



Newsletter March 2021

Spectam scour halt

As a result of production issues Ceva, the manufacturers of Spectam Scourhalt, have informed us that supplies will be limited this season. Whilst this may be a concern, it does highlight the message that we must all aim to use antibiotics responsibly, “as little as possible, but only as much as necessary” even more important this year.

With the continuing requirement across the UK livestock industry to reduce the use of antibiotics, the blanket use of oral antibiotics in young lambs is an area we have been working hard to move away from.

Some general information on prevention of Watery Mouth is overleaf, but do give us a ring if you want to talk about your specific situation in more detail.



Staff news

We are delighted to be welcoming our new vet Lucy Yarnold at the end of this month, who will be joining us from a rural practice in West Wales, looking to expand her farm horizons. Prior to her time in practice, Lucy has also worked as a meat inspector and was a finalist in the RABDF dairy student awards. She also likes to cook, which should come in very handy when we're finally allowed to hold farmer meetings again!

Sadly, we will also be saying goodbye to Alice who is moving in with her other half in Bristol in May. Whilst she feels it's too far to commute, at least it's not too far to visit from time to time!

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Watery Mouth

Watery mouth or “rattle belly” is a collection of clinical signs in newborn lambs which includes lethargy, failure to suck, profuse salivation, bloating and retained meconium. The condition is caused by colonisation of the small intestine by *E. coli* with rapid multiplication and release of toxins.



Initial infection results from a high environmental bacterial challenge in the lambing shed and pens, and from ewes with faecal staining of the wool of the tail and back end.

Colonisation of the gut and rapid bacterial growth is facilitated by inadequate or delayed colostrum intake. These

risks are higher in lambs of low birthweight, from ewes in poor condition or ill health, in multiples, following difficult births and due to mismothering.

Watery mouth disease is commonly encountered in twins and especially triplet lambs aged 12 to 36 hours kept in unhygienic conditions. Affected lambs are dull, lethargic, depressed and reluctant to suck. They frequently lie in the corner of the pen and rarely stretch or show interest in sucking when encouraged to stand. Within 2 to 6 hours there is profuse salivation, a wet lower jaw and increasing abdominal distension, despite the lamb not feeding. The condition can quickly progress to coma and death.

Despite bloating, lambs with watery mouth disease need oral fluids regularly to prevent dehydration. During the early stages soapy water enemas such as diluted washing-up liquid, or other laxatives may be used to promote defecation.

Problems with watery mouth disease are often worse in housed flocks towards the end of the lambing period as the bacterial challenge builds up. All attempts must be made to improve hygiene standards in the lambing shed. Wherever possible, the remaining pregnant ewes should be moved to another building, or weather permitting, turned out to pasture. It is important to ensure lambs receive enough good quality colostrum to ensure adequate immunity

Key prevention points:

- Correct nutrition of pregnant ewes (to ensure correct birth weights and good quality colostrum).
- Abundant clean, dry straw bedding.
- Cleaning and disinfection of individual pens between lambing ewes.
- Collection and disposal of afterbirths.
- Ensure that lambs suck colostrum within two hours of birth or are supplemented by bottle or stomach tube.
- Ensure lambs receive 50mls per kg of quality colostrum in the first two hours and 200mls per kg in the first 24 hours.
- The industry has targeted stopping antibiotic use for this purpose to tackle antibiotic resistance. All efforts to prevent the disease should be made.

