

Black Sheep Farm Health

March 2023 Newsletter



The Field Report

Set On Calves

A cow that has a dead calf or loses a calf can feel like a waste of time and money if you don't have an appropriate calf to set on. It can be tempting to buy calves from another farm to set onto this animal, but it is important to consider if these calves are worth risking the health of your herd.

If you do decide to buy calves to set on, consider the disease status of the farm of origin.

Are they BVD accredited free?

Do they have a similar Johne's status to your animals?

Will you need to test this animal to maintain your disease status?

Regardless of herd status, we would strongly recommend BVD antigen testing any bought-in calves, either through tissue tagging or blood sampling, as we have recently found a PI in some bought-in calves.

It is not just BVD and Johne's that can be brought onto farm with set on calves. For example, Mycoplasma Bovis, IBR, other pneumonia pathogens and scour pathogens could be introduced. For these diseases, it is difficult to determine the status of the farm of origin as routine surveillance is not in place for these pathogens. Brought in calves could have a significant impact on the future of your herd.

Use of Metacam in Neonates

A study of dairy animals found that 6% of new-born calves had fractured ribs and that these animals had significantly reduced daily live weight gains (DLWG). Dystocia, or difficulty calving, makes rib fractures more likely.

There is evidence that the use of anti-inflammatories such as Metacam, given immediately post birth, leads to greater calf growth in early weeks of life, likely due to reducing pain related to rib fractures or other calving-associated injuries, allowing for increased colostrum intake. For this reason, we would recommend that any calves or lambs who require assistance at birth are given pain relief.

SPRING OPENING TIMES

To make sure that everyone can get what they need through lambing and calving, the office will be open on Saturday mornings, including Easter weekend, throughout April from 9 am to 1 pm.

Lambing List

We have now sent out this year's lambing list, please fill it in and return it to the office so we can get everything prepared and put up for you.

Lambing Course

A day-long course covering the basics of lambing.

£50+ VAT

Wednesday 15th March, 10am - 5pm

Alnham Church (NE66 4TL) then a nearby farm for practical. Lunch and refreshment provided.

RSVP by calling the practice (01669 838 288) or emailing info@bsfh.co.uk

Importance of Selenium for Immunity and Vaccine Response

We commonly see low selenium levels across Northumberland, in both cattle and sheep. Selenium is involved in many roles within the body but is particularly important in the proper function of the immune system.

Animals that are low in selenium have poorer immune systems, making them more susceptible to infections.

These animals are also likely to have a poorer response to vaccination. It is important to consider the selenium status of your stock prior to vaccination to ensure that you get the maximum returns from your investment in vaccinations and animal health.

Blood tests can be very useful in assessing trace element status, and provide us with the necessary information to supplement animals as necessary.



Colostrum is Gold

Colostrum is vital for calves, lambs and kids to ensure that they receive adequate antibodies to allow them to fight infection early in life. A study of beef suckler calves found that 1 in 7 animals had complete failure of colostrum absorption and 1 in 3 had partial failure.

The main points for colostrum can be summarised using the 4 Q's:

- **Quality** - Ensuring colostrum contains adequate antibody levels is important. This can be achieved by providing adequate protein and appropriate vaccination prior to lambing/calving. If using a colostrum replacer, it is important to ensure you check the antibody content of the supplement you are using. We recommend using Immucol Platinum which we stock at the practice.
- **Quantity** - Calves should suckle vigorously from the cow for 20 minutes to ensure adequate colostrum intake. Calves should receive 4 litres of colostrum and lambs should receive 50 ml/kg of colostrum as a first feed.
- **Quickly** - The first feed of colostrum should be given within 2 hours of birth. The ability for the calf/lamb to absorb the antibodies decreases with time.
- **sQueaky Clean** - It is important that all equipment for feeding colostrum is kept clean and disinfected regularly.

Colostrum monitoring is a useful tool, particularly if you are having problems with watery mouth, joint ill or navel ill. The colostrum quality can be checked using a brix refractometer.

The colostrum transfer in the calves/lambs can be checked by blood sampling animals aged between 24 hours and 7 days old. This can indicate the success of antibody transfer on your farm.

Causes of Abortion in Ewes

There are many causes of abortion in ewes including both infectious (e.g. enzootic abortion, campylobacter, salmonella, toxoplasmosis, tick born fever, borders disease etc.) and non infectious causes (e.g. stress, vaccination, poor nutrition etc). Almost half of ewe abortion submissions to SAC last year were due to either toxoplasmosis or enzootic abortion of ewes both of which have vaccinations available.

If abortion levels in your flock are greater than 2% or if you have more than 2 abortions in a day this should be investigated. Investigations involve taking samples of both the aborted foetus and placenta and may also include blood sampling the ewes.

Due to the infectious nature of many abortions it is important that the aborted ewe is isolated from the flock, her aborted material is removed and the area disinfected and bedded.

Funding available through Animal Health and Welfare Pathway

As many may know, there will be a number of different grants available as part of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway. One that has stood out to us is a government contribution to a medical grade fridge. To have confidence in vaccine efficacy, it is important that you are confident that your fridge can reliably maintain the correct temperature!

For the full list of funding and for further information, please follow the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-equipment-and-technology-fund-fetf-2023/annex-4-fetf-2023-animal-health-and-welfare-eligible-items>