

Black Sheep Farm Health

October 2022 Newsletter



The 154th Alwinton Show – Saturday 8th October, NE65 7BQ

We will have a stall at Alwinton Show- pop by for a chat, a goodie bag and a chance to win a hamper!

Free Hats

We are running low on cool bags again! If you have any we would appreciate you returning them. Anyone who returns a cool bag in October will get a free hat!

Fluke Risk Update

With a general trend of less rainfall this year, the risk of fluke infection is lower than usual. SAC have not found any evidence of fluke challenge on post mortem examination this season and have only had 1 sample out of 15 farms positive for antibody showing fluke exposure.

There is still a risk of fluke, particularly in wet fields or farms, but it is important to consider testing and pasture management as alternatives to routine dosing. Testing at this time of year involves blood testing spring born calves and lambs for antibody. In winter testing will involve worm egg counts or coproantigen tests, that can be done on dung of animals of any age. Pasture management strategies may involve fencing off wetter areas within fields or removing stock from high risk pasture.

With triclabendazole resistance becoming more of a concern, the reduced risk this year makes it an ideal time to consider using alternative drenches later in the year rather than a TCBZ.

Environmental impacts of MLs & SPs

The use of macrocyclic lactones (MLs), otherwise known as group 3 or clear wormers, such as Cydectin, and synthetic pyrethroids (SPs), such as Spotinor or Ectofly, will have adverse environmental impacts. For example, the Cydectin datasheet states that treated cattle should not access ponds or waterways for 14 days following treatment.



Both MLs and SPs harm non-target organisms, such as dung beetles, that are of fundamental importance to soil health. Dung beetles are estimated to be worth £367 million a year to cattle industries in the UK; they increase pasture fertility by improving soil aeration, reducing compaction and increasing soil organic matter, in addition to reducing pasture parasite burden and nuisance fly populations.

There are two types of dung beetles present in the UK; dwellers and tunnellers. Without the use of MLs or SPs, they exist in a ratio of 60:40. However, with SP insecticide use, this ratio changes to 80:20, then to 99:1 with MLs. Tunnelling dung beetles are of greatest benefit and are severely affected by the use of SPs and MLs.

These drugs enter the environment largely via the faeces of treated animals. Selective treatment based on worm egg counts and live weight gains, in addition to management strategies such as grazing long grass, mixed leys and resting or rotating pasture can help to reduce use of MLs and therefore minimise environmental impact.

It is also important to note that products in the ML group are toxic to some dogs, particularly collies. Please remember to keep your dogs away from the pens when using these products to avoid adverse reactions. Any dogs with altered behaviour, drooling, wobbliness or tremors after potential exposure to livestock wormers should see a small animal vet as soon as possible.



Investigating Thin Ewes

After weaning, ewes should regain condition before tupping. It is possible for thin ewes to gain a whole body condition score in 8 weeks. If ewes fail to gain condition despite adequate nutrition and there is no obvious cause for this (such as chronic lameness or broken mouth) they can provide a good opportunity to screen your flock for diseases associated with ill thrift, such as OPA, MV and Johne's. These diseases are referred to as 'iceberg diseases' as, for every visibly affected animal, there will be numerous others affected by the disease that show no signs.

Euthanasia and post mortem examination of 2-4 thin ewes that are not fit for sale is a cost effective way to screen for OPA, MV and Johne's, in addition to providing information about the presence of parasites and other diseases in the flock.

Blood sampling can also be used to investigate thin ewes. Blood samples can assess trace element status, in addition to providing information about diseases present on farm.

Please don't hesitate to contact the practice if you have any thin ewes to be investigated.

Intranasal Pneumonia Vaccines

Written by Roma Wyllie, final year at University of Liverpool

The time of year has come when we begin to think about managing pneumonia in cattle, and more importantly, preventing it. One way that we can do this is via intranasal vaccination.

Currently there are 5 UK veterinary licenced vaccines against bovine respiratory disease that can be given directly into the nasal cavity. These protect against some of the main pneumonia causing pathogens such as IBR (infectious bovine rhinotracheitis), BRSV (bovine respiratory syncytial virus) and PI3 (parainfluenza 3).

Intranasal vaccinations act quickly, establishing local immunity within days of administration, while injectable pneumonia vaccines can take weeks to provide immunity. Intranasal vaccines are therefore suitable for use in the face of pneumonia outbreaks. Intranasal vaccines are less affected by maternally derived antibodies than injectable pneumonia vaccines. This means they are ideally suited for use in at-risk calves within the first few months of life. Once local immunity has been established, injectable vaccines can be used as boosters, as these generally produce a greater systemic antibody response.

It is essential that cattle are well hydrated before giving intranasal vaccines so that they are absorbed efficiently. If the calf is dehydrated or low in energy, the efficacy of these vaccines will be reduced. Consider vaccinating calves against pneumonia before anticipated periods of stress such as before housing or transport.

Off-Grid Electricity

We know that some of our farms do not have mains electricity. Properties that are not connected to the national electricity grid are eligible for a £400 payment from their energy provider. In order to receive this payment, the property needs to register with CAN (Community Action Northumberland) before the end of November.

CAN Contact Details: Christine Nicholls, 01670 517178, christinenicholls@ca-north.org.uk or info@ca-north.org.uk