

Newsletter May 2021

Fly Strike

Art McAlonan

Strike in sheep is an unpleasant disease we unfortunately have to deal with year on year. On average 1-3% of your flock will suffer from strike making it a serious welfare concern. There are also significant financial losses associated with the disease due to reduced growth rates, loss in condition, hide and wool damage, and deaths. It is important to have a robust control plan in place.

When does strike occur? Blowfly strike is highly seasonal and generally affects flocks between March and October. The first 'wave' of strike in spring is seen when soil temperatures reach more than 9°C allowing overwintered larvae to develop. Warm humid days are ideal for larval development which is why we are starting to be pestered by more and more flies at the moment!

The fly life-cycle: As the adult female flies develop they lay eggs in the wool of sheep (one fly will typically lay around two hundred eggs!) These eggs hatch and the larvae crawl down the wool to the skin where they feed causing skin damage. The smell produced by this damage attracts more flies to lay their eggs in the wool. It takes around twelve to twenty-four hours for larvae to hatch in the wool which is the reason sheep can look fine one day but be infested the next. This makes it really important we check for strike regularly. Once the larvae have fed enough, they drop off the ewe and pupate in the soil before emerging as adult flies.

Signs of disease: The skin damage by the larvae causes intense irritation and the open wounds are prone to getting infected. The most obvious signs of strike are associated with this stage of the disease:

- Discomfort (foot stamping/ shaking/ rubbing of the tail and breech)
- Foul smell
- Matted and discoloured wool or wool shedding
- Reduced of appetite
- Weight loss
- Panting



Risk factors: The most common area for strike to occur is around the breech. The risk of strike in this area is increased by faecal soiling which attracts flies to lay their eggs and provides the perfect damp warm environment for larvae to develop. Lambs with loose faeces, for example due to high worm burdens, are particularly at risk of fly strike. Sheep with long dense fleeces are also at increased risk of strike. Early cases are often seen in ewes pre-shearing, whereas lambs are at higher risk as the season progresses and their fleeces get longer.

Strike can also occur on other parts of the body such as feet, especially in between the toes where foot rot is present and on the heads of rams with head wounds.

Strike control: Control should be aimed at reducing the susceptibility of your sheep to strike and reducing fly numbers:

- Dagging- regular removal of soiled fleece from around the breech makes animals less attractive to flies
- Tail docking
- Annual shearing of ewes
- Good worm control to reduce faecal soiling
- Treatment with preventative products

Which product to use? There are many different products available for preventing fly strike. The insecticides (e.g. Ectofly) are best applied to short fleece, preferably soon after shearing or, at most, within the next thirty days. They are effective at preventing strike and also treating active infestations. The duration of activity varies with different products so it is worth checking this on the label.

Another important group of products for strike prevention are the insect growth regulators (e.g. Clik). These products specifically target flies and are extremely effective at preventing strike. They are generally the longest acting preventative products available, with some products protecting against strike for sixteen weeks. These products often have a long meat withdrawal which must be considered particularly if you are planning to finish lambs early. Insect growth regulators are not however effective at treating existing strike and an insecticide should be used in these cases.

When should you treat? Shearing is often a good time to treat ewes and lambs with a strike preventative. Using a long acting insect growth regulator at this time can protect animals for the rest of the fly season. However, fly season often starts prior to shearing and long fleeces increase the risk of strike in ewes. If possible, treating ewes with a short acting insecticide at the start of the fly season and then again at shearing will help cover this period of risk. If we have a warm, wet autumn it may be necessary to treat again at the tail end of the season. When using a preventative fly strike strategy, regular inspection of your flock is still necessary to pick up and treat individual cases promptly. If you have any questions about strike or the preventive products available, please speak to one of the vets. If you want a quote, please ring 01278 663399 or Art.

Silaging Sounds

Cormac White

It's getting to that time of the year where many will be spending long days in the tractor. In recognition of that, we thought it would be a good idea to have some options other than Radio 1, 2 or 4 depending on your age profile to listen to in the cab. You might find something worthwhile both from a learning and an entertainment point of view in some of the podcasts below:

- The Pasture Pod (for the Grazing Enthusiasts)
- The Dairy Edge (for Dairy Related Topics)
- Head Shepherd and Ovicast (for the Progressive Sheep Farmers)
- The Beef Edge (for the Suckler farmers)
- Rock and Roll Farming (for interviews with people from across the farming industry)



Endometritis and Tom's Diploma

Endometritis is a disease that affects around 1 in 5 cows. It is defined as an infection of the uterus found any time greater than 26 days after a cow has calved, often referred to as 'whites' or a 'dirty' cow. One of our vets, Tom Crosby, is conducting a study on this disease as a part of his Diploma of Bovine Reproduction, a post-graduate degree he is undertaking at the University of Liverpool. Tom is looking for farms that would be willing to participate.

What are the requirements?

To qualify for involvement in this study you must be a dairy farmer and **not currently have a vet carry out routine pre-breeding or 'fresh' checks on your cows.** It is very important that the cows being studied would not have been seen and/or treated by a vet under normal circumstances.

You must also be willing to assist in the selection and presentation of the cows on a fortnightly basis for the vet. This means you must be willing to pick them out and help put them down a race or into a crush so they can be assessed.

What's in it for you?

You will be given a free fortnightly vet visit if you chose to enroll in the study. If you require any work that is not related to the study during any visit, it will be charged at normal rates, but the visit cost will remain free. Approximately half of the animals that will be enrolled in the study will be given a treatment that could potentially help to cure the animal of endometritis and improve their subsequent fertility; the treatment will be free.

If you are interested and would like more information about this, please contact the office on **01278 663399** or contact Tom on **07809212424**.

Reminders

Banking

Please use the below account number and sort code for any future payments (these can also be found on your statement and invoice):

55239471
60 - 60 - 05

Bank Holiday

We are closed on Monday 31st May 2021 as it's a bank holiday.



Foot Trimming & AI Courses

We will be running these courses shortly, please register your interest to any of the offices.