

September 2024

NEWSLETTER



Workshop: Management of Calf Weaning

Wednesday 2nd October, 1-5pm

Venue TBC

£30+VAT per person

Refreshments provided

Please RSVP to the practice
on 01669 838288

Client Evening Save the Date: Keeping Lambs Alive Discussion

Evening of Thursday 3rd October

All welcome to attend, more details to follow

Remember Quarantine Treatments for Incoming Tups

Consider the unwanted guests incoming tups may be carrying and ensure steps are taken to prevent introducing these into your flock.

- ### Short of Straw?
- A challenging year of weather has caused all manner of problems, not least a shortage of straw as we look towards the winter.
- Consider, is this the year to trial shortening the winter housing period?
- Deferred grazing has the potential to shorten the winter housing period and therefore lower associated costs.
 - Not every field on every farm will be suited to outwintering on deferred grazing. Consider shutting up a drier field now, ideally with some access to shelter, to defer the grazing for winter.
 - The longer the deferred or rest period, the higher the dry matter yield but the poorer the quality, so is best suited to animals with low energy demands, such as dry suckler cows.
 - Leaving a portion of adult cows outside after weaning may be a good option. Even a handful of well-conditioned cows outside for part of the winter will contribute to reduced wintering costs.
 - Remember, as with any form of outwintering, always have a contingency plan in place for extreme weather.

- **Quarantine:** Incoming animals should be quarantined for 3-4 weeks and monitored for any signs of disease.
- **Avoid introducing resistant worms:** Gold standard is to treat incoming tups with both orange and purple drenches, but Zolvix (an orange wormer) given alongside a clear injectable or drench is a suitable alternative. Place on hard standing for 48 hours after treatment then turn out onto "dirty" pasture.
- **Sheep Scab:** Sheep should either be treated for scab on arrival (injectable moxidectin or organophosphate dip), or should be blood sampled 2 weeks after arrival for exposure to scab.
- **Liver Fluke:** Treat with closantel or triclabendazole on arrival followed by a repeated dose of closantel 6weeks later. Graze on well drained dry pasture until both treatments are completed.
- **Lameness:** Examine feet on arrival for problems and treat as required. Foot bath twice in quarantine period with Zinc Sulphate solution ie Golden Hoof. Consider vaccination with Footvax.
- Bring animals up to date with the routine flock treatments ie vaccines.

Red Clover & Sheep Fertility Update: Devil in the detail

Although red clover can be a highly nutritious forage, the accepted wisdom for shepherds and vets has been to avoid grazing red clover for six weeks before and after tupping. This is because red clover contains high levels of 'phyto-oestrogens' which can interfere with both ewe and tup fertility. This theory was backed up by extensive research from the Southern Hemisphere – indicating significantly increased barren %, increased return to service and fewer lambs per ewe mated.

However, with a red clover renaissance in the UK, there has been more interest in mating ewes on the forage. Anecdotal evidence suggests that sheep could be mated safely, and an Innovative Farmers field lab trial found that ewes grazing red clover during the risk period were more fertile, not less.

So, was the original research completely wrong, and red clover safe to feed during mating? Not exactly. The apparent contradiction may be due to differences in the experimental conditions:

- **Percentage of the sward:** The Southern Hemisphere work demonstrated negative effects in swards that were ~60-100% red clover. In contrast, the Innovative Farmers trial swards had an average of 17.6% red clover by fresh weight (the highest being 36.9%).
- **Phyto-oestrogen content:** Following the original research, clover breeders have been selecting cultivars for lower phyto-oestrogen content. The 'Pawera' cultivar used in much of the original research was popular because of its persistency, productivity, and strong summer growth.

So, we're comparing apples with oranges: the older studies involved more red clover, with a higher phyto-oestrogen content. When decision-making on your farm, we therefore ought to consider the percentage of the sward that is red clover, and the clover cultivar. The Innovative Farmers field lab was reassuring for swards with a minority red clover content, but for red clover-dominant swards the message is very much still 'handle with care'.



Consider Cull Ewe Screens with AHWP Funding

Reapply for Animal Health & Welfare Pathway for your sheep enterprise to receive **£1075 towards sheep health**; comprised of £436 for phase one (health planning and WECs) and £639 for phase two (endemic disease follow-up).

Cull ewe screens may be a good way of utilising this endemic disease funding and can give an insight into the 'iceberg' diseases which may be affecting your flock such as Maedi Visna (MV), Johne's disease and Caseous lymphadenitis (CLA). These diseases can limit production and these cull ewe screens can be used to inform decision making and to implement management strategies.

This 'endemic disease funding' could also be used at other points in the year to investigate:

- **Reproductive performance** with pre-lambing metabolics or barren ewe screens
- **Lamb performance** ie nutrition, trace elements, border disease, parasitic gastroenteritis, coccidiosis, ewe mastitis
- **Neonatal survival** ie border disease, toxoplasmosis, joint ill, ewe nutrition status, trace elements, watery mouth, mastitis, tick pyaemia, lamb dysentery, pasteurellosis)
- **External parasites** ie scab
- **Lameness**

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