



Sheep News Winter 2021-2022

It has been a busy quarter since our last newsletter. We have seen the relaunch of the AHDB Challenge Sheep Meetings. Nicky Ogden outlines her meeting in Axminster with Phil Pearse and the importance of resistance diagnostics. The meeting hosted by Rob and Anna Hawke in Salisbury outlined the cost:benefit of EID technology for their sheep flock and the relative return on investment. EID was the focus at the lamb loss meetings in December alongside new updates about both beef suckler and neonatal lamb losses. Many of you participated in the research conducted by the practice between 2019 and 2020. The use of EID is very pertinent with the recent launch of the DEFRA funding- remember to speak to your sheep vet to review how "a bit more data" could be used to enhance performance on your farm. Liver fluke has begun to rear its head in the region

and Clare Eames outlines how to get the most from your surveillance - are you checking your abattoir feedback and sharing it where needed with your vet?

We seem to have had a flurry of farm assurance visits over the last weeks. Remember the importance of the new elements to the standards which are catching a few out (A) a Health & Safety Plan for your farm (B) the requirement for a member of the team to have attended a Safe Use of Medicines Course and (C) the requirement for a veterinary signed health plan and antibiotic collation. See back cover for details of our upcoming courses including our sheep specific "Safe Use of Medicines Course for Commercial Sheep Flocks".

Emily Gascoigne



Sheep Clients commended with Awards

Huge congratulations to two of our flocks on their recent awards:



Tim White awarded the Farmers Weekly Sheep Farmer of the Year and Innovator of the Year



Mark & Belinda Raymond and Jenny Rearden awarded the South West Farmer Awards Sheep Farmer of the Year

New Research on Colostrum Quality

You will all be aware of the importance of colostrum in neonatal lamb health – it is probably our favourite hashtag around lambing time – colostrum is gold!

#ColostrumIsGold

Good colostrum management is crucial for prevention of diseases such as watery mouth and joint ill, and is also linked to improved lamb growth rates, reduced antibiotic usage and better overall health.

The '3 Qs' of colostrum feeding are **QUALITY, QUANTITY and QUICKLY**. Lambs require 50ml of good quality colostrum per kilogram of bodyweight in the first 2 hours after birth, and at least 200ml/kg within the first 24 hours.

But how do we define good quality colostrum and how can we measure this on farm? Good quality colostrum has a high concentration of antibodies and nutrients, which gives it its thick yellow appearance. We can measure this simply using a Brix refractometer (available from our dispensary for £18.75 excl. VAT). A couple of drops of colostrum are placed onto the glass surface, and when held up to the light the quality can be measured on the 0-32% scale. High quality colostrum can be fed or stored, and poor quality colostrum should be discarded.

Until recently, a reading of 22% on the Brix was widely used as the cut off for good quality ewe colostrum. However, recent studies have found that it may be more appropriate to use a higher cut off. A project by Fiona Lovatt at Flock Health measured the colostrum quality of ewes within six hours of lambing and found that many samples were off the top of the Brix scale (>32%). A recent study from Switzerland by Kessler *et al* (2021) compared ewe, cow and goat colostrum and suggests 26.5% as the optimal cut off for ewes i.e. **only colostrum that measures less than 26.5% should be considered as poor quality** and subsequently discarded.



Other interesting findings of the Flock Health Colostrum Project were that colostrum quality was better in hill ewes than lowland ewes; better in housed ewes than outdoor ewes; and better in twin and triplet bearing ewes than singles. It is thought that protein-deficient feeding of singles is common, and the amount of protein fed is significant for colostrum quality. Thus a seasonal reminder for those feeding preserved forage to have it analysed as soon as possible to help with diet preparation in advance of the New Year rush post scanning.

Bella Lowis



P.S A seasonal reminder to get preserved forage analysed ASAP before the post-scanning rush!

AHDB Challenge Sheep - Anthelmintic Resistance Meeting

We have been pleased to start doing face-to-face farmer meetings again – it has been great to see so many of you out and about. One of the meetings which we ran earlier this month was in conjunction with the AHDB Challenge Sheep Project. The Project has been following 11 flocks nationwide to share knowledge and generate new information on managing ewe replacements. To date over 7,000 replacements (ewe lambs and shearlings) have been tracked, recording many parameters including body condition score; lambing data and lamb performance.

One of the flocks which we have been working alongside is with [Phil Pearse at Park Farm, Membury](#). This year Phil was keen to analyse wormer efficiency on farm to help to make accurate decisions based on our findings.

Information on Park Farm:

- ◆ 850 Lleyn ewes to ram (plus ewe lambs), single sire mated
- ◆ Lamb indoor late-February
- ◆ 454 ewes involved with Challenge Sheep project, started 2017
- ◆ All replacement ewes have been homebred for the last 3 years. Bought in rams quarantine treated on arrival.

We set out in August with a group of 250 lambs which had returned a high pooled faecal egg count (FEC). Forty of these lambs were selected at random, weighed and a faecal sample was taken for an individual FEC. The lambs were split into four different groups, each treated with a different wormer category: white (Albendazole), yellow (Levamisole), clear (Noramectin) and clear (Moxidectin). All lambs were then grazed as one group as before. Individual faecal samples were collected from the lambs in the trial at either 7- or 14-days post-treatment, depending on wormer used. Individual FECs were analysed and the percentage reduction calculated.

The results are shown in the table below:

Wormer Group	Average FEC Reduction Post Treatment (%)	Reduction Range (%)
White (Albedazole)	47	0-88
Yellow (Levamisole)	86	50-100
Clear (Noramectin)	55	0-95
Clear (Moxidectin)	88	38-100

Anthelmintic resistance (AR) is present when a worm can survive the recommended dose of anthelmintic/wormer which is normally



designed to kill it. AR is defined as a reduction of less than 95% between pre- and post-treatment faecal egg counts. Therefore, we can see that there appears to be some AR in all the tested groups above. Phil is not alone: increasing numbers of studies in the UK and Europe have shown wide-spread resistance to at least one group of wormers. A recent Welsh study found that 43% of farms studied had triple or quadruple resistance.

From Phil's results, we have identified relevant techniques that we will use to control worm populations in the flock, including:

- ✓ Maximising grazing management by avoiding grazing pastures with high worm burdens
- ✓ Graze lambs on an alternative forage over the last third of the grazing season to allow them to finish without high worm challenge
- ✓ Boost nutrition at key times of year to reduce susceptibility to worms
- ✓ Ensure appropriate wormer usage only when needed – continue to use FECs and post-drench checks
- ✓ Monitor lamb growth and intervene when necessary
- ✓ Use 4th/ 5th generation wormers each season under veterinary guidance
- ✓ Repeat the testing in the spring – worm populations change with seasons, is their resistance profile the same?

Understanding each flock's anthelmintic profile is crucial to ensuring flock sustainability. If you haven't assessed your flock's status over the last two years, we recommend getting in touch with the practice to work out how best to do it for your flock. The sooner we know, the better we can act!

Phil's comments on the findings:

"The testing was particularly useful as it will help to change the way in which I think about worming in the future. I was somewhat surprised by the results, especially since we haven't used a lot of clear drench (Noramectin) in the flock over the last few years. We're keen to work alongside our vets to investigate our resistance profile further in the spring."



Nicky Ogden



Fluke Diagnostics - more exciting than it sounds, honestly...

A recent study carried out by XLVets and Synergy Farm Health found that lambs on liver fluke infected farms were exposed to liver fluke later than previously thought. By December 2019 11 out of 25 of these farms had lambs that had been exposed to liver fluke meaning that some farms will be treating for fluke too early. Premature usage will be an unnecessary cost possibly putting sheep under meat withdrawal. Additionally, flukicide resistance is unfortunately increasing, just like anthelmintic resistance, so we need to avoid unnecessary intervention wherever possible.

Life Cycle Reminder:

- **Fasciola hepatica infects the liver of both cattle and sheep**
- **Adult fluke are 2-3 cm long and live in the bile ducts**
- **Adults lay eggs that enter the intestine and then infect pasture**
- **Eggs hatch and are ingested by a snail *Galba truncatula* when it is wet and warm – generally spring and autumn but this is variable year on year**
- **Fluke develops in the snail and then returns to pasture to be eaten by sheep/cattle**
- **These immature fluke migrate through the liver to the bile ducts as they become adults, causing significant damage and pain.**
- **10-12 weeks after ingestion the fluke start to lay eggs**
- **We use different tests to look for evidence of different life stages of liver fluke**

Test	Application	Comments/ Limitations
Post Mortem Examination	Adult or immature fluke will be seen on examination of the liver and bile ducts. Identifies all stages on infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free data for active surveillance! • If selling through live markets, this data is often not available
Fluke egg detection in faeces	Only useful once adult fluke are present in the bile ducts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-12 weeks after ingestion • Asks the question “are there adult liver fluke present?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will not detect immature fluke – acute or subacute infection • Egg numbers fluctuate daily – can have false negatives and missed infection
Coproantigen ELISA in faeces	Detects infection 2-3 weeks earlier than a fluke egg count <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7-9 weeks after infection • Asks the question “ is there active late immature or adult infection” and “did my fluke treatment work?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive result confirms active infection • More reliable than fluke egg counts • Useful for checking flukicide efficacy post drench <p><i>Top tip for sampling:</i> 10 individual samples submitted to the lab which can be pooled is recommended. Ask for “Fluke coprantigen”</p>
Biochemistry in blood	Liver enzyme levels alter from 2-3 weeks after infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes are variable and not specific to liver fluke infection (other diseases traumatize the liver too) 
Serology in blood	Detects antibodies from 2-4 weeks after infection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful in lambs in Autumn to ask the question “has the liver fluke cycle started for the year” and “is there fluke on my farm” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful to check young naïve animals i.e. new season lambs • Antibody levels remain positive for months after infection so does not confirm current active infection in adult sheep <p><i>Top tip for sampling:</i> A good use of a Flock Health Planning visit.</p> 



Wishing you and your families and of course your flocks, a happy, healthy and prosperous Christmas and New Year!
From all of us at #teamsheep

Clare Eames

SHEEP TRAINING COURSES 2022

delivered by our Industry Leading Specialist Sheep Team

Practical Lambing

The original sheep course run by the practice; it is designed for those both new to sheep keeping or for experienced shepherds looking to refresh their skills or review the latest evidence to promote success and lamb survival. This interactive session is classroom based and includes a practical component with our lambing simulator including model lambs. There will be an opportunity to test your skills with the support of the session tutor.



Time: 9.30am-3pm

Dates: 1st February 8th March

Cost: £100 +VAT

Venue: Synergy Farm Health, West Hill Barns, Evershot, Dorset DT2 0LD

Lamb Survival and Advanced Lamb Care *#everylambcounts*

Following published research produced by the team, this course has been designed for shepherds interested in advancing their knowledge of lamb care, troubleshooting lamb health issues and working towards maximising lamb survival on farm. This session is a combination of a classroom session and a practical involving neonatal lamb post-mortem. By the end of the course, participants will be able to do lamb post mortems on their own sheep flocks to facilitate monitoring and data collection to advance flock health. Post-mortem materials will be provided but delegates are encouraged to bring fresh/frozen thawed dead lambs to the course. This course is NOT suitable for pregnant women or for Smallholders.



Time: 9.30am-3pm

Date: 25th January

Cost: £100 +VAT

Venue: Synergy Farm Health, West Hill Barns, Evershot, Dorset DT2 0LD

**TO BOOK YOUR PLACE PLEASE CALL 01935 83682
OR EMAIL Courses@SynergyFarmHealth.com
For a full list of courses please contact Reception on 01935 83682**

Dispensary Seasonal Offers and Christmas Ordering



HEPTAVAC P PLUS

25 doses £23 LIMITED STOCK!
50 doses £44 125 doses £96.50
250 doses £180

*Prices correct on printing 08/12/21. Offers end 31/12/21. All prices ex VAT. For a full list of promotions, please call Dispensary on **01935 83682**.

We will endeavour to get all your medicines to you as requested but ordering before the busy time would be much appreciated.

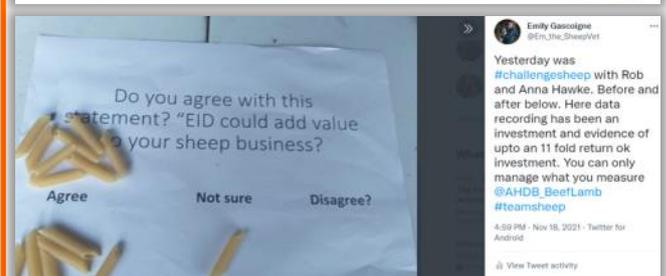
Medicine Collections will still be available from Lower Coombe, Langport Vets, New Street Vets Honiton, Mole Avon Axminster, Lower Woodford and Dorset Equine.

The Dispensary Team wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and all the best for 2022

#TopTweetsBleats!



Sheep Breeders RT @SheepBreeders21 · Nov 15
Tonight at #SBRT21 - Maternal multi-breed evaluation with @SamBoonBreeding @AHDB_BeefLamb explains the new, multi-breed evaluation for maternal breeds including parasite resistance, lamb survival, longevity, mature weight and BCS - increase performance & decrease carbon footprint



WEST HILL BARNS, EVERSOT, DORSET, DT2 0LD
office@synergyfarmhealth.com **01935 83682**

www.synergyfarmhealth.com

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