals. Very low temperatures are an issue as medicines can freeze. If this happens, let them defrost naturally in a warm room - do not try to defrost them with hot water.

**Transport:** When collecting temperature sensitive products, such as vaccines, you should always use a cool bag to store the product until you get home, when the product should be immediately transferred back into a fridge. Taking the product directly from the practice to the farm is best as they can warm up within 20 minutes.

**Usage and Handling:** Check the data sheet or label in/on the box to make sure you administer medicines at the correct dose and by the correct route. Once opened, injectables can become contaminated and while most have a fairly long breach period of 28 days, some (live) vaccines need to be used within 8-24 hours of opening. Use fresh needles and syringes to prevent medicines becoming contaminated; use one needle to draw up vaccine and another one to inject. Change needles as often as possible; in practice this means every 10 animals, or between groups. Needles definitely need changing if they are dropped or become visibly contaminated or bent.



## Hot under the collar about livestock and climate change?

The impact of livestock, and especially ruminant livestock, on the climate continues to be of great interest to the general public and media. Unfortunately the narrative remains confused by sensational and often conflicting reports.

If you're struggling for clarity, the Oxford Martin School (part of the University of Oxford) has produced a report that lays out how methane produced in the gut of cattle and sheep impacts the climate, and if/how this needs to be dealt with.

The report can be found here:

<https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/reports/Climate-metrics-for-ruminant-livestock.pdf>

Or simply by searching for 'climate metrics for ruminant livestock' online.

Some good news is that all the measures suckler and sheep farmers take to improve animal health, as well as the farm's bottom line, also tend to reduce the methane output per kg of beef or lamb. As methane is a potent greenhouse gas, even a small reduction has a significant benefit.

PROGRAMME BRIEFING  
JULY 2018



### Climate metrics for ruminant livestock

