



# Newsletter

## April 2020

### Covid 19 update

As the Covid-19 pandemic escalates, we have had to change the way we work quite a lot. Safety and security of the food chain, as well as statutory testing are still government priorities, so most farm work will carry on as before, including routine fertility work, emergencies and TB testing, but we must also put human health (both yours and ours) at the top of the list. You must tell us if you or your staff are showing symptoms of Covid-19 or are in self-isolation. If this is the case we are required to postpone TB testing and routine work. We will still attend emergencies, but there are extra precautions we will need to take.

We are currently not allowed to do any work which does not immediately impact on the food chain - this includes castrates and disbudding. As we don't know how long these restrictions may last, those farmers who opt for us to do surgical castrates should look into the elasticator method. Give us a ring if you want to talk this through.

Although TB testing is still going ahead for the time being, we are required to keep a 2 meter "social distance" from everyone on farms at all times. This may require us to operate the crush as well as testing, so please allow for extra time. Handling required for small calves may make TB testing impossible under these circumstances, and the veterinary profession is lobbying APHA hard on this. You could consider penning calves tightly temporarily so manual restraint is not required. APHA will allow applications for the closing date for a test to be delayed ONCE due to Covid-19 related problems and they have promised farmers will not be penalised on their Single Farm Payment because of this, but movement restrictions may still be imposed.

To minimise face-to-face contact, please do not enter the surgery. Please ring in advance to order medicines, and when you come to collect, please park by the farm entrance and give us a ring on your mobile or beep your horn, and we will bring your order out to you. For those of you who prefer to pay at the time of collecting medicines, we will now only take payment by phone.

Small animal work is limited to emergencies only after telephone triage. This requires less staff in the building and we have therefore had to reduce our opening hours as a result:

Monday - Friday	08:00 - 17:00
Saturday	10:00 - 13:00
Sunday	Closed

We appreciate this is a worrying time for everyone, and will do our best to help in anyway we can. In the mean-time please follow the advice and stay safe. The situation is still evolving rapidly and we will update you with any changes on the veterinary front.

## Coccidiosis in lambs

As the end of lambing for many of us is in sight, it's time to start thinking of problems affecting growing lambs.

Coccidiosis is a problem of intensively-reared lambs, occurring primarily indoors where stocking densities are high but may also occur in lambs at pasture, where there is heavy contamination around feed troughs in creep areas during warm wet weather. Loss of gut absorptive capacity results in profuse diarrhoea. Morbidity is high but mortality, even in severe cases, is low. Convalescence is protracted in all cases resulting in lengthy delays to finishing and extra feeding costs



Lambs take in the pathogenic coccidia oocysts (eggs) by mouth. Inside the gut, the oocysts hatch, invade the gut cells and multiply dramatically. The coccidia emerge by bursting the cells open - damaging the inside lining of the lamb's gut. A dramatic number of oocysts are shed in faeces and this can be many million times higher than the number that were ingested. It takes two to three weeks from infection via the mouth to passing oocysts from the rectum.

On pasture and in buildings the oocysts are very hardy and can survive for long periods including over winter. They are resistant to drying, freezing, heat and many disinfectants. Ewes also shed low numbers of oocysts which can initiate infection even on clean pasture.

Sheep must be moved from infected pastures/premises as soon as disease becomes apparent. Decoquinate (Deccox sheep premix), diclazuril (Vecoxan) and toltrazuril (Baycox) can be used for the treatment and prophylaxis of coccidiosis in lambs and the choice of medication will depend upon individual farm circumstances



Control involves avoidance of faecal contamination of bedding/pasture around feed troughs.

Ensure clean bedding especially around feed areas, move feed hoppers regularly.

Creep areas at pasture can become heavily contaminated especially during wet weather therefore the troughs must be moved daily.

Medication of the ewe ration with decoquinate will suppress but not totally eliminate oocyst production therefore this regimen is operated in conjunction with medication of the lamb creep feed. Occasionally, disease may occur because there is a problem of ration palatability when the farmer elects to medicate only the lamb ration and the lambs choose to eat the non-medicated ewe