

# Black Sheep Farm Health

May 2018 Newsletter



## Red Tractor Changes

There are some important changes to the farm assurance scheme requirements relating to antibiotic use. More information can be found on the Red Tractor website as 'Responsible Use of Antibiotics on Red Tractor Farms'

For beef and sheep farmers, the main changes involve:

- 'A **written annual livestock health and performance review** must be undertaken by the vet'
- 'Highest Priority Critically Important Antibiotics\* must only be used as a last resort under veterinary direction'
- 'It is recommended that at least one member of staff responsible for administering medicines has undertaken **training in the handling and administration of medicines**'

Practically, it means reducing and refining the use of antibiotics through proactive health planning. HP-CIAs\* can't be used as a first option, and when they are used, we need diagnostic tests to gauge sensitivity to the antibiotic in question.

For the purpose of 'performance reviews' we have sales of antibiotics recorded on our practice software and, importantly, this data is split into sheep and cattle.

Finally, we're holding a 'Mastering Medicines' course that complies with the new requirements this summer. The course will most likely be a half-day and will be as practical as possible. Contact Hazel if you're interested or know anyone who would be.

For any more guidance on the new rules, don't hesitate to get in touch with one of our vets.

\*HP-CIAs are fluoroquinolones (e.g 'Marbox') and 3rd/4th generation cephalosporins (e.g certain dry cow tubes)



## The Field Report

Lambing and calving continues apace. For us, seeing livestock turned out to pasture is a great antidote to the turbulent spring weather, however slowly the grass may be growing.

There is some housekeeping this month, with details on changes to the Red Tractor scheme and the product licence for 'Cydectin'. There is information on cocci in beef calves enclosed too - the wet weather has made it a bad year for this particular parasite.

## Coccidiosis in beef calves

### Key Points

- **Coccidiosis in beef calves varies in severity but often chronically decreases growth rates, resulting in significant economic costs.**
- **The main sign is a profuse diarrhoea in several calves at 6-8 weeks, often with blood or mucus.**
- **Treatment involves giving a coccidiocide by mouth.**
- **Prevention is centred on hygiene and nutrition.**

Coccidiosis is an important cause of scour in calves and lambs. The severity of effects ranges from fatal to subclinical. The risk of losing calves is low but disease spreads quickly within a group, and recovery from coccidiosis is protracted. In beef calves the major economic effect is a reduced carcass weight or increased time to slaughter.

Typically, coccidiosis affects older calves (six to eight weeks old) than many other causes of scour such as *E. coli* or rotavirus. The most common signs are scour, wasting and poor appetite. The scour is profuse, often with flecks of fresh blood and mucus. Irritation can also lead to persistent straining, which can occasionally lead to rectal prolapse.

### Treatment

If coccidiosis is suspected, treatment is reasonably straightforward. As with any scouring calf, isolate them where possible. There are a number of oral coccidiocides on the market, with the active ingredients diclazuril ('Vecoxan'), and toltrazuril ('Baycox', 'Tolracol') and resistance does not appear to be a problem in coccidia. The benefit of the latter is that their persistent activity means that just one treatment is needed, whereas diclazuril products may need to be repeated three weeks later. Dehydrated calves also require appropriate fluids - products such as 'Rehydion' fit the bill nicely. Finally as with any sick calf, nursing is key.



## Prevention

As coccidia are present in the gut of all adult cattle, eradication is not feasible or necessary. The focus should be on reducing the challenge faced by calves at an early age. In practical terms this means optimising hygiene:

- Keep **calving pens well bedded and dry**
- Both **feed and water troughs should be clean of dung** contamination
- Have a suitable **space ready to isolate scouring calves**
- **Calve in tight batches and don't mix age groups** - consider synchronisation and AI if feasible.
- In fields, **reduce or eliminate access to standing water** including poached areas around water troughs.
- **Supply mains water** where available.

Disinfection is also an important part of shed hygiene, although eggs of coccidia are more resistant to disinfectants than other pathogens. The eggs persist for over 12 months, so simply resting sheds without cleaning them out won't avoid the calves being exposed. As ever, getting calves off to a good start with the appropriate dose of colostrum is vital.

If, despite taking sensible measures, the challenge is likely to be high a prophylactic dose (of one of the coccidiocides mentioned above) can be given. The timing of this varies but is often at six to eight weeks old. Previous outbreaks of disease on a particular farm can also be used to estimate when future outbreaks will occur. Check the recommendation for each product, but often the treatment is given around 1 week into the risk period.

Many of these control elements are common to other calf diseases - therefore by taking steps against cocci, the challenge of other diseases reduces too. For example standing water also increases the risk of Johne's, leptospirosis and salmonella.



Photo courtesy of NADIS

## Product News: Cydectin Licence

A change in licence for Cydectin products, both the injectable and oral forms, should be noted by anyone using the product. They are based on concerns about the persistency of the product in water and dung. The key considerations are:

- Treatments should be administered **only when necessary** and should be **based on faecal egg counts or evaluation of the risk of infestation** at the animal and/or herd level.
- It is **advisable not to treat animals every time on the same pasture** to allow dung fauna populations to recover.
- Animals should **not have access to watercourses during the 10 days after** the treatment.

If using 'Cydectin' injectable, remember to only inject under skin behind the ear. If the product is injected anywhere else, there is a potentially infinite meat withdrawal.

Don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any further questions about 'Cydectin' or other product licences.

## A helping hand for farmers

Now that the snow has finally cleared from all but the highest peaks the full extent of damage done by the winter weather is becoming evident. We've seen on our rounds that, although some have got off lighter than others, no one has had it easy.

If you feel the toll taken has become excessive, then do not hesitate to speak to someone. There are a number of services available, including:

- **Farming Community Network:** 0300 0111 999 (7am - 11pm)
- **RABI:** 0808 281 9490
- **Samaritans:** 116 123 (24 hours)

It goes without saying that we are here to talk to as well, and as with business any discussions remain confidential.

## Prolapse Study

For those of you with sheep, you will see a questionnaire enclosed with your newsletter for a study being carried out by Edinburgh University on vaginal (pre-lambing) prolapses in sheep.

The survey is just a page long and will inform future treatment of the condition - anyone who brings their form back to the practice in person is entitled to a cup of tea and a biscuit!