

# Black Sheep Farm Health

October 2023 Newsletter



## The Field Report

### Alwinton Show– 14th October

Looking forward to seeing everyone at Alwinton Show-pop by for a drink, cake and some chat!

### Swedes, Skiing, and the South Island: A Year in New Zealand

**CHANGE OF DATE: NOW WILL BE HELD ON THURSDAY 2ND NOVEMBER**

**Thursday 2nd November  
Longframlington Memorial Hall, NE65 8AH**

Arrive from 6.30pm for hot beef rolls and drink, ahead of a 7.30pm start.

Kaz has now returned from New Zealand, we look forward to welcoming him back with a client meeting to hear more about his travels and experiences vetting in New Zealand over a drink or two

This meeting is free and open to anyone who wishes to attend.

Please RSVP to the practice, one of the vets or by emailing [claire.neillans@bsfh.co.uk](mailto:claire.neillans@bsfh.co.uk)

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### Early Pregnancy Scanning Cows

There are many benefits to early pregnancy scanning beef cows. It can be used as a tool to improve margins and cut carbon.

Early scanning allows identification of empty cows, avoiding wintering costs for non-productive animals. This is also good for improving carbon efficiency of production. Early scanning also allows for detection of twins.

Give the practice a call to get your spring calving cows booked in.

### Myth Busting: Tups & Antibiotics

There is a common myth that gets passed around regarding antibiotics causing infertility in tups. No research, data or evidence exists to support this. In fact, research in Canada shows that commonly used antibiotics such as oxytetracycline (e.g. Alamylin) and tilmicosin (e.g. Micotil) have no effect on fertility in bulls even when used at a double dose. An exception to this rule is florfenicol (in preparation such as Resflor and Zeleris.)

What is much more likely is that the disease being treated reduces fertility as a result of the associated fever. In fact, prompt treatment with antibiotics and anti-inflammatories of a sick tup is key to reducing a high temperature and therefore protecting sperm production. Any tup that has been ill in the run up to tugging should be semen tested to make sure his fertility hasn't been affected.

### Sheep Keepers: APPLY FOR AHWP NOW!

Any of our sheep keepers that have not yet applied for and completed the animal health and welfare pathway, now is the time to do so. The funding is available for completing worm egg counts as part of drench efficacy testing. As we approach winter, this will become less relevant, and applications should be made now to allow for testing to take place.

Please get in touch for support with your applications.

### Blood Sampling Bought-In Tups for Scab

Many people will have bought new tups in preparation for the season ahead. All bought in animals pose some degree of risk.

One particular concern in sheep scab; tups will have close contact with every ewe on the farm in the coming weeks. Blood sampling tups for scab ahead of tugging can identify those with recent exposure to scab, allowing you to address this before the tups go out!



## Vet Attestation for Non Red Tractor Approved Farms

A vet attestation will be required by December for those farms who are not Red Tractor Assured. Farms without an attestation will not be able to send animals to slaughter, including cull ewes. Please get in touch if you are not red tractor assured and we can arrange the attestation for you.

## Maximising Growth in Weaned Calves

Profitability of sucker cattle relies on low fixed costs, low variable costs and optimal output. There are many factors that affect growth rates:

### **Nutrition & Protein at Weaning:**

It is important to make sure calves are on the same ration pre and post weaning; this ensures their gut has adjusted to the new ration and that they are familiar with the diet. The withdrawal of milk, often coinciding with housing, can result in a massive change in a calf's diet, most notably in protein levels. This reduction in protein will reduce growth rates so it is important to consider ways to increase protein in the diet; turn out onto kale or grass, utilising legumes for silage or top dressing with soya or beans. If you'd like to chat about calculating rations, please get in touch and Joe will be happy to help.

### **Trace Element Status:**

Trace elements play a vital role in all body functions. Correct trace element status is key for growth and immunity, so are vital in weaned calves. If status is unknown samples, should be taken 6 weeks post weaning. Supplementation can take many forms including boluses, long acting injectables and mineralised feed.

### **Pneumonia Vaccines:**

Pneumonia causes massive losses through mortality, reduced growth and cost of treatment. It is a multifactorial disease. Stress around weaning makes calves more susceptible to pneumonia. Calves should be vaccinated against RSV and PI3 viruses before housing. Other vaccinations may be used depending on farm history and previous causes of pneumonia. It is important to investigate any pneumonia outbreaks in order to prevent them in the future. Vaccines are important but are not a substitute for good management. Stress, shed design, nutrition and trace element status should also be addressed in order to prevent pneumonia in weaned calves.

### **Housing & Ventilation:**

Housing environment is key to ensuring reductions in pneumonia, vaccination cannot overcome poor ventilation. The shed environment should be dry and free of dust. This is achieved by ensuring adequate air inlet and outlet. Heat stress leads to reduced feed intake and therefore reduced growth rates. Clipping backs out helps to reduce heat stress in housed spring calves. If you would like to assess your shed ventilation give us a call to arrange a shed audit. We can also provide advice at the design stage for new sheds.

### **Worms & Fluke:**

Any worm burden will reduce daily live weight gain and risks an outbreak of type two ostertagiasis, causing mortality and diarrhoea. Worm egg counts while grazing or pepsinogen testing at housing can be used to decide if treatment is required. The risk of fluke varies massively between farms and from one year to the next. First grazing season calves can be blood tested for fluke antibodies at least 2 weeks after housing to assess if they have been exposed to fluke and if treatment is required— **last year only 5 of 20 were positive for fluke!**

### **Stress:**

Weaning is a stressful experience for cow and calf, and can result in reduced liveweight gain due to increased physical activity (vocalising and pacing), which reduces time spent feeding. Stress at weaning also affects a calf's immune system for at least two weeks after; this can make calves more susceptible to disease and less able to respond to vaccinations.

**Steps to reduce stress at weaning;** avoid other stressors (vaccination, dehorning, castration), avoid changes to housing, feed, water or social groups for two weeks after weaning, ensure novel feedstuffs are introduced before weaning (silage eating is learned from mum!), consider fence-line weaning or quiet wean nose flaps, remove cows from the calves to leave calves in familiar environment.

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