

Black Sheep Farm Health

March 2021 Newsletter



The Field Report

Although many farmers across the UK are now in the thick of it, many of you are probably just getting going. In this calm before the storm, take five to read our updates below - on getting your lambing order in, making benchmarking work for you, and more.

Best of luck and remember we are here to serve... and we have plenty of Kaiwakas in for lambing and calving!

Lambing and Calving List: get your orders in!

The 2021 spring supply list is enclosed with this newsletter and bill (or attached if bills are by email). If you are unsure about exactly what you might want or need, give us a ring and we can explain the use of each product.

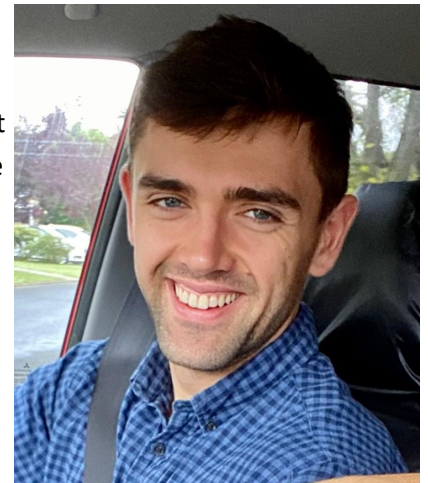
Please give us at least 24 hours to get your order ready! It helps avoid delay and disappointment, and makes life much easier for Hazel and Carole.

Black Sheep Team News

We're very pleased to announce that after just over three years as an assistant, Kaz has joined the partnership.

'I am very excited to join the BSFH partnership. The partners, as well as Hazel and Carole, have been hugely supportive during my first years in practice. I owe thanks to Jack, Jenny and Joe for this vote of confidence. Joining the partnership is my chance to put my money where my mouth is, and contribute to the profession in my small way. I believe in the type of practice that we are building: vet-led and client-focused.'

I should also thank our clients, as their support has allowed the practice to grow to this point. There are challenging times ahead for British farmers, and the veterinary profession needs to be at its best to support them. Fewer and fewer young vets get this opportunity, arguably leading to vet dissatisfaction and high team turnover, which in turn compromises the service to farmer and livestock. This 'change' is about stability: we will continue to provide the service you want, need and deserve.'



Taken before he realised he is now responsible for his own truck repair bills

Have you wormed your dogs recently? Protect your sheep

Don't forget that all farms dogs should be wormed every three months with a wormer active against tapeworms (e.g. Cazitel). Dogs shed various tapeworms that can infect sheep, with costly consequences.

These tapeworms form fluid-filled cysts around the body (see picture). These can either lead to partial or whole carcass condemnation. One species of tapeworm forms cysts on the brain, leading to fatal neurological signs.

Of course, cleaning up after dogs is another sensible precaution. Sarcocystosis (a cause of lambs going 'off-their-legs', likely to be underdiagnosed) and neosporosis (the most commonly diagnosed infectious cause of abortion in cattle) are both transmitted by dogs via their faeces. Rights of way are always problematic - signage can help as the general public are usually unaware of the risks their pets can pose.



Make benchmarking work for you: recording data at lambing and calving

Benchmarking is an integral part of keeping a livestock enterprise going - we can't demonstrate improvement without first measuring a baseline.

During the cut and thrust of a busy spring, aspirations of recording can easily fall by the wayside as work mounts. This means recording should be as straightforward as possible: start small, only record what is most important and, if it works, try adding something more the next year.

We think recording or benchmarking should focus on what is most relevant to you. For example, most sheep farmers know their scanning % going back years, but not many know their rearing % off the top of their head. Which do they get paid for? Which has the biggest impact on farm success, whichever way you define that?

Some important examples include:

- Number of live calves/lambs born
- % heifers and % cows assisted
- Number of scour/joint ill/navel ill/watery mouth cases treated and died
- Number of twin lamb disease/staggers/mastitis/abortion cases treated and died
- Mortality at birth/first 2 days/first 2 weeks/pre-weaning
- Cases of vaginal prolapses, mastitis, lameness etc marked for culling

Data on production is vital and often lacking, but it is not the only consideration. For example, reducing the % of cows and heifers requiring assistance will lead to:

1. A greater number of live calves,
2. Less time spent suckling calves
3. Fewer calves treated for joint and navel ills
4. Fewer empty cows for the next year.

This not only increases profitability and animal welfare but improves your vital work-life balance.

Do you get 'lambing ears'?

'Lambing ears' is a mysterious skin condition of farmers, that only occurs during the lambing period, specifically in indoor lambing systems in the UK.

Skin on the ears becomes hot, itchy and sore, before blistering and crusting.

The same farmers are not affected when in close contact with sheep when shearing a few months later. Intriguingly, although medics have theorised that it is a reaction to lambing fluids, no such condition is reported on the hands and arms, which experience greatest exposure to fetal fluids.



Calciject (Blue Top) alternatives

The 'blue top' 20 CMD Calciject injection is now off the market. There are a couple of alternative options for treating low calcium in ewes.



1. 'EweGo' energy and calcium drench.

We have stocked this solution for some time.

Low calcium and low energy often go hand-in-hand in sick ewes, and in any case they are difficult to distinguish. Propylene glycol provides the energy, with calcium added to counter hypocalcaemia. Both are absorbed well orally.

2. An injectable calcium solution

Available in 500ml bottles, this is the closest equivalent to the 20 CMD calciject, used in the same way. Unlike EweGo it is not a source of energy.

For more information, just telephone one of the vets, or the practice on 01669 838 288.