



Sheep News

We have two new brand new features in this edition of sheep news: a Q&A session with one of our clients, Martin Atkinson, chatting about “onion fostering pens” and also a “Sheep Team on the road” with Imogen Rogers. We would love to involve more clients in our newsletters and share top tips, so if you would like to tell us about something to do with your flock, please talk to one of the sheep team (participating clients will receive a goody bag of freebies)!

Our annual lamb loss meeting is going ahead virtually any day now (Wednesday 2nd December 7pm),

hopefully you will have received an invite by text, personally or seen it advertised on social media. The focus of this year’s meeting will be on health schemes available to sheep flocks, with a particular look at the new MV and Johnes monitoring schemes that are designed with commercial flocks very much in mind. Please RSVP to the practice if you can attend; we hope to see lots of you there!

We are also very excited to launch our “Ewe nutrition package”, which provides a bespoke feeding plan for your ewes in the lead up to and during lambing. See Sam’s article below for

Winter 2020/2021

- Ewe Nutrition Package
- SRUC Johnes Monitoring vs Risk Level Certification
- Sheep Team on the Road
- “Onion fostering pens” Q&A with farmer Martin Atkinson
- Meetings and Training
- Dispensary News

more details and please contact one of the sheep team if you would like further information on this.

From all the sheep team, we wish you a very happy and healthy Christmas and a prosperous new year!



Charlotte Moulard

Ewe Nutrition Package

Good ewe nutrition is essential to optimise flock performance. With feed accounting for more than 50 % of variable costs it is also a major determinant of farm profitability.

Underfeeding ewes has repeatedly been shown to result in significantly increased lamb mortality. Appropriate feeding will result in:

- ✓ **Vigorous lambs**
- ✓ **Good quality colostrum**
- ✓ **Reduced pasture worm burdens**
- ✓ **Improved milk yield**
(= Improved lamb growth rates!)



Assessing Nutritional Needs:

Pregnancy scanning of ewes enables efficient feeding management; in many cases ewes carrying a single lamb can meet their energy requirements from forage alone, saving on supplemental feed costs. Identifying ewes bearing multiple lambs enables accurate feeding provisions and management.

Body Condition Scoring is a cheap and valuable tool in

evaluating the adequacy of the feeding regime. Lowland breeds should have a BCS of 3.0 – 3.5 (on 5 point scale) at lambing (2.5-3.0 for highland breeds). If ewes are in poor condition then supplementary feeding will need to be instigated earlier. Ewes with the correct body score will have better fertility and enhanced lamb performance.

Metabolic Profiling is an accurate measure of how ewes are responding to their diet. Blood samples are taken from ewes 2-4 weeks before lambing is due to start. Markers for energy, protein and minerals are typically analysed and feed provision can be fine-tuned if required.

In the New Year we will be launching an exciting **4-tiered nutrition package for our sheep and beef farms.** The most basic package will include forage analysis and feeding advice; the most comprehensive will involve an on-farm visit to assess the feeding environment and also trace element analysis. There will be something to suit everybody, with the overall aim of providing independent, comprehensive nutritional advice for our farms. Watch out for further details in the main Synergy Newsletter in the New Year.



Sam Cottam

SRUC Johnes Monitoring vs Risk Level Certification

Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) offers various health schemes under the Premium Sheep and Goat Health Schemes (PSGHS) umbrella. They have recently launched Monitoring Schemes for Johnes disease and Maedi-Visna, alongside their existing Johnes Risk Level Certification Programme (accreditation) and MV Accreditation Scheme. While PSGHS Accreditation remains the gold standard highest health status, the Monitoring Schemes offer some assurance for buyers.

Johnes disease is often underdiagnosed in sheep because the signs are non-specific. If you don't test for it, then you won't necessarily know if you have it in your flock! Affected animals lose weight and they are often culled for poor body condition or poor production. There is no cure for Johnes and it is fatal. The disease has a long

incubation period, so it is often introduced to flocks by the purchase of apparently healthy sheep that are yet to show any signs of disease but are infected.

Signing up to a Johnes health scheme will add value to your flock by reducing the risk to purchasers of buying in disease from you. Whether you choose to sign up for the new Johnes Monitoring Scheme or the full Johnes Risk Level Certification Programme, annual sampling of some animals in your flock will be required – this must be carried out by us. Any animals testing positive must be removed under the rules of both schemes.



Johnes Risk Level Certification Programme	Johnes Monitoring Scheme
Gold standard.	Some assurance for buyers.
Level 1-5 is awarded depending on results and adherence to mandatory requirements of the programme. (Level 1 is the lowest risk – awarded after 3 clear annual tests).	Annual Health Status Report will be issued (including the number of years monitored) if test results are negative.
Annual testing of all animals 1 year old and over (blood, milk or faeces), as well as blood and faeces from all added animals	Fewer animals tested each year. Annual targeted testing approach – 5 rams, 12 or 20 high risk adults (depending on flock size), and a proportion of added animals.
Blood, milk or faeces samples required. Both blood and faeces are required from added animals.	Individual faeces samples required.

In addition to the annual sampling, both schemes require a flock biosecurity plan to be in place including a Johnes disease control plan, which must be reviewed each year by your vet. The recommended measures include not retaining the offspring of positive animals for breeding; hygiene of lambing areas; avoiding grazing youngstock on pasture where manure has been spread within 12 months; providing mains water if possible; avoiding faecal contamination of feed and water; and not co-grazing sheep and cattle.

Please contact us if you would like more information on how Johnes disease health schemes could benefit your flock.



Bella Lewis



Sheep Team on the Road



ing regularly worm egg checked and wormed where appropriate, but despite this, they were still scouring; not achieving the predicted growth rates and were generally looking poor.

After ruling out inadequate nutrition and high worm burdens; faecal and blood samples were taken from 6 random sheep in the group. These samples were primarily to check for liver fluke and for trace element deficiencies. The results showed no fluke, but that 5/6 sampled animals were

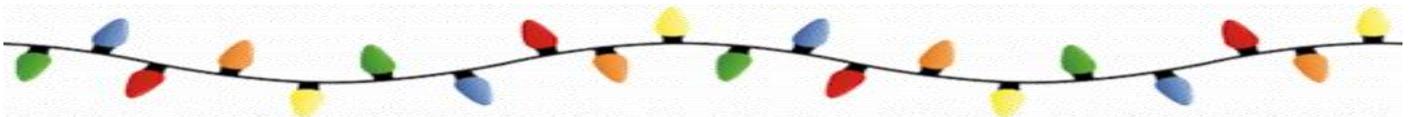
deficient in both Selenium and Cobalt. This was a new finding on the farm and correlated with new grazing land being made available. These elements are essential for growth and good health, and must be acquired from the diet.

They are found naturally in forage but demands in growing lambs may often out-weight the amount available through the diet alone, so supplementation is often required to correct deficiencies.

Over in the West of the practice, a recent interesting scour cases springs to mind! One of our clients had been struggling to control scour in this year's lambs and could not get to the bottom of it. These animals were be-

CONT. OVERLEAF





In this case, the client opted to split the group in two for treatment. Any animals over 25kg received an oral bolus, containing both Selenium and Cobalt. Boluses are popular because they provide 4-6 months of trace element supplementation, however, lambs must be at least 25kg to receive them. For the smaller lambs, oral drenching was started instead, with the plan to repeat this every 2-4

weeks until these individuals were sent on. If we quantified with this with weight data we can weigh up the cost-benefits of supplementation. For example, if sheep keep costs 20p/head/week and a 35kg lamb is growing at 200g per day it will take 25 days to hit a target weight of 40kg. If a lamb is only achieving 50g per day it will take 100 days to hit target. Those extra 75

days on farm will cost £2.20 per lamb. For 500 lambs that equates to a saving of £1100 or 15 fat lambs at £75/lamb! Trace element deficiencies are common and often can easily be diagnosed. If you would also like to check your trace element status, please get in touch with one of the sheep team.

Imogen Rogers



“Onion fostering pens” Q&A with farmer Martin Atkinson

Flock Introduction



We are lambing 400 ewes, a combination of North Country Mules (NCM) and Suffolk Crosses. The NCM are bought in as shearlings and go to NZ Suffolk rams, from these the ewe lambs are retained and go to a Texel ram. The main flock lambs outdoors in April but the Suffolks lamb indoors in February which gives us some early lambs providing year round supply to the butcher sell to.

Q1: What is an onion skin orphanage and how does it work?

We find the NCM in particular are very prolific but we don't leave any triplets on the ewes so end up with quite a few orphans from the outdoor lambing (everything is adopted on with the early group). The orphanage as evolved to have a low labour requirement whilst maximizing growth rates.

The lambs start in a sheltered pen in the main lambing shed to get them going on a bottle and give them a chance of being adopted onto another ewe if the opportunity arises. Once drinking well they are moved as a batch (usually 10) onto an adlib warm milk setup in the main orphanage. This is a series of pens starting in one corner getting progressively bigger (like an onion skin) meaning multiple pens can be fed from a single milk source. As they grow the lambs are moved into increasingly larger pens.

The milk is mixed up once a day with all containers and lines being

cleaned out at this time. In addition to adlib milk the lambs always have access to creep pellets, fresh water and good hay.

The lambs are weighed weekly and moved according to weight. All lambs are weaned at 14Kg, I experimented with leaving some on an extra couple of weeks but they didn't finish any quicker, drank a lot of milk and chewed teats. Weaned lambs are put into a separate pen with adlib pellets and hay.

The best lambs grew at 0.5 Kg/day until finished (at 40Kg) with the first ones going on the 16th of June, the whole group averaged 0.33 Kg/day with the last ones going on the 16th of August.

Q2: How did you come to start managing your orphanage in this way? Is there anything this has helped (make easier, sorted any problems?)

The main two objectives are to get maximum growth rates with low labour requirement. We changed from a shepherdess style system to a heatwave this year which allowed us to mix bigger batches of milk as its stored cool so doesn't go off as quick and is much easier and quicker to clean out each day.

Q3: Do you have any top tips for making sure you have the biggest success with this set up?

Weigh regularly and wean at 14 Kg, I found this reduced the milk powder requirement, brought the slightly smaller lambs behind on quicker and stopped teats being damaged.

*****Do you have any top tips you'd like to share with the rest of the Synergy flock? Participating clients will receive a free goody bag. Contact Emily or Charlotte on 01935 83682 for more information*****

Meetings and Training

Due to Covid-19 our face-to-face courses are currently cancelled. We hope to provide these services again soon when it is safe to do so.

Safe use of Veterinary Medicines for commercial sheep flocks

10th December 10am—1pm ***ONLINE*** (£75 + VAT)

“How do we realise full potential from our investments in medicines?” and “How to use them effectively and safely”. It is now a Red Tractor Recommendation that one person from each farm has attended a course on the handling and administration of veterinary medicines. Our course satisfies

this recommendation and is aimed at commercial shepherds and members Of the team administering or handling medicines.

Certificate for Flock Plan at end of course

Free thin ewe post-mortems through APHA

The APHA post-mortem laboratories are offering free thin ewe post-mortems until the end of December, specifically looking and testing for iceberg diseases (namely MV, Johnes, OPA and Border disease) in addition to other causes of ill thrift. Up to three ewes can be submitted for testing from each farm and these may be ewes that have been identified for culling due to poor condition at tupping or barren ewes at scanning. Speak to your sheep vet for more details

Virtual Lamb Loss Meeting

Wednesday 2nd December 7pm
ONLINE

We will shortly be running our seventh annual lamb loss meeting. As well as going through the results from this year's lamb loss survey we will also look at the various health schemes available to commercial sheep flocks, with a particular focus on the new MV and Johnes monitoring schemes that have been launched this year.

Lamb loss survey forms can be found on the back of the summer newsletter or please contact the practice for a new copy. If you would like to attend the meeting please RSVP on 01935 83682.

A Virtual Introduction to Lambing

Thursday 11th February 1pm - 4pm (£50+ VAT)
ONLINE

In place of our practical lambing courses that we run annually. We will discuss the importance in preparation for lambing, including the pros and cons of housing, nutrition, body condition scoring and what equipment is necessary. We will talk through how to approach some of the most common lambing difficulties, knowing when to intervene and when to call a vet.

#TopTweetsBleats!



Fi Kenyon
@fi_kenyon

We have an exciting new project to develop tools to encourage the use of new technologies on sheep farms with a great team @colinmacphail @5AgriGroup @Em_the_SheepVet @SynergyFarmVets @NighthawkSoft @SRUC @farmadvice @DatamarsAgriUK @MasseyRob @MoredunComms funded by @innovateuk

YorkshireShepherdess @AmandaOwen8 · 21h
Moving on up.
*Matches have been made & it's time to get down to bus
#shepherdess #yorkshire #farm #tupping #yorkshiredales



Thisfarmlife
@thisfarmlife

As simple as that. We work to live, not live to work.
@RABicharity
@dpjfoundation
@yellowwelliesuk

IF YOU DONT MAKE TIME FOR YOUR WELLNESS YOU WILL BE FORCED TO MAKE TIME FOR YOUR ILLNESS. READ THAT AGAIN.

Dispensary News....



There is currently a nationwide manufacturing problem with Betamox LA. We will be supplying TRYMOX LA as an alternative, this has the same dose rate and withhold periods.



WATERPROOF WEAR



Flexothane Essential Trousers
Available in Small- XXXL
£18.13 + VAT



Flexothane Essential Jacket
Available in Small- XXXL
£33.19 + VAT

For further information and offers please call Dispensary on 01935 83682

Next issue in March