

April 2015

Happy Easter to everyone! Let's hope that the **Easter bunny brings us some grass**, with the cold temperatures it seems to be very slow coming this year. On the plus side we have **not been getting the extremes of temperature** with big fluctuations. This has meant that the **calf pneumonia has been kept to a minimal**.

What problems have we been seeing.... In the cattle we have seen a lot of **calving issues** with beds out, big calves and twists. We are not sure why **cows get uterine torsions**. Some can untwist very easily and quickly, where as others can be virtually impossible. The sooner we are called to them the better but they **can be very difficult to spot**.

- Typically a cow which is **bagging up to calve**, starts to **prepare for calving** with a **few strains** and then she **stops**. When you feel vaginally then sometimes the **cervix appears totally closed**.
- More often you can get your hand through to the calf but if you hold the tight band and run your hand along it you will notice that your **hand twists generally anti clockwise**. If you feel this then call us, pulling through a twist can kill the cow.

In the sheep the lambing room has kept relatively quiet. The biggest issue seems to be with **mastitis**. I refer to my last newsletter for any hints on prevention and treatment. One further suggestion is when **weaning to take both lambs off the ewe at the same time**. Fine in theory but in practice this may well check the remaining lamb.

- The idea behind this is that a **lamb has a chosen side**. If it is weaned and not its butty then the ewe will continue to produce **milk on both sides**. The **one side will not be sucked** and so be more prone to mastitis!

Nematodirus risk. As we all know the egg which hatches to release nematodirus **requires a period of chilling for 3 months** then a **period of sustained temperature of greater than 10°C**.

- Susceptible lambs will be within **3 – 6 months of age**. Any **earlier then they are not affected**, any **later** then they should be **immune**.
- At the moment the **risk is quite low**. However when it does warm up then a lot of lambs may well be at risk. **4 years ago we had a sudden rise in temperature and a massive hatch coinciding** with a lot of susceptible lambs which led to big losses so be aware of this.
- A heavy infection causes **profuse, watery yellowy – green** diarrhea leading to dehydration and death.
- Fleeces become **dull and rough** and animals are tucked up (humping).
- The **disease can hit rapidly** and death can occur before the eggs have reached the pool!
- A lower infection reduces **appetite and productivity**.
- We are also starting to see this disease in **older lambs** at the **end of the grazing season**.

Control includes: Try to **minimize susceptible lambs from grazing pastures** that had lambs on last year (far easier said than done!!) Also **calves can transmit the disease**.

- If you have had nematodirus in the past and are high risk then **3 doses of a white or levamisole drench** every 3 weeks once the temperature has peaked to 10°C.
- **Resistance** to this has started to be seen so only use the drenches if required.

Cocci poses another risk to young lambs.

- This is seen in **4 - 7 week old lambs** that have been **exposed to high levels of cocci**.
- It is more often seen in **intensive husbandry systems** where the lambs are in a **high stocking density** area. I.e. in sheds or huddled under hedges
- If it occurs with **Nematodirus** then the **disease is far worse**.
- It should be treated as a **flock problem** and not just individual lambs.
- A blanket dose of **vecoxan** at set times can be very **effective** however the lambs need to **build up immunity** by a low level exposure to the bug. It is very important that you **time the blanket dose just right** or else it can be a complete waste of time and money.
 - **Too early** then **no immunity** to cocci has built up and they can pick up cocci the next day.
 - **Too late** and **lots of deaths** can happen.
- In order to get the timing right then **monitor the lambs closely**. Think back to **when you have had cocci before** and see if this **ties in for this year!** Do you **suspect you have particular fields** which pose the biggest risk?
- When you see a scouring lamb, **bring us a faecal sample**. One from that lamb and then 10 pooled poo samples. We can look for cocci under the microscope and tell you if you need to treat today or not.
- Prevention is dependent on **good hygiene and husbandry** such as keeping troughs clean and dry.
- Where possible **avoid grazing younger and older lambs** on the same pasture.