

November 2025

NEWSLETTER



Fluke: Low Risk Doesn't Mean No Risk

With the long dry summer, fluke risk *may* be lower on some farms than previous years.

We would, however, like to reiterate that low risk does not mean no risk; we have diagnosed fluke on multiple farms since September.

The dry summer conditions may have driven stock to preferentially graze the damper areas where the grass quality may have been better, and this may have put them in contact with the fluke's intermediate host, the mud snail.

Testing remains the best option to cope with the unpredictability of fluke risk on an individual farm, avoiding treatments that are unnecessary or too early, while also making sure animals are treated in time to minimise any production losses.

We can carry out pen-side fluke antibody tests; these tests detect fluke from 2 weeks post initial infection and are a valuable tool when decision making about fluke risk.

As the test cannot differentiate between fluke antibodies acquired in previous years from recent exposure, these test should be carried out on lambs or calves, rather than adult animals.



^ A typical mud snail habitat

'We calve twice a year; the first half and the second half'

At this time of year, as cattle are being housed, we are busy PD'ing spring calvers. We often hear, exclaimed with a chuckle, "it's the bull coming next, he won't need to be PD'ed!"

A bull still running with the cows during November could make for a very long calving period! There are many benefits to maintaining a tight calving period:

- Higher calf weaning weights and a more even batch of calves
- Easier management of the calf crop and calf diseases
- Ensures only cows with good fertility are retained in the herd

We often hear 'there is just nowhere to put the bulls away from the cows'. There is, however, usually somewhere the bulls can go away from the main group of cows:

- With a couple of bullocks
- With in-calf cows
- With a small number of cows before they've been PD'ed; this limits the potential number of late calvers
- Bulls housed with each other if they already have established relationships

Borrow Our Scales for Weaning Weights

Remember you can borrow our weigh scales! They have been freshly serviced and are ready to see a bit of work this autumn and winter.

Call the practice to arrange borrowing the scales for your calf weaning weights.

A Checklist for a Smoother Winter

- ☐ Ensure silage analysis and ration planning completed well in advance of housing. Contact Claire or Kaz to arrange.
- ☐ Ensure **pneumonia vaccines** have been given in plenty of time before housing.
- ☐ Consider **lower stress weaning options** such as fence line weaning or quiet wean nose flaps. Consider trying Feraplease at weaning?
- ☐ Ensure calves have been introduced to silage or any other novel feedstuffs pre-weaning.
- ☐ **Plan protein provision** for weaned calves.
- ☐ Ensure housing is managed to reduce stress and risk of disease, with **dry, fresh bedding, good ventilation without draughts and provision of clean water**.
- ☐ Arrange timely PDs.
- ☐ Consider the timing of your Johne's disease testing if you have a TB test due this winter; the TB skin test can interfere in Johne's test results for 3 months.
- ☐ If planning on getting cows freeze branded, this could be booked in alongside other routine jobs. Contact Kaz to arrange freeze branding.
- ☐ Identify any lame cows and get them seen to.

Clipping Ewes Before Lambing?

An interesting study from New Zealand has linked shearing ewes during pregnancy to improved lamb survival, farm profitability and sustainability.

In the study, one group of ewes were clipped at day 70 of gestation, another at day 110 and a final group were left unshorn.

Key findings from the study:

- Pre-lambing clipping, regardless of timing, increased size of placenta (by weight of cotyledons, or 'buttons')
- Lambs from shorn ewes were heavier than lambs from unshorn ewes at birth and at 72hrs
- Lambs born to shorn ewes suckled sooner than lambs born to unshorn ewes
- There was no evidence for an effect of pre-partum shearing on gestation length, parturition length, time of placental expulsion, placental efficiency, weight and energy of perirenal brown fat, and lamb temperature at birth.

The study demonstrated that shearing ewes before lambing may lead to placental changes affecting lamb development and behaviour. These changes are associated with higher lamb survival.

A winter clip will not work for all production systems, but an interesting thing to consider if you house ewes!

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