

April 2023 Newsletter

Abomasal bloat in lambs and kids

Abomasal bloat is a common health problem commonly affecting orphan lambs and kids at around 2 - 4 weeks of age. Some farms have experienced death losses as high as 25-30%. On other farms, it is a sporadic disease. Whilst the mechanism of this disease is not fully understood it is commonly believed that it is caused by a build up of harmful bacteria called *Clostridia* in the stomach. As the bacteria multiply, the sugars in the milk ferment and gas is produced, leading to the bloat seen in affected animals. The stomach also becomes more acidic, killing healthy bacteria. This often leads to a rapid and unpleasant death if left untreated.



An important risk factor for lambs and kids developing abomasal bloat is rapid ingestion of large amounts of milk, particularly of poor quality milk replacers. Using milk replacers that contain milk proteins rather than plant-based proteins and giving as many small feeds as possible will reduce the incidence. Damaged teat drinkers that release the milk too quickly should be replaced as soon as possible.

Prevention

Feeding lambs and kids on cold liquid yoghurt at least twice daily will help prevent abomasal bloat. Feeding sour milk in which lactic acid conversion has already occurred prevents the fermentation occurring within the gut. It is extremely important to note that lambs should still be fed as much colostrum as possible for the first 4 days of life, only including the yoghurt from day 5 where possible.

The recipe

- Put 3 litres of warm water (40 degrees Celsius) in a bucket and add 1k of milk replacer. Mix well.
- Add 200ml of acidophilus yoghurt. Mix well and cover. Keep the mix warm for the next 12 hours.
- The mix should set in 12 hours and should have no crust on top or liquid on the bottom. It should resemble commercial yoghurt.
- Take 200ml of the mix to use as a starter for the next batch.
- Add 5L of cold water and mix. It is now ready to be fed to lambs and kids.

The yoghurt mix made via this recipe can last up to 5 days in a cold place and the amounts made can be altered to fit the amount of lambs or kids that require feeding, i.e. 1 tablespoon of yoghurt : 1L milk.

If you are experiencing difficulty with abomasal bloat in lambs or kids please contact the office for further support from our veterinary team on 01278 663399.

The Animal Health and Welfare Pathway is now live!

To sign up to the scheme you must first apply to the Sustainable Farming Incentive scheme (SFI) through your rural payments log in, where you go for basic payment scheme claims. You must then apply for the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway to acquire a unique number that is required for us to book and complete your review. The funding for the review is to be used on preventative health and welfare work, not routine work such as PDs or castrates. The amount of funding is as follows:

Amount of funding

- **£522 for a beef cattle review**
- **£372 for a dairy cattle review**
- **£436 for a sheep review**

Don't miss out, this funding will not be available forever! We are ensuring our clients are paid £60 out of the funding for their time during the visit.

If you would like more information on the SFI or the review please contact the office and ask to speak to any of our veterinary team.

Foul-in-the-foot (luer)

With the recent heavy rainfall and the pressing need to turn out your cattle, the risk for cows developing foul is high. Foul is an infection found between the digits. It affects the tissues under the skin in this area, causing severe pain, swelling of the foot, marked lameness, and a foul smell. The pain caused can also lead to reduced feed intake, resulting in a drop in yield and a reduced growth rate. Foul is caused by bacteria which are normal components of the cow's environment. The bacteria invade through sites of injury and inflamed skin. Thus an environment which aids the damage or softening of the interdigital skin increases the spread of the disease. Wet, muddy areas around gates and troughs are notorious for this.

Treatment

- Treat early. The longer the infection is present the more likely it is to spread to a joint, leading to prolonged lameness that is more challenging to treat effectively.
- Most antibiotics are effective in treating foul but penicillin is the best choice. Drugs like Alamyacin LA300 with a long duration of action may be a better choice when repeated handling of the animal will not be possible.
- Give Metacam! It provides pain relief and has an anti-inflammatory affect, improving antibiotic penetration and cow welfare.
- Topical treatment with Terramycin spray or any spray with anti-microbial effects will also help the cow recover.



Don't forget to vaccinate for Lepto!

Lepto is transmitted via watercourses and cattle are at a much higher risk of contracting it at turnout. Don't get caught out, vaccinate your cattle to protect them at turnout.

Did you know our Vet Techs can....

- carry out Freeze Branding on heifers?
- carry out disbudding as part of a regular service?
- monitor calf growth rates on dairy farms?
- administer vaccines for you (adult cattle, calves, sheep, goats)?
- carry out Teat scoring?
- carry out Body Condition Scoring?
- carry out Mobility scoring?
- do Faecal Worm Egg Counts (sheep and cattle)?
- blood sample calves to check for colostrum update?
- sample young calves to find out what is causing the scour problem?