

## April 2014

Over all, lambing still seems to be going very well. **Not many problems** with the lambs at all which is very good news. The weather has been lovely but if it does start to turn colder then it will be a real shock to the lambs and so **shelter is of the utmost importance**. Have a look at your fields where your lambs are and make sure there are **areas they can hide from the cold**. If in doubt put up some shelters or drop some bales in the field which they **can hide behind**.

The biggest problems we have seen are **big lambs** leading to caesarians and sheep pushing their reeds out.

- The most likely reason for this is that the **lambs are just so big that** there is not much room inside the ewe.
- To correct them place a **harness on the ewe** and give her a **shot of metacam** under the skin.

With the **worm season** upon us, hopefully for the later born lambs **nematodirus** won't be so much of an issue. Nematodirus needs a period of prolonged cold then warmth. This year it has not happened and so hopefully they should have **already hatched out** and so **missed infecting** our later born lambs, but **still be on the alert**.

- If in doubt please bring us some poo samples so we can correctly advise you.
- Please also remember that clear wormers are not particularly good against nematodirus.

In the back end we discussed with a lot of you about carrying out **drench checks** to make sure your **wormers are working well**. Don't forget as this will **lose you money and kill lambs**.

1. Bring us a **poo sample in prior to worming**.
  2. **Drench the lambs** with a white drench or a clear drench.
  3. Bring us a **second poo sample in 10- 14 days later**. For a yellow drench wait 7 – 10 days.
- With the particularly wet season that we have had, we are expecting a large amount of **coccidiosis**. Again bring us a poo sample to see if you have it on the farm.
  - Vecoxan is the **ideal prevention**. Don't forget we want the lambs to get a small amount of cocci to elicit immunity against it.

With **turn-out of cattle** hopefully just around the corner don't forget to have your **cattle fully vaccinated**.

Spring is the time to vaccinate against **lepto using leptavoid**.

- Lepto is picked up from contaminated water courses and rats. It not only affects your cattle but it can also be spread to you and **cause life threatening illness**.

Another killer is of course the **clostridial diseases** (strike). These kill a lot of young cattle each year.

- Deaths seem to occur on the same fields year on year. It is also spread by flood water!!! The cost of the vaccine (Bravoxin 10) is very good value for money, and in the long run could save you a fortune.

Having recently attended an excellent talk by a world authority on **"Successfully rearing heifers"** I thought over the next 2 months I'd share some of the points.

Your **current heifer management practices** will influence the performance and economic returns of your herds **in 2 years**. Due to this **long time lag** there is often less time devoted to calf and heifer rearing, but it needs to be remembered they are the **future of both the beef and dairy herd**.

- Throughout the industry calf and heifer growth is constantly **failing to reach growth and breeding targets**, leading to a **delayed age and insufficient body frame at first calving**.
- Inadequate **growth of heifers** is not only expensive, (as the process takes longer and so they require more animals) but it also **compromises the future performance**.
- It has been proved that the **fate** of a cow is determined both when **she is still an embryo** as well as how well she is **fed as a calf**. The better they are **nourished at this early stage** the faster they grow and the more **milk / calves they will produce**. As a result a **calf** from a **well grown calf** will always do better than a calf from a high producing dairy cow / poor doing suckler.

In the dairy world body weight at calving has a **large effect on milk production**.

- For every 70 kg of additional body weight at calving leads to an increase of 1,000kg of milk in the first 305 days of lactation which is an extra £300 at least.

The target should be **first calving between 22 and 24 months** with a weight for a Holstein fresian of **650kg**.

- How many are achieving this? How many know?