

# FarmVets

S O U T H W E S T



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## Newsletter March 2016

### How to stop newborn lambs dying

Lamb death in the first three days of life (termed neonatal mortality) varies between 5 and 25 per cent in UK flocks. How does your flock compare? You can minimise losses by:

- Good ewe nutrition during late pregnancy
- **Clostridial vaccine** (e.g. Heptavac P Plus) booster to all ewes prior to lambing (boosts antibody levels in colostrum to help protect lambs)
- Preventing birth trauma by intervening in a timely manner and **using sufficient lubricant** and avoiding excessive force
- Good lambing pen hygiene
- All lambs receiving sufficient **colostrum** (200 ml/kg in the first day– 50 ml/kg in the first feed)
- **Dipping all lamb's navels in strong iodine** ASAP after birth.
- Sufficient space for ewes and newborn lambs (2.2 square metres per ewe)
- Take steps to prevent neonatal infectious disease (please contact the practice to discuss)
- Avoid hypothermia by providing shelter in fields and ensuring lambs in sheds are protected from draughts.
- **Address hypothermia quickly and aggressively:**
  - lambs under 5 hours old – dry the lamb, place in a warm environment, tube warm colostrum
  - lambs older than 5 hours old may require a glucose injection, speak to us about how to do this if you aren't sure.



Have suitable, clean equipment ready – stomach tubes, teat feeders, syringes, needles etc. The practice sells **all the essentials** (drugs, equipment, consumables) for lambing, and we are happy to provide advice too!

### Using IDM to control disease on farm

The **Infectious Disease Monitor** scheme run by FarmVets SouthWest can help you control disease on farm through bulk milk testing for BVD, IBR, Lepto and Liver Fluke. This is particularly **important if you do not vaccinate** your cattle.

It is common knowledge that BVD, IBR and Leptospirosis are extremely damaging to your cattle. Not only this, but the **signs of these diseases** on farm are often **subtle and can go undetected** for some time if you are not monitoring your bulk milk. Infectious Disease Monitor is now **entirely automated** using your payment testing samples. This means no more reminders to bring a bulk milk sample to us in the office. We do it all for you! We are offering this service for £25+VAT per year, per disease tested. Contact any of our offices if you would like to sign up.

## Calling the vet for calvings - cost effective or not?

Whilst calling your vet to assist with a difficult calving may seem like a big expense, the question you should be asking yourself is **can you really afford not to?**

Consider what it costs you to get a heifer to the point of calving. AHDB have calculated the average cost to rear a heifer to calving at 28 months as £1280. Even if you're not going to be breeding replacements the service and overhead costs alone soon mount up. **Investment costs at this point will be far greater than the cost of the veterinary attention** which might save her future breeding potential and possibly the calf.



If the visit results in a caesarean, over 50% of cows will go on to breed successfully again. Even if she doesn't, over 80% will survive the surgery, salvaging at least the cull value of the cow.

With beef cattle the cost of production is estimated at £450-800 per cow per year— the loss of a calf due to a difficult birth means no return on that investment that year—that money is effectively lost. The calf mortality rate for calvings rated as severely difficult may be over 50%, that for caesareans is lower, but variable, depending on how rapidly the decision to operate is made— the quicker the decision, the better the calf survival.

In any difficult calving, vet assisted or not, it's also well worth considering the **use of a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory** (e.g. Metacam®). This will help reduce any discomfort post calving that may hinder normal feeding and nursing behaviour.

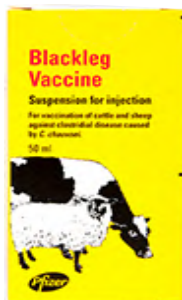
## Lungworm Prevention: Order your Huskvac now



**Huskvac** for lungworm prevention should be ordered now to allow vaccine course completion and protection before turnout. Non-vaccinated youngstock require **two doses, four weeks apart**, with the second dose given no later than two weeks prior to turnout. Previously vaccinated cattle do not usually need a booster. (Remember, this vaccine will **not work** if you worm your cattle between 8 weeks before the 1st dose and 14 days after the 2nd dose).

## Blackleg-rapid, unpredictable, fatal: preventable by vaccination

Vaccinate your cattle and sheep now with **Blackleg Vaccine** to protect them ready for grazing this year. (Stock recently vaccinated with multivalent clostridial vaccines may already be protected – if you are not sure whether your stock are protected please contact the practice for advice).



## Tip of the month: Record Lamb & Calf Deaths

Records of which animals, when, and why (suspected cause) form an excellent base for investigation and planning prevention. Please contact the practice for further practical tips on straight forward recording methods or to discuss your results.