

## Farm First Newsletter February 2013

**Reduced Price Liver Fluke Testing in Dairy Herds** An increased number of animals are being diagnosed with liver fluke this year and we would like to make sure that it is not a hidden problem in your herd. We are seeing it even in cows which were treated at drying off, as they could be carrying a significant burden, due to development of immature fluke not killed by the treatment or re-infection after the treatment. If cows are carrying a liver fluke burden it will cause a drop in milk yield and quality, and have effects on fertility and general health. We can carry out two simple tests to look at the risk of fluke in your herd. Firstly, a bulk milk test will look at the level of antibodies across the herd to give an indication of the level of infection this year. If this is high, and more information is required, a fluke egg mob test can be carried out on faeces from 10 of the thinnest cows, to see if there are any fluke eggs present. If they are, this would confirm the presence of adult liver fluke in the liver. If results indicate a problem, we will discuss the various treatment options with you. We have decided to subsidise the cost of post, packing and interpretation on these tests, to encourage sampling to be carried out. The total cost will be £9.20 + VAT for the bulk milk test and £38.80 for the mob test on faeces.

**Colostrum Storage** We have recently come across the following product called **Perfect Udder**. The Perfect Udder Colostrum Management Kit is the solution for handling colostrum from harvest to feeding without the fear of recontamination, while also allowing the colostrum to be pasteurized, refrigerated, frozen, reheated and fed through a nipple or oesophageal feeder all from the same container. With its special heat conductive materials, the Perfect Udder allows complete pasteurization and also quick cooling and warming of product. A 10 bag sample pack and tube costs £22 +vat and is sold by a company called G. Shepherd Animal Health ([www.gshepherdanimalhealth.co.uk/](http://www.gshepherdanimalhealth.co.uk/) . tel 01772 690333/07778 191964).

**Subsidised Testing for Barren and Aborting Ewes** If you scanned your ewes and recorded a barren rate greater than 2% you can now ask for a subsidised flock blood test to establish whether the cause of the problem was toxoplasmosis. At a time when many sheep producers are asking for veterinary diagnostic support to confirm or rule out potential Schmallenberg virus (SBV) infection, it makes sense to investigate whether other diseases are present in the flock at the same time. **Barren EweCheck**, the diagnostic scheme supported by MSD Animal Health, is available until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013. As we move into lambing time abortions may occur in your flock, and if the rate exceeds 2% investigations should be undertaken. Ideally aborted fetuses with placenta should be submitted for sampling to try to find the cause of abortion. The cost of a post mortem for abortion is £88 for foetus(es) from 1 dam and £98 for foetus(es) from 2 dams. If you are having problems, don't just don't just assume it's Schmallenburg, as the other common causes of abortion will still be around and each one requires different measures to reduce the impact and prevent further cases next year. If the cause of abortion has not been identified during lambing, MSD Animal Health also supports an annual **FlockCheck** diagnostic service, in which blood samples are taken from 6-8 aborted ewes. The 2012 FlockCheck results showed once again that the most commonly diagnosed causes of abortion in sheep continue to be EAE and toxoplasmosis, despite the availability of cost-effective vaccines. Over 300 samples were tested in 2012 of which 86% were positive for

toxoplasmosis and 58% for enzootic abortion. Over 50% of the samples (52%) showed exposure to both these diseases.

## **Ewe Nutrition Pre lambing**

Poor nutrition in the last 4-6 weeks of pregnancy can lead to the following problems:

**Ewes** - Twin lamb disease, hypocalcaemia, mastitis.

**Lambs** - Hypothermia, watery mouth/rattle belly, joint ill (navel ill), pneumonia, scour.

The ewe must have enough to eat and the means to be able to eat and drink enough so consider: grazing, housing, trough space, water availability, ewe health, lamb numbers

**Twin lamb disease** should be considered as a warning that the flock is under nutritional stress. Survival rates of ewes with twin lamb disease are generally poor and there is an argument that the cost of treatment is better put into the remaining healthy ewes.

**Treatment options Glucose supplements** oral glucose will not work as it is metabolised by rumen flora, so glucose precursors such as glycol need to be used. Work from one XLVet practice suggests that dosing four times a day is more beneficial than the traditional twice daily regime. We now have in stock Ewe-Go a combined energy and calcium drench which costs £ 1/ dose.

**Non-steroidal drugs (NSAID's)** There is evidence to show that the complex biochemistry associated with twin lamb causes release of inflammatory factors that have an effect on appetite. Suppressing these with drugs such as flunixin can encourage the ewe to eat.

**Inducing Birth** -as the major reason for the occurrence of twin lamb disease is the presence of the lambs, inducing the ewes is often the best means of a cure. However, this should be discussed in detail with your veterinary surgeon.

## **Meetings**

DairyCo are holding a Dairy Feed efficiency meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> March at: **Alice Springs Golf Club, Kemeys Commander, Usk, Monmouthshire. NP15 1PP. 7:30 – 10:30pm.** DairyCo and Professor Kevin Sinclair will review:

- Balanced diets for dairy cows
- Variety of protein feedstuffs
- Improving nitrogen efficiency for reduced environmental impact and improved profit
- Effects of reducing protein in the diet

## **Staff News**

Simeon, one of our TB testing vets, is moving on to pastures new at the end of the month when he will move to a new job closer to friends and family in the Midlands. We wish him well in his new position.

We have appointed a new vet called Gabriel Ciprés who will be starting as a TB tester at the beginning of next month. We look forwards to welcoming him to the practice.