



### **Barren Ewe Scheme**

Once again MSD are running their Barren Ewe Scheme which subsidises the cost of testing barren ewes for Toxoplasmosis. This infection is one of the most common reasons for finding empty ewes at scanning, especially in young ewes. There is a vaccine available to protect the flock if the disease is diagnosed, so if your scanning results were disappointing and you would like to check for the presence of Toxoplasma, please get on touch with us to arrange blood sampling of a group of 8 empty ewes.

### **Control Ringworm After Housing**

As the winter sets in housed growing calves and cattle become more susceptible to common skin diseases such as ringworm, particularly if it's wet. Ringworm is a superficial fungal skin infection of all animals (including humans) that occurs mainly in calves 2-8 months of age. It can cause continual irritation, which distracts affected animals from feeding, and if cattle are in close contact the condition will spread easily. It shows up as grey/white circular skin lesions that typically appear around the eyes, head, muzzle, neck and trunk.

Ringworm is certainly unsightly and unwanted for pedigree producers showing cattle and it causes permanent hide damage. It can also check dairy youngstock growth rates and slow beef production throughput significantly; in one recent French study affected calves were up to 12.9kg lighter after a 155-day finishing period.

Ringworm is a self-limiting disease so it's tempting to do nothing, but affected cattle will remain infectious to transmit the skin condition to other animals. Spores from the *Trichophyton verrucosum* causal fungus also remain viable for years in cattle housing and can be difficult to eradicate even with thorough disinfection. Consequently, it is well worth controlling ringworm, particularly when you appreciate that it can also infect people working with housed cattle over the winter.

Vaccination provides an effective disease control option. Bovilis® Ringvac can be used both to prevent ringworm and treat the skin condition to shorten the recovery time in affected cattle. The vaccination course is two intra-muscular injections 10-14 days apart. Calves can be vaccinated from two weeks of age and should be immune to ringworm three weeks after the second injection. Farmer feedback suggests that correctly vaccinated cattle are protected for life without the need for boosters. It has also been shown that provision of fat soluble vitamins i.e. vitamins A,D and E will reduce severity and help in recovery of the disease.

If you do see signs of ringworm this winter please contact the practice for advice as soon as possible.

### **Solantel**

This is a new flukicide drench which contains closantel. It kills liver fluke from 5 weeks of age, so is effective against late immature and adult fluke, and also fluke which are resistant to triclabendazole. It also has activity against *Haemonchus contortus*, the Barber's Pole worm, which is a problem on some farms in the area. It is the ideal product to use at this time of year when sub-acute fluke is likely. The dose rate is 1ml/5kg and it has a 42 day meat withhold. The product is very competitively priced, so if you would like more information please ring us at the office.

### **Ram Longevity**

The National Sheep Association (NSA) is running a ram survey and facilitating 10 focus groups around the country, they need 10 participants for each group. The project is investigating the flock life of breeding males and the reasons for deaths and culling in the UK. With the help of funding from the Animal Welfare Foundation, and after concerns from NSA members about the short life of commercial rams, NSA is urging as many farmers as possible to participate in this new study to find out what is going on. Without practical information, the experts are unable to pinpoint practical, on-farm solutions to the problems, as is the case currently. The project will involve 10 focus groups around the country, to gather more detailed data and

encourage discussion amongst farmers. These are free to attend but booking is essential, and participants must have 200+ breeding ewes and ram purchase information, ideally from the last four years. Volunteers can contact enquiries@nationalsheep.org.uk to secure their place. The survey is available online and hard copies can be requested from NSA Head Office by contacting laura@nationalsheep.org.uk or 01684 892661.

### **Calf Jackets**

Trial work has found that 50% of calves experience some sort of scours, with vets reporting that the vast majority of cases are due to cryptosporidiosis. Cryptosporidiosis is caused by parasites and can lead to watery, yellow scours. Good hygiene practices are essential, considering it can be spread in the environment, via other calves and from dams.

Speaking at a recent AHDB Dairy Calf to Calving event AHDB Dairy's Technical Manager, Andy Dodd said cleaning calf jackets should form part of any disease prevention strategy.

"Calf jackets can potentially harbour cryptosporidium eggs. These can only be destroyed if the jackets are disinfected with a licensed cryptosporidium disinfectant and then washed at 60°C. The eggs are only destroyed at temperatures at or above 60°C. It is important to allow the jackets to dry completely before re-using them," he said.

Not all disinfectants will kill crypto and not all calf jackets are suitable for washing at 60°C, so farmers are advised to check data sheet and product information.

Andy added: "In the calf sheds and calving pens, applying heat through using a steam clean is as important as the hot wash for the calf jackets. You need the heat to kill the eggs that haven't hatched. Ideally, muck out, steam clean and disinfect between calving and calves. Allow pens to dry as Cryptosporidium does not like dry conditions and the eggs will not survive being dried out. For more information download AHDB Dairy's calf jacket fact sheet at [dairy.ahdb.org.uk/calves](http://dairy.ahdb.org.uk/calves).

### **Ewe Metabolic Profiles**

Following on from our article on blood testing pregnant ewes last month, we are able to offer some free metabolic profiles thanks to Norbrook Laboratories. Each successful applicant will be able to have free lab tests done on 3 ewes, and will have to pay for the other 3 ewes, thus halving the lab costs of a group profile. If you are interested in registering for this please ring the office **before 13<sup>th</sup> January**. The ideal time to test is one month before lambing.

### **Holstein Friesian Bull Calves**

We have been approached by a client who has just moved into the area who is looking to source some baby bull calves to rear on. If you are interested in supplying her, please contact us at the office and we will pass on your details.

**Joke** A little old lady was walking down the street dragging two large plastic rubbish bags behind her. One of the bags was ripped and every once in a while a £20 note fell out onto the pavement.

Noticing this a policeman stopped her and said "Madam, there are £20 notes falling out of that bag."

"Oh really. Dammit." said the little old lady. "I'd better go back and see if I can find them. Thanks for telling me, Officer."

"Well, not so fast," said the cop. "Where did you get all that money? You didn't steal it, did you?"

"Oh, no, no" said the old lady. "You see, my back garden is right next to a golf course. A lot of golfers come and pee through a knot hole in my fence, right into my flower garden. It used to really wind me up. Kills the flowers you know. Then I thought, why not make the best of it? So now I stand behind the fence by the knot hole really quietly with my hedge clippers. Every time some guy sticks his thing through my fence, I surprise him, grab hold of it and say "OK mate. Give me £20 or off it comes!"

"Well, that seems only fair," said the cop, laughing. "OK. Good luck! Oh, by the way, what's in the other bag?"

"Not everybody pays."