



Newsletter

January 2021

Happy New Year from all of us at Orchard Vets

I'm sure 2020 was not the year anyone wanted, and a national lockdown is not a great start to 2021 either, but until things improve, rest assured we will always be here to support you and your animals.

Animal health and welfare remains our top priority, and government is keen for us to maintain the safety and supply of the food chain, meaning that farm veterinary work should carry on as normal (including TB testing).

We would remind you, however, that we all also need to look after our own health, so if you need a visit, or need to pick up medication from the surgery, please do let us know if you are showing signs of Covid, or are self-isolating so that we can take the necessary precautions. During visits, we will also do our best to maintain social distance.

TB risk assessment last chance

TBAS funding for a free TB risk assessment is running out, so this is likely to be your last chance. This involves a visit from us to identify risks and come up with a practical, bespoke plan to reduce your risk of TB, or mitigate the costs and inconvenience of being under restrictions



Mastitis tube update

Finally a bit of good news on the mastitis tube front, Combiclav/Synulox and Albiotic LC tubes are expected to be available at some point this month. Multiject is expected next month, but Tetra Delta is still a vague "first half of the year".

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Focus on...Clostridial disease

Clostridial diseases remain a serious threat to unvaccinated sheep; death occurs within hours of rapid bacterial multiplication and toxin production although lambs with tetanus can survive for several days. There are established vaccination protocols which prevent all common clostridial diseases. Initially, two vaccinations are given four to six weeks apart followed by annual vaccination four to six weeks before the expected lambing date to ensure adequate accumulation of protective antibodies in colostrum. Lambs are vaccinated from three to four months-old with the programme complete before weaning. All cases of clostridial disease are fatal despite treatment except for a small percentage of cases of malignant oedema (bighead) and blackleg which receive veterinary treatment during the very early stages of disease.



Sporadic cases of clostridial disease may occur in the flock in those lambs which have received inadequate colostrum due to various factors including individual lack of colostrum accumulation in the ewe's udder due to poor feeding/mastitis, large litter, or feeding colostrum supplements/bovine colostrum from unvaccinated donors.



Tetanus

Lambs show hind leg stiffness and difficulty walking leading to recumbency, seizure activity and death from respiratory failure.

Lamb dysentery

Lambs less than one week are affected at the beginning of the outbreak, thereafter losses occur in older lambs. Lambs are typically found dead without any observed clinical signs.

Pulpy kidney

Pulpy kidney occurs in four to ten week-old lambs born to unvaccinated dams, and in weaned lambs from six month-old when passively derived antibody has waned and the lambs themselves have not been vaccinated. The major clinical feature is sudden death.

Braxy

Braxy is characteristically seen in unvaccinated weaned lambs during the winter months associated with ingestion of frosted root crops. Affected sheep are almost invariably found dead.

Black disease

Black disease is typically associated with migration of immature liver flukes during late summer/early autumn and can affect unvaccinated sheep of all ages. Clinical signs are rarely observed and sheep are simply found dead.

Blackleg

Entry of clostridia occurs through skin wounds, dog bites, shearing cuts, via contaminated needles/injection equipment, and untreated umbilicus of newborns. Typically, affected sheep are very dull, inappetent, and have a fever. Involvement of one limb results in sudden onset severe lameness.

Malignant oedema (bighead)

Malignant oedema is typically seen in rams during late summer/early autumn when head butting is a common behaviour. The most obvious clinical sign is marked swelling of the head particularly surrounding the eyes which forces the eyelids closed.

