

Newsletter April 2021

Nematodirosis in Sheep

Art McAlonan

Nematodirosis caused by the gut worm *Nematodirus Battus*, is a serious disease of growing lambs. Typically, it affects lambs in their first grazing season often between 6-12 weeks of age although it can affect younger lambs as well. Lambs are infected when a cold snap is followed by warmer temperatures as this causes eggs to hatch into the infective larval stage.

Symptoms include: dullness, reduced feed intake and production of excessive watery diarrhoea. If left untreated lambs often die and mortality rates can be substantial if worm burdens are high. In the long term, growth rates are affected, with some being permanently stunted. Adult sheep are unaffected.

Diagnosis can be made on FEC (faecal egg counts), clinical signs and post mortems. It is important to get a diagnosis as coccidiosis presents in the same way and can also be present in conjunction with nematodirosis but requires different treatment.

The treatment currently recommended is use of white drenches but there are limited cases of resistance. This is where the FEC is important as the one used for diagnosis can then be compared to one taken 10 days later to check the wormer is effective and ensure resistance is not present on the farm.

Prevention and minimisation of risk is key due to the potential for high mortality rates and suddenness of disease onset. Avoiding high risk pasture, where possible, is key. This is pasture that had lambs on it the previous year. Reduce coccidiosis risk (as this increases the risk of mortality) by grouping animals of similar ages, not over grazing and if feeding doing so off the ground. Know the risk periods. The weather is ever changing now and a cold snap, followed by warm weather that triggers a mass hatching, can occur at any time from February-June.

Check the nematodirus forecast online at <https://www.scops.org.uk/forecasts/nematodirusforecast/> for local risk, perform regular FEC and remember that it may not be a one off per season and there may be recurrence of disease through to the summer. Keep vigilant and call into the practice to speak to one of the members of the team with any specific enquiries or for general advice.



Grass Tetany/Staggers/Hypomagnesaemia

David Taylor

Staggers is a disease in cattle and sheep caused by magnesium deficiency. Mag is important in nerve function as well as other body systems but it is the effect on nerve function that results in the clinical signs seen when cattle and sheep develop staggers.

Clinical signs that are seen with staggers include: A stiff walk and hypersensitivity to touch in mild cases, progressing to bellowing, galloping, falling over and, in severe disease, a recumbent animal manically paddling its feet and, finally, convulsions and death.

Lactating cows and ewes are most commonly affected since the production of milk is a considerable drain on magnesium in the blood. This is complicated by the fact that cattle cannot store magnesium well. Often staggers may be complicated by low calcium levels.

Risk factors include: lactation, as mentioned, grazing grass that is either too short (intake too low) or too lush and wet (increases the speed feed goes through the gut). Pasture that contains fast growing ryegrass, especially a new ley following maize, can increase the risk of staggers because high potash content blocks magnesium absorption.

Treatment of the individual involves slow iv dosing of a calcium/magnesium mix (calciject No.5) and sub-cut magnesium (Magniject No.9). Herd prevention strategies include bolusing, high mag buckets and licks, dressing pasture with mag oxide or even something as simple as feeding supplementary silage, with or without extra magnesium in. The circumstances of each farm means there is no one "silver bullet". Please call one of our offices and speak to a vet to discuss your approach to staggers this year.

Sheep Abortions: Free Lab Testing

Cormac White

Toxoplasmosis and enzootic abortion (EAE) are still the two most common causes of sheep abortion despite being preventable.

Sheep abortion results in considerable economic loss to the flock. Both diseases can cause abortion (lambs are often mummified with toxoplasmosis), stillbirths and the birth of weakly lambs that may die shortly after birth or are more likely to succumb to neonatal disease. Occasionally abortion storms may occur, whereby a large proportion of the flock aborts. **Toxoplasmosis can additionally result in high barren rates and low scanning percentages.** Toxoplasmosis is caused by the protozoan parasite, *Toxoplasma gondii*, with ingestion of feed contaminated with cat faeces containing toxoplasma oocysts (eggs) being the main source of infection. EAE is caused by the bacteria, *Chlamydia abortus*, and it is most commonly introduced to a naïve flock by buying-in ewes that carry the bacteria.

Annually, through the FlockCheck scheme, MSD Animal Health subsidise the laboratory fees to test ewes for exposure to toxoplasmosis and EAE. **Six to eight blood samples will be taken from unvaccinated ewes that have either aborted, are barren or have produced weakly lambs.** Subsidised blood testing is only available until 30th June 2021 so take advantage of it now! There will be a charge for a visit and time to take blood samples.

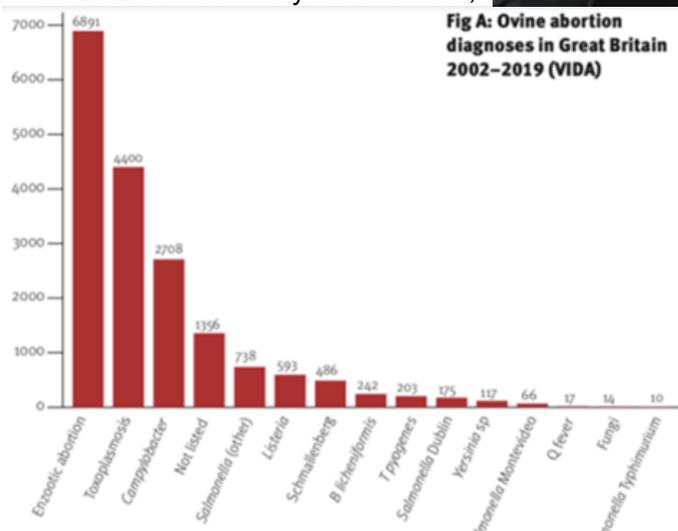


Fig A: Ovine abortion diagnoses in Great Britain 2002-2019 (VIDA)

Important Information

Art McAlonan

Saturday Mornings at the Market:

Saturday mornings at the Market are very busy in the office with skeleton staff working. We would be really grateful if any tasks such as booking in your TB test, account queries etc, were kept to Monday - Friday when we have 6 admin and 3 offices open. Health plans will not be done on a Saturday. Many thanks.

Diatrim:

Unfortunately, it is now illegal for us to import the medicine **Riketron**. We have sourced a similar alternative called **Diatrim**. The meat withdrawal for cattle is 12 days and the milk withdrawal is 48 hours.



Betamox

We now have Betamox back in stock. Betamox is suitable for dairy cows as it has a milk withdrawal of 24 hours.



Medicine Course:

As you are aware Red Tractor requires Farm staff to have undergone a Medicines Training Course. In our continuing effort to support our farmers we will be running a **Medicines course on Wednesday 7th July at Sedgemoor Auction Centre at 2pm.** This will cover all material relevant to these recommendations/regulations. The course is £40 to each farm. Please ring any of our offices to book your place.

Banking

We are in the process of changing our bank account. The new account number and sort code is:

55239471
60 - 60 - 05

These can also be found on your statement and invoice. The old account will remain open for a short period, but the **new account should be used from now on.**