



Free Testing for Coccidiosis Coccidiosis is a common cause of diarrhoea and ill thrift in both calves and lambs. Some animals show no signs of scour, but the cocci still damage the gut and reduce feed conversion efficiency and growth rates. Both lambs and calves can show signs from 4-6 weeks upwards, depending on when they are exposed to the parasite. Free testing for coccidiosis is available to both dairy and sheep farms and speciation of the parasites is included. This is especially useful in sheep as often many cocci are present, but they may not be ones that cause disease. If you are seeing scour or ill-thrift in your youngstock please contact us for more information on sampling.

Grass Stagers Magnesium deficiency, or grass staggers, is a stress related condition which can be brought on by factors such as cold, wet weather. Very wet pastures mean that when temperatures improve, grass will grow rapidly. Staggers is still a significant cause of death in cattle and sheep during the spring period and you cannot afford to lose valuable livestock as a result of this preventable disease. Given this, **preventative strategies** must be employed to minimise the risk. The major points to consider for **cattle** are as follows:

1. Provide magnesium to cattle prior to the spring grass flush.
2. Try and bring animals in at night for the first week, especially in cold, wet and windy weather.
3. Reduce silage and any concentrate feeding gradually in the run-up to turn-out.
4. Delay the use of potassium-rich fertilisers until later in the year.
5. Watch out for poor weather – staggers cases increase dramatically on wet, windy days and frosty nights.
6. Consider a belt and braces approach to magnesium supplementation – use a bolus and free access products.

An effective means of giving each individual animal a guaranteed supply of magnesium during the high risk period is by using boluses such as Optimag magnesium bullets. These boluses are given 2-3 days prior to turn-out. The boluses last 28 days and will provide a consistent supply of magnesium to cattle. Magnesium bullets are also available for **sheep**. These boluses are given 2-3 days prior to turn-out or to coincide with the period 2-6 weeks post lambing. The boluses last 21 days.

Other major points to consider for **ewes** are as follows:

1. Provide magnesium to ewes prior to the spring grass flush.
2. If lambing indoors, supplement with magnesium prior to turn-out.
3. If lambing outdoors, supplement to coincide with the period 2-6 weeks post lambing.
4. Try and keep ewes with lambs aged 2-6 weeks on the same pasture – moving them can trigger staggers.

Other methods of supplementation include adding magnesium sulphate in the water, but all water sources must be treated; adding magnesium to the concentrate feed; using high magnesium minerals on the feed; or providing free access magnesium blocks. The blocks are popular but we have reservations about them as not all individual animals will eat blocks, so losses can still occur.

It is also worth remembering to carry a bottle of Mag Sulphate in the cab of your tractor/truck/quad so as to have it on hand to treat a animal down with staggers. This is an emergency situation and a bottle given under the skin even as you wait for us to arrive can often save the day and will do no harm if the cow does not have staggers.

Lambing and Out of Hours Charges We would just like to remind you of some of our charges for lambings and out of hours calls. Lambings vary in price from £27.12+ VAT for a relatively straightforward one up to £41.66+ VAT for one which takes a lot longer time. A sheep caesarean costs £80 + VAT including all drugs and consumables. For out of hours calls up to 11pm, a surcharge of £22.25 + VAT is added to your usual visit charge, after 11 pm the charge is £33.74+ VAT. If we return to the surgery to treat your animals, up to 11 pm the cost is £16.22 + VAT whereas after 11 pm the charges is £27.04.

Sole Occupancy Licences As I am sure you are aware, changes are being made to Sole Occupancy Licences in September. Farmers who currently have SOA's within the 10 mile radius of their main holding and want to maintain that connection, can contact the Welsh Government to get their CPH updated to include all land within a 10 mile radius. By doing so they should avoid having to do a pre-movement test to bring stock home when the changes are introduced in September. However, please be aware that we are still awaiting confirmation from AHVLA that this is exactly what will happen.

BVD Check Tags We can now supply tags which can be used for taking ear samples to test animals for BVD virus. Some of our clients are using these to check purchased animals and new-born calves to ensure that they are not infected with BVD. We can also put them in on the first day of a pre-movement test, so that animals can be sold as BVD free, as results are usually back very quickly. The tags vary in price from £4.50 for management tags to £5.50 for tags which take the sample and act as secondary ear tags. Please contact one of the vets for further information.

Discounts for Payment at Time Just a reminder that if you pay for your drugs at the time of purchase you will get a 10% discount. If you are ordering more than a couple of bottles, please can you ring in advance to avoid delays at the desk and to ensure that we have what you need in stock.

New Premises By the time you receive this newsletter, we will be in our new premises (next door to the old one). Please note that if you are posting anything to us the address is now Unit 1, The Bryn Garage (not Unit 2), Penpergwm, Abergavenny, Mon. NP7 9AT. All other contact details remain the same.

Trailer for Sale Following on from the above news about our move, we now have a room for lambing sheep or looking at calves, so no longer need the livestock trailer that serves as our sheep room. The trailer is an Ivor Williams- DP120 (2 axle, 10ft long, 6ft 6' wide, headroom 6ft) which was purchased in early spring 2009. It has hardly left the practice! Price is £2,800, but we are open to offers. If anyone is interested in buying this very low mileage trailer please contact Rob.

Dairy Development Council Meeting A meeting for farmers will be held on the **10th of April at Usk College, Usk, Monmouthshire, NP15 1XJ**. The main speaker for the event will be Chris Hudson and who hopes to be able to supply farmers with all the relevant information they need to combat their dairy fertility issues. The event should run from around **11am to 3pm**. Please telephone **01554 748592**, to confirm your attendance at this event.

This Month's Joke (kindly supplied by Alun Thomas from Llangorse)

MAFF UPDATE

Due to the financial situation in the farming industry, the government has decided to place all the farmers over the age of 60 on an early retirement scheme. The scheme will be known as R.A.P.E (Retire Agricultural Personnel Early).

Persons selected to be RAPED can also apply to join the SHAFT SCHEME (Special Help after Farm Termination). Those who have been RAPED and SHAFTEDED will then be reviewed under the SCREW scheme (Scheme for Retired Early Workers).

Please note that you can only be RAPED once and SHAFTEDED twice, but you may be SCREWED as many times as the government decrees appropriate.

Persons who have been RAPED can also apply to get AIDS (Additional Income for Dependants) or HERPES (Half Earnings for Rural Personnel on Early Severance) pay.

Those farmers still remaining in the industry will receive as much SHIT (Special High Intensity Training) and CRAP (Caring Responsive Assistance Programme) as possible. As you are aware the Government has always prided itself in the amount of SHIT and CRAP it gives to farmers.