



**Worm Control in Lambs** Worms can be a significant problem in sheep particularly between June – August resulting in scour and ill thrift. At the surgery we can perform a faecal worm egg count to determine if worms are affecting lamb growth, or whether you would be wasting your money by worming them. A mob test costs £18.54 for one set, and £12.98 for a second set submitted at the same time. Outlined below are guidelines for taking faecal samples for worm egg counts ('mob tests'). The fresher the samples are the better!! Usually we will report results back to you within 12 hours (unless it's very busy!)

**Gather lambs into the corner of a field/collecting yard**



**Leave the lambs to stand quietly for 10 minutes**



**Collect 10 random fresh samples ('steamers') from the ground and place in a receptacle. Ideally these samples should be collected and stored separated e.g. in 10 plastic gloves/bags. We will pool. About 1 heaped teaspoon from each lamb is sufficient.**



**Label the samples with the date and group of animals**



**Repeat this procedure for each separate batch of lambs**



**Take the samples directly to the surgery or if delayed store in a refrigerator for no longer than 24 hours**

**For scouring/sick lambs it is best to do individual worm egg counts on each sample. Please advise us when you bring the sample in if you feel the animals are unwell**

**Investigating Lamb Deaths** if you are finding a few dead lambs in the field it is useful to find out why you are losing them. Action can be taken to prevent these losses. The common reasons for lamb losses at this time of year include pulpy kidney, nematodirus and pasteurella; but we also see more uncommon causes such as nephrosis (a kidney disease often triggered by nematodirus) and red gut (a twisted gut). Often the cause is obvious on post mortem examination at the practice, so immediate advice can be given on preventing further cases, however in some cases samples have to be sent off to the lab to confirm the diagnosis. If you are having problems, please give us a ring and have a chat to see if we can help. Practice post-mortems usually cost between £25 and £80 depending on the time involved.

**Milk Letdown in Heifers** This seems to have been more of a problem recently, so I thought it worth listing some of the factors that might be involved. Some herds find they need to use

quite large quantities of oxytocin injection. This should not be necessary. It is important to make milking a pleasant experience and not a process associated with fear or pain. The heifers need to know what to expect. If fear is involved, adrenalin will be produced and the let-down mechanisms will be inhibited. Some potential factors include:

- Bring heifers through the parlour before calving so that they know the routine. Applying a good teat dip at this stage will also get them used to being handled, as well as reducing the incidence of dry period infections and subsequent clinical mastitis in early lactation.
- Do not chase them round the collecting yard to get them into the parlour. They are often last in, when the milker's patience may be waning, so extra consideration is needed.
- Make sure that the parlour stall-work is the correct size, i.e. that the heifer is not squashed into the parlour between large cows, making her become uncomfortable.
- Take care with the backing gate. The heifers are often at the back of the collecting yard, so if they are being pushed by the backing gate, or even worse, if it's electrified, then this will inhibit milk let-down when they enter the parlour.
- Some farms keep a separate heifer group, where there will then be less stress from mixing with other animals.
- Excess udder oedema is painful and will reduce milk let-down. Over-feeding and insufficient exercise precalving are predisposing factors.
- Some consider that feeding concentrates in the parlour will take her mind off the milking machine, but many farms no longer do this.
- It is vital to ensure that the heifer is well stimulated before unit application. This means going through the full procedure of predip, fore-milk, wipe and dry before the unit applied. Others massage the udder with a warm cloth before unit application.
- Some farms claim extra comfort from rubber flooring in the parlour and this may help.
- One machine manufacturer has an initial rapid "stimulation pulsation" phase, run at a lower vacuum, to try to stimulate milk let-down before unit application.

It is difficult to know how long to leave the unit on a freshly calved heifer if she is not letting her milk down. A suggested routine for the first few milkings is:

1. Heifers taken gently into the parlour, carry out a full udder preparation routine and apply the unit. If no milk, remove after 1-2 minutes maximum.
2. Repeat for the next two milkings, doing your best to optimise the let-down response, perhaps by manual massage of the udder.
3. If there is still no milk let-down, at the fourth milking use 2ml oxytocin as soon as she enters the parlour, so that she will associated milk let-down with udder preparation and not with unit on.
4. Use 2ml oxytocin for four milkings, then 1ml for the next two milkings, then 0.5ml for two (provided this low dose still works), then try without(or just with a small amount of water).

There will be no "one fits all" solution. Poor let-down is partly associated with the temperament, so even genetics will play a part.

### **Rob's Quote of the Month**

Rob and Jane were having a serious technical discussion about teat condition in dairy cows, and the effect poor condition can have on mastitis rates. As Rob walked across the office to leave for his first morning call, his final pronouncement to Jane was:

"So the moral of the story is you've got to look after your tits".

As all the staff present in the office were female and most had not heard the previous conversation they were all a bit surprised to hear Rob's pronouncement. The date and time of Rob's industrial tribunal hearing will be announced in the next edition of the newsletter.