

Farm First Newsletter May 2013

Nematodirus battus is an intestinal parasite which affects young lambs, mainly in May and June causing severe diarrhoea and death. Disease can only occur when both the weather conditions permit the hatching of the eggs on the pasture and young lambs are grazing the pasture. Cases have been reported in this area in the last 7 days, so we are now at high risk. Altitude is an important variable and generally we would expect the hatch to be about a week later for every 100m increase in height. For the latest reports of outbreaks please go to <http://www.scops.org.uk/news-detail.php?NewsID=21> where there is a regularly updated map the current situation.

The disease is transmitted by the previous year's lambs passing eggs on to the pasture. These eggs will survive for long periods of time and only hatch after a prolonged period of cold weather followed by a sudden warm spell. As this is exactly what we have experienced this "spring" there is a high risk of disease this year. The eggs are ingested by the lambs and larvae develop in the gut, causing disease in animals aged from roughly 3 weeks to 3 months of age. Older lambs and adult ewes are not affected by this parasite as there is an age-related immunity.

Nematodirus battus larvae damage the gut causing sudden, severe, watery diarrhoea which leads to rapid dehydration and death. If diarrhoea is not seen then faecal staining under the tail is often obvious. Lambs will also become dull, stop sucking and have a gaunt appearance. Up to 5% of lambs can die within 3-4 days of the onset of clinical signs.

A diagnosis can be made on the basis of clinical signs, grazing history, weather conditions and post-mortem examination. Faecal egg counts are less useful in acute outbreaks, as the clinical signs are caused by the *Nematodirus* larvae rather than the egg-producing adults.

Treatment of affected lambs should be undertaken rapidly and lambs should be removed from the contaminated pasture immediately. A white drench (benzimidazole BZ-1) is the most effective and cheapest way to kill *Nematodirus battus*. It is vital to keep affected lambs hydrated, as dehydration is often the reason they die. This can be achieved by the use of oral fluid replacers either by bottle-feeding or stomach tube. Rehydrion gel is a liquid that can be added to milk and, unlike other electrolyte replacers it does not interfere with the milk clot. Fluid replacement should be done frequently to prevent excessive dehydration

The main way to prevent nematodiosis is to avoid grazing lambs on pasture where last year's lambs were grazed. If this is not practical then a worming protocol may need to be put in place for the lambs throughout the main risk period. Please ring us if you wish to discuss this.

Optimag

Further to last month's article on the staggers risk at turnout, we are now able to supply Optimag boluses which will supply a cow with 3g magnesium daily for 4 weeks after administration. They should be given 2-3 days before the period of risk i.e. turnout or moving on to lush pasture. This will reduce the risk of staggers for 4 weeks. A pack of 10 boluses costs £46.31 + vat for payment at the time of collection (or 5 or more packs @ £44/pack).

Mastitis and Ubro Yellow

We now have Ubro Yellow back in stock, and are pleased that this useful mastitis treatment for dairy cow is back in our armoury. If you are having problems with increased levels of mastitis or poor treatment success please ring us to discuss the problem. Jane has recently returned from a meeting where the latest in mastitis research was discussed in detail.

Kexxtone

We now have a bit more information about the new Kexxtone bolus for dairy cows. Each bolus contains 12 tablets of monensin, which is released slowly. The monensin increases energy to cow by increasing the efficiency of rumen fermentation. It causes a shift in the microbial population, so that there is more propionic acid formed (and less acetic acid). This means that there is more glucose and therefore energy available to the cow. A single bolus is given to cow about 20 days prior to calving and gives approx. 95 days cover. There is a zero milk and meat withdrawal. The boluses are licensed for prevention of ketosis in individual 'at risk' cows on a farm, and in a recent trial (1312 cows involved) it reduced ketosis levels in herds by 74%.

We think it will have a place in many of our herds for the "at risk" cows, which includes dry cows with a body condition score over 3.5; those with a long dry period; those which have lost a lot of weight in the dry period, cows with a history of energy problems at last calving; and heifers calving at over 27 months of age. The boluses cost £28.50 each or £135.14 for a pack of 5. For a limited time a free bolus gun worth £31.99 will be supplied with a purchase of 20 boluses. The cost of the bolus should easily be recouped by savings from treating less ketotic cows, fewer LDAs, and the subsequent improved milk production.

Meetings

We will be holding a meeting place on the use of Regulin to control the breeding season in sheep. There are both economic and management benefits to manipulating the breeding season, including finishing lambs earlier, and having a compact lambing season. If you want to know more about this alternative to sponges, please ring us to reserve your place at the King of Prussia on Wednesday 29th May at 7.30pm.

Staff News

A novel cause of mortality in lambs has been noted at Parc Lodge Farm (run by Graham and Helen Sevenoaks). The harbinger of death in this case was Rob and his new van. Rob says the lamb just jumped up from the side of the road and ran into his front wheel but we think he was probably fiddling with his hair in the mirror as he drove up the drive. We would suggest moving all lambs from fields alongside driveways if you know Rob is due to visit.

Rob and the Sevenoaks feature again in this section. Rob was fertility testing some bulls for Graham and Helen and got kicked on the nose whilst palpating the testicles of one of the bulls. He was complaining about this when he got back to the practice later that day to Vicky and Andrew, saying he had got kicked on the nose as he had been feeling some testicles. Vicky piped up that that didn't usually happen to her! Anyway if you see Graham or Helen, ask Helen what she thought of Rob's probe. A picture will be printed next month....