

February 2016

With lambing upon us I have dusted off the **check list** to help remind us how to keep lamb losses at a minimum that and help to **maximize your profit** from your lamb crops.

1. Colostrum – the key to successful neonate rearing.

- The colostrum not only provides **antibodies** against the common diseases on your farm it also supplies much **needed energy** for the new born lamb. A lamb requires **50ml of colostrum per kg of body weight** for the first feed ie for a 5 kg lamb it needs 250ml of colostrum. **A full dose is required** or else the gut shuts down and stops the goodies from the colostrum seeping into the body. In the first 24hours they require 200ml / kg of colostrum. We can **very cheaply check** if your lambs are getting the required colostrum by taking blood samples from lambs that are under 10 days old.

2. Good hygiene – try to keep your lambing shed as clean as possible. **E coli, crypto, rotavirus and coronavirus** all live in faeces. Bugs hate being dried out, so throw lime onto the floor to dry the sheds up and make sure your drainage is working well.

- The above 2 points have never been so important as last year we started to see quite a few resistant watery mouths.

3. Joint ill- It is a difficult disease to advise on as many of you already **navel dip / spray with strong iodine**. If you are dipping make sure that you **clean your pot as often as possible** as nasty bugs can live at the top of the dip pot. If you are spraying then **fully cover the navel but don't spread it with your fingers**.

One of the most effective means of reducing this appears to be **wearing arm length gloves** when you lamb the ewes. It is believed that we may spread the bug from ewe to ewe via their vaginas. We have had some excellent results when people have adopted this policy.

4. Fluke. - Bring us some poo samples from the ewes. We can look to see if there are fluke eggs present if so they need to be treated. We can then re check 21 days later to make sure your fluke product is working. If you have not fluked your animals since housing then it is very worth while to do so as this year has been a really good time for fluke.

5. Under weight – if you are worried that the ewes are not getting enough feed there is a very **simple blood test** we can do to **check that the amount of feed your sheep are getting is enough**. *Call us if you are worried.*

6. Shelter / cold –it is vital that the lambs have **good shelter from the elements**. A good hedge is ideal but if there is no shelter in the field then put some up. Straw bales / silage bales can be placed around the edges of the field. Be careful that it doesn't get too shitty behind there or else you can end up with cocci etc.

7. Cocci – **Vecoxan** is very good at helping to prevent and control this as well as **cocci licks**. If you start to see **dirty bums then bring us a sample asap** and we can look at it to ascertain the problem. The lambs need to build up some resistance to cocci and so a small dose of cocci is beneficial and then treat them.

8. Abortions – if you are experiencing these then do contact asap. We can advise you on the best course of action. As you know there are lots of ways to try to reduce these and it is a **good idea to know your enemy**.

9. Difficult lambings / prolapses – many of you after putting your hand inside a ewe give penicillin or alamyacin LA this is very good as it hopefully kills any of the bacteria which you take into the uterus / vagina.

For ewes that keep **striving then metacam** is more important as they strive due to pain and swelling which metacam is very good at reducing.

- Pain relief such as **metacam** is also **very very beneficial**. I hear **giving birth is quite painful!!!!** Let alone if a dirty great hand has been shoved in there.
- Consider giving metacam to these ewes at a dose of **1ml / 40kg under the skin**. Metacam lasts for 3 days. It hopefully makes the ewe feel better and keeps her eating.
- It very importantly reduces **swelling in the vagina and stops ewes from pushing** hopefully reducing prolapses.

10. Prolapses.

Things you can try to reduce this problem:

- Administer metacam when you see them starting to push.
- **Feed as evenly as possible**, trying to avoid peaks in consumption, as sheep are designed to eat all day long.
- Reduced **lameness**.
- Feeding of **barley straw as opposed to silage**. This should be fed in racks to the sheep.
- The use of **salt blocks and molasses** has reduced the number of prolapses on some farms
 - o The salt blocks would encourage the ewes to drink water and so reduce constipation, but make sure you have clean water, easily accessible.
 - o The molasses act as a further lubricant to the poo again reducing pushing.