July 2013

Should I vaccinate for Schmallemberg??

- Unfortunately we do not have a yes or no answer as this is still a very new disease and research into it is going to take a couple of years to come out!
- We know that from similar diseases that once an animal is infected with the virus it stays immune for life. This is good news as it hopefully means that if the animal is bitten by the midge when it is not pregnant then it will become immune for life with limited production effects.
- Last year on testing we did several bulk milk sample tests from strategic areas of the practice. Everyone was positive and so we can assume pretty uniform spread of the disease from Llanerfyl to Craven Arms, from LLandinam to Whitchurch.
- We have not seen lots of deformed calves and lambs, which is good news.
- Just because your farm is infected it doesn't mean every single animal on the farm has been bitten and this is the crux. The number of immune animals varies considerably from farm to farm. If 90% of your animals are immune then this is good news and hopefully you won't be seeing clinical signs next year but if only 25% are infected then there is an increased risk.
- It appears that the disease has been spreading through the winter despite the cold weather.
- It is not thought that the disease can spread from animal to animal without the midge.

If the pregnant ewe is infected between days 28 – 60 days of pregnancy then there is an increased risk of deformed lambs being born. In cattle the crucial time is the 3rd, 4th and 5th month of pregnancy.
Very early infection can lead to the resorption in cattle and sheep.

What should you do next year?

Option 1: Do nothing!
You would be hoping that the livestock have built up a natural immunity to the disease by being bitten by the infected midge when they were not pregnant.
Option 2: Blood sample a random 12 – 20 animals on your farm.
This may not be statistically significant but it would give us an indication as to the level of infection. It is about £6.50 / sample.
Option 3: Vaccinate all breeding ewes and cattle with the Bovillis SBV vaccine.
This needs to be done at least 3 weeks prior to tupping / bulling
For **sheep** It is a single injection of 2 ml administered under the skin but
For **cattle** it is 2 injections 4 weeks apart under the skin.

- It is not recommended to be done when the animal is pregnant.
- The cost is around £3 per dose.
- The length of immunity is unknown as of yet.

Option 4: Regular use of fly repellants such as Swish in your cattle.
Option 5. Vaccinate your younger breeding animals.

Synchronisation of lambing:

Option 1:
Regulin implant.
Day 1 Remove from any ram contact.
Day 7 Insert implant.
Day 42 Intro rams.

- Peak mating c 25 days after introduction

Can use teasers and sponges to try and sync further
You do need to implant the rams as well.

Option 2:
Teaser:

- Make sure the ewes have not been in sight or sound of a ram for at least 2 weeks.
- Introduce your teaser tup to the group of ewes and leave in there for a minimum of 2 days ideally 1 week. It needs to be a sexually active ram with good libido.

Introduce your fertile ram 14 days after the introduction of the teaser tup. The ratio of rams to ewes should be 1 : 30.
This method is only able to advance the season by a couple of weeks but it will synchronise the lambing pattern.

Option 3:
Sponges:
Inserted for 12 – 14 days
Ram in after 48 hours
Leave in for at least 48 hours and re-intro 15 days after sponge removal.
Use a ratio of 1:10 rams : ewes

- Inside breeding season the conception rate can reach 87% and outside can reach 86%!!

Out of the breeding season you may want to use PMSG which will improve conception rate. This is injected at time of sponge removal. Careful and hygienic application of sponges.