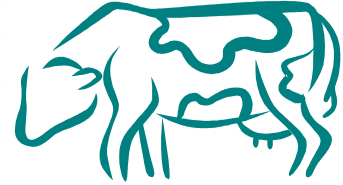


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Newsletter February 2013

Barren EweCheck 2013

As has been widely reported in the farming press, many flocks are experiencing high barren rates this year. Schmallerberg infection has been blamed but there are other causes of high barren rates including the stress of an awful summer, toxoplasmosis and, not so common around here, border disease.



Ewe scanning

MSD (formerly Intervet/Schering Plough) are sponsoring a scheme called "Barren EweCheck 2013" until March of this year. MSD will pay for the lab tests for Toxoplasmosis which is responsible for 29% of all diagnosed cases of abortion as well as barren ewes. So you only pay for our visit and time (and any other tests you may want us to do e.g. selenium, copper and cobalt AND, which brings us nicely on to the subject... Schmallerberg virus.

Ewes that went to the ram in the summer are more likely to have been infected around tugging time and pregnancy than spring lambing ewes. This may explain higher barren rates but it is not a safe assumption. We would strongly recommend that you get 6-8 barren ewes blood sampled for Schmallerberg antibodies if you have concerns over your barren rates. Barren rates tend to be around 5% after 5 weeks period of mating but many flocks achieve 2% or less.

Finally, don't forget the tups in all of this. Ram MOTs are very important pre-service in minimising barren rates and a post-service check over is always a good idea. Please contact the offices for advice.

Spring Deal - Lepto Vaccine

We are running an excellent offer on Lepto vaccine in February and March. We strongly recommend you source your vaccine in these two months as the offer will not be extended.



Lepto abortion

FVSW SPRING LAMBING MEETINGS

"Maximising your lambing percentage"

How to reduce lamb losses before and after birth



We are holding two meetings in February: The first will be on Wednesday 20th at 12 noon at Sedgemoor Market, North Petherton and the second will be held on Wednesday 27th at 12 noon at the Eagle Tavern, Buckland St Mary. Places are limited so please contact either the North Petherton or Ilminster office to book your place. A complimentary lunch will be provided.

Colostrum Management



Feeding colostrum

Dirty or contaminated colostrum is still a significant finding on farms that have calf health issues despite giving colostrum at birth by bottle or bag. High levels of bacteria have been shown to reduce uptake of antibodies in newborn calves and it is also worth remembering that the bugs in colostrum are setting up home in a sterile gut to form the normal gut bug population. If colostrum is contaminated with Johne's, salmonella, crypto or E.coli then the calf is at a disadvantage straight away. Nobody would sow weeds in with corn.

Hygiene of all equipment is highly important. Milk and colostrum contain fats and proteins and this can form a film that renders disinfection useless. Therefore, clean all equipment before disinfecting it.

- Clean and disinfect teats before taking colostrum
- Clean and disinfect dump lines and buckets before and after harvesting colostrum
- Consider freezing a couple of clean plastic milk containers and putting them in the dump bucket during milking. This rapidly cools the colostrum so reducing the build up of bugs.
- If colostrum is not going to be used within 2 hours of milking then it should be refrigerated and warmed for use later.
- If colostrum is frozen in bags then store 1 litre of colostrum in a 3 litre bag and lay it flat – this way it will freeze and thaw quickly.
- Thaw colostrum in water of 40-44 °C – not in a microwave
- Refrigerated colostrum may be kept for a week and frozen colostrum for a year.
- Don't leave colostrum in an uncovered Orbeseal bucket on the dairy floor.



Frozen colostrum in bags

We can perform a quick and simple test on a blood sample from 2-5 day old calves to determine if they have absorbed enough antibodies from colostrum. The test is done in-house and costs £5.00+VAT. The more calves that are sampled the better idea we have of how well things are going. Taking a few samples each time we are on farm is usually the best approach.

On our rounds.... Corein Selles



Smoke testing a calf shed

Not surprisingly I have encountered quite a few calves with pneumonia recently. Thankfully a lot of these responded well to treatment. Pneumonia is almost always caused by a combination of viruses and bacteria attacking the airways of the animals. One way of preventing lung problems is by keeping the bug burden as low as possible. Easy ways of doing this are keeping different age groups separate and isolating sick animals, but good ventilation is crucial. Stale air (with bugs) should be able to escape from the building easily, allowing fresh air to come in. It is not always easy to achieve this without deep freezing the animals at the same time and even new buildings are not always adequately ventilated. I've already done a few smoke tests this year which showed if buildings were sufficiently ventilated and then discussed the options for improvement. If you think you have issues with your buildings, or if you want to build a new one, please ring us as we are happy to give advice. There's nothing more frustrating for me than a brand new building which is actually a pneumonia bug trap.