

Nematodirus Risk The main risk period for one of the most serious threats to young lambs is approaching. *Nematodirus battus* is a roundworm which causes severe diarrhoea and death usually in May or June. Disease only occurs when the weather conditions permit the hatching of the eggs on the pasture and young lambs are grazing that pasture. This year we have already seen affected lambs in April due to favourable climatic conditions. The pasture becomes contaminated by eggs which were shed onto the pasture by lambs the previous year. We did see several outbreaks of nematodirosis last year meaning that eggs will have been left on the pasture. These eggs can survive for long periods of time and hatch only after a prolonged period of cold weather followed by a sudden warm spell. Mean UK monthly temperatures from December 2013 to February 2014 have all been above average suggesting that there will be an early hatch of the *N. battus* eggs present on contaminated pastures this spring. Only lambs between 3 and 12 weeks of age are susceptible, so if the eggs hatch early lambs born later will be at less risk of disease, but February-born lambs will be at high risk of disease.

Nematodirus battus causes sudden severe, watery diarrhoea which leads to rapid dehydration and death. If diarrhoea is not seen then faecal staining of the perineum is often obvious. Lambs will also become dull, stop sucking and have a gaunt appearance. Up to 5% of lambs will die within 3-4 days of the onset of clinical signs. Diagnosis can be made on clinical signs, grazing history (pasture grazed by lambs last year), 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 before the adults produce eggs. However faecal samples can be useful to differentiate this condition from coccidiosis, the other main cause of scour in lambs of this age.

Treatment of affected lambs should be undertaken rapidly. White worming drenches (benzimidazoles BZ-1) are the most effective against *Nematodirus battus*. It is vital to rehydrate affected lambs as dehydration is often the reason these lambs die. This can be achieved by use of oral fluid replacers either by bottle or stomach tube. Rehydriol gel is a liquid that can be added to milk and does not interfere with the milk clot, unlike other electrolyte replacers. Fluid replacement should be done frequently to prevent excessive dehydration. If clean pasture is available, the group should be moved immediately.

The main way to prevent nematodirosis is to avoid grazing lambs on pasture where last year's lambs were grazed. This is especially important this year since there were known outbreaks last year. If this is not practical then a worming protocol should be put in place for the lambs throughout the main risk period. This should be done after discussion with your veterinary surgeon. Further information about *Nematodirus battus*, including forecasts on the timing and severity of disease, can be found on the NADIS website at www.nadis.co.uk.

BLOWFLY STRIKE Almost every flock experiences blowfly strike – plan now to limit your losses. Even very small fly strike lesions cause disrupted grazing and rapid weight loss. Topical preparations to prevent blowfly strike are most effective when applied **before the risk period, usually from mid May onwards**. With the warm wet spring we have had, **blowfly strike is expected early on this year**. Some products have long meat withdrawal periods so careful planning is essential. Preventing diarrhoea caused by parasitic gastroenteritis will greatly reduce the risk of blowfly strike on back-end. Footrot lesions with granulation tissue, dermatophilosis lesions on the skin, and urine scalding around the prepuce also attract egg-laying adult flies.

High cis cypermethrin pour-on preparations (e.g. Crovect) provide protection against fly strike for up to 6 to 8 weeks but may require re-application. (Meat withdrawal - 8 days).

Cyromazine(Vetrazin) applied before the risk period is effective against blowfly strike for up to 10 weeks after topical application. (Meat withdrawal - 28 days). Dicyclanil(Clik) affords 8 to16 weeks' full body protection against cutaneous myiasis. (Meat withdrawal - 7 and 40 days; 1.25% w/v suspension and 5% w/v suspension, respectively). Organophosphorus dips provide good protection against blowfly strike for up to six weeks. (Meat withdrawal -70 days). Note: Cyromazine (Vetrazin) and dicyclanil (Clik)preparations do not treat blowfly lesions; these products are designed to prevent establishment of infestations (compared to the high cis cypermethrin pour-ons and organophosphorus dips).

Beef Heifer Pelvic Measurement Choosing your heifer replacements is very important and there are lots of factors important to consider such as milking ability, calving ease, mature size and temperament. Calf size is one important determinant of calving ease; the second one is the pelvic size of the heifer. We can help you select the right heifers to keep for breeding by eliminating heifers with small pelvic areas pre-breeding. We do this using a Rice pelvimeter to calculate the pelvic area. For the first time this year, we have begun working with farmers on the pelvic area measurements of potential heifer replacements. The groundwork was carried out in the US where they have compared data on thousands of heifers.

The pelvis grows at a relatively constant rate from nine to 24 months of age; Continentals grow at a rate of 10cm² a month and native breeds at a rate of 8cm². Measuring the heifers enables us to identify which have smaller pelvises within the group, and these can be rejected for breeding. Often it is not the smallest animals in the group that are flagged up. If you would like your breeding heifers to be examined before you put them to the bull, we would charge on a time basis if it was done with routine work or at a pre-movement testing, or for £1.50/cow if done at a TB test.

Meetings We are holding a meeting for dairy farmers at **12pm on 13th May** at the **Cripple Creek**. The meeting is sponsored by Forum Animal Health who make the Aggers fluids, and they have arranged for **James Husband**, a vet who specialises in dairy nutrition, to speak to us on transition cow management and also the use of the Aggers fluid sachets in sick cows. He will cover which fluids are the best to use in which cows.

On 20th September, as part of Gwent being the Royal Welsh Feature County in 2015, there will be an Open Day at the Abergavenny Stud (NP7 9SL) by kind permission of the Batt family, followed by another at the Glebedale Stud (NP7 8AG) again by kind permission of the Parry/ Bodily family followed by a race night and auction at the Hogs Head, Treadam (NP7 8TA). For further details and ticket purchases please ring 07814 030838 or 07971 866012.

Open Day We will be having an open evening on Friday 6th June in conjunction with the other businesses at the Bryn Garage. There will be a chance to look around our new premises and refreshments will be on offer. We look forwards to welcoming as many of you as possible along on that evening.

Drug Orders If you have a large drugs order or one that includes vaccines, please could you ring in advance to save you time waiting at the desk while we stick all the labels on. We don't generally keep vaccines in stock, so it could also save you a wasted journey. In most cases all products can be ordered for next day delivery.

Web Site Our new web site is almost ready, so look out for the launch of it sometime during the next few weeks.

A Saying About Farmers That Rob Heard Recently Farmers always complain, even when things are looking up and there is light at the end of the tunnel. What farmers do is buy more tunnel. **(Though obviously it doesn't apply to any Farm First clients!!)**