

Black Sheep Farm Health

August 2022 Newsletter



The Field Report

Watch Out For Lungworm

There have already been reports of lungworm this year which is earlier than normal suggesting there may be a significant challenge this autumn and winter. This current hot and dry weather will likely slow down the parasite but there will be a significant challenge when the wetter weather returns. Typical signs include coughing, deaths and poor weight gain.

Medicine Hub

Going forward we will be using the AHDB Medicine Hub for antibiotic collation that is required as part of your health plan by Red Tractor. We can set up an account on your behalf to allow this but will require a response to an email from medicine hub, when you receive this email if you are happy for this to be created please press accept and we can calculate your antibiotic usage.

Introduction to Emili

Emili is from North Shropshire, where her family farms Hereford x Simmental cattle and a small flock of Herdwick sheep. She has recently graduated from the University of Glasgow and looks forward to joining the team at BSFH in August. In her spare time, Emili likes to explore the outdoors with her dog, Fly.



Weigh Your Adult Sheep

Do you know the average weight of sheep in your flock? It is worth considering weighing a group of your adult flock to give an accurate average weight to allow accurate dosing of adult ewes. We have certainly been shocked by how much heavier some animals are weighing than the usual estimation would have us dosing for!

Northumberland Monitor Farm—Get Set for Winter Grazing

Alnham Farm, Whittingham, Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 4TJ

Wednesday 17th August. 10:30am—3 pm

Bale grazing and deferred grazing are tools to help achieve lower cost wintering systems: but getting set up requires planning ahead.

This years AHDB Monitor Farmer G Sordy & Sons plan to reduce their usual winter housing period by outwintered some of their spring calving suckler cows on 100ha of deferred hill ground and bale grazing youngstock on some in-bye ground. Outwintering cows can reduce winter costs by up to 70%.

During this meeting consultants Emily Grant and Rhidian Jones will guide attendees through the process of setting both systems up including infrastructure requirements (water and feeding), shut off dates and recovery period for deferred grazing, working out how much feed you need and allocating it through the winter, target growth rates in youngstock and the importance of BCS in cows and identifying suitable fields.

G Sordy & Sons will also provide an update on how the finishing cattle are performing on the GS4 leys, their reduced wormer use in lambs and how they are preparing for tupping.

Lunch and refreshments will be served .

To register your free place either book online, email KE.events@ahdb.org.uk or call 01904 771218



For Flocks sake vaccinate!

Enzootic abortion is the most common cause of abortion in sheep – accounting for over a third of all abortion cases submitted to the lab. It is spread from aborted material and from sheep to sheep. This includes bought in gimmers and ewe lambs. Tups can spread it but to a lesser extent. Ewes are often infected one year and abort the next. Any purchased sheep, but especially breeding females that aren't already vaccinated, pose a huge risk of bringing in disease to an unvaccinated flock.

An aborted lamb costs £20-25 by the time it hits the ground dead. A pair of dead lambs can equate to £50 per ewe. In an abortion storm of 20% of ewes aborting means losses can be huge. For this reason, we advise that all flocks buying in replacements are vaccinated. A single vaccine as gimmers lasts a lifetime which means ewes can be vaccinated and protected for 35 pence per lamb born. Ideally the whole flock is vaccinated as soon as possible but a way of spreading the cost is to vaccinate gimmers each year and after 4-5 years the whole flock will be vaccinated and protected.



Teaser benefits

A teaser is a tup that has been vasectomised so is no longer fertile but hormonally behaves like a male. The effect of the teaser on ewes, known as the “ram effect” helps to bring forward the breeding season and synchronises ewes to cycle at the same time allowing for more compact lambing period which has many benefits.

The ideal tup to undergo vasectomy surgery is a healthy shearling or tup lamb that has a known health status or is home bred. It is often beneficial for it to be a different breed from other tups to make identification easier!

Surgery should occur at least 3 weeks prior to use and the teaser should be introduced 10-14 days prior to the start of the breeding season, generally at a rate of 1 teaser to a maximum of 100 ewes. It is worth noting that due to synchronisation more tups may be required (up to 1:30).

Health planning reminder

With the spring rush on livestock work now over, this is an ideal time to assess what went well over the past year and what could be improved.

Most assurance schemes now specify that an annually updated health plan is written in conjunction with your vet, which may incorporate aspects such as an antibiotic review or justifications for some husbandry practices.

Having said that, we find the vast majority of you understand (i) the value of reflecting and planning on animal health and productivity beyond a tick box for the assurance inspector, and (ii) you get out what you put into this sort of exercise. There is always something new to consider – a novel tool to manage disease, new funding to tackle a certain infection etc.

We can be flexible with booking and understand that sometimes when the sun is shining you need to be sitting on a tractor so don't worry if you need to reschedule or only call when you see the forecast is for rain! Just ring the office to organise a session with one of the vets.

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