



Newsletter

February 2021

Flock Check 2021

Reproductive failure, neonatal lamb disease and mortality have the biggest impact on sheep farmers' productivity, according to a poll at the SHAWG conference held last November.

Understanding what has contributed to abortion rates greater than 2%, a greater than expected number of barren ewes and weak or sickly lambs, can help identify actions to be implemented to pre-empt the same problems occurring the following year.

Flock-check is a subsidised testing service for the 2 most common causes of reproductive failure/ill thriven lambs, Toxoplasma and Enzootic abortion. It allows for blood tests on 6-8 barren ewes and is available from now until June.

Please give us a ring if you'd like to take part or want further details

Huskvac

The huskvac season is now open. Vaccination is a great start in preventing clinical disease, but don't forget that vaccinated animals will still need exposure to lungworm larvae to boost their immunity so don't over-treat for worms at pasture.

Vaccination requires 2 doses, 4 weeks apart, and the course needs to be completed a couple of weeks before turn-out. Vaccination is a great start in preventing clinical disease, but don't forget that vaccinated animals will still need exposure to lungworm larvae to boost their immunity so don't over-treat for worms at pasture.

Staff news

With some sadness, we will have to say goodbye to Charlie in the coming weeks as she is moving to Barbados. Given the current cold weather it's hard not to be a little bit jealous - To be young and free!

As her replacement, we look forward to welcoming Henry Saunders in the coming months, a young vet from Kent with a particular interest in dairy fertility management (and also giant tortoises - though I doubt even the most diverse of farmers will be branching out in that direction).

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Lungworm (husk) in cattle

Early clinical signs of lungworm in growing cattle (and dry dairy cows) include an increased respiratory rate at rest, but more noticeably frequent coughing after short periods of exercise. Severely affected cattle may be reluctant to move, stand with their head down, neck extended, and cough frequently.



In the dairy herd, a reduction in bulk tank volume is noted along with frequent coughing when cows are walking to and from the milking parlour.

With very large larval numbers on pasture, disease can occur in adult cattle vaccinated as calves but not subsequently challenged for several years. Lost milk production could reach £1.50 to £3 per head per day with recovery taking 10 to 20 days after treatment.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis of patent lungworm infestation is based upon the demonstration of lungworm larvae in the faeces, but can be suspected based on the clinical signs and history

Prevention

Lungworm prevention is based upon development of immunity and is best achieved by vaccination. Periods of natural exposure to lungworm (and other parasites) during the grazing season to allow for immunity to develop, then infection controlled by strategic anthelmintic treatments, is a risky strategy for lungworm prevention but would control parasitic gastroenteritis (PGE) in most situations. Therefore, PGE is often a secondary consideration to the more important lungworm disease.

Where vaccination of cattle for lungworm is undertaken, planned worming during late summer (July to September) can work to control PGE, but mistakes can happen and failure to treat at the scheduled time may result in disease and costly weight loss in the cattle. No real challenge during their first grazing season at pasture, and failure to develop immunity, renders cattle susceptible to lungworm during their second season at pasture especially if weaned beef calves graze the same fields every year (for example rented ground away from the main farm etc). Nematode control strategies aimed at suppressive management of gut worms, in particular those using persistent acting wormers, prevent exposure of naïve cattle to lungworm and disease is often seen in older animals during their second, third or subsequent grazing seasons.

You can now place your order for Huskvac ready for the 2021 grazing season