

South Wales Farm Vets

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Living And Working In Your Community

August 2020

Hello and welcome to the August Newsletter. I hope you are all well and that you didn't miss the RWAS too much. Mixed fortunes weather wise – we've been seeing some odd faecal egg count results with warm wet spells. Maggots have done well as have the corvids!

This month we are talking about getting sheep back in lamb. This time of year is critical for your next lamb crop.

We are also organising a meeting – 'Farm Medicines Best Practice which covers antibiotic resistance and best use of medicines – a requirement for Red Tractor dairy farms. We intend to hold a meeting on Thursday 3rd September, pending final approval. Places are limited to 20 people so please book early.

Mary

Manipulating the Ewe's Breeding Cycle

The ewe's oestrus cycle is dependent on changes in melatonin associated with daylight length. Decreasing levels of light ie shorter days lead to ewes starting to cycle. The peak cyclicity is therefore in October/ November.

With a generally increased price for early lamb it can pay to lamb in January, however this requires ewes to be cycling in August. It is also beneficial to lamb in as tight a period as possible, making use of staffing and facilities. This mean lambs can be grouped as they are all a similar age.

So how can we achieve this?

1) Hormones

Regulin is an implant placed under the skin of the sheep. It releases melatonin which mimics the onset of autumn fooling the sheep into thinking the mating season has arrived independent of the time of year. Regulin will advance the breeding season but will not cause synchronisation.

There are two products (CIDR-OVIS and Chronogest Sponges) available, containing progesterone, which can synchronise a group of ewes to cycle within a 48-72 hour period, or be used for oestrus advancement outside of the breeding season.

Both products are easy to use and cost effective. They historically have been a mainstay of the pedigree breeder, however the practice is recommending and using them increasingly with clients who wish to shorten the lambing period. For example those with a small flock who have other work commitments.

2) The Ram Effect

The pheromones produced by a ram will help advance ovulation by approximately two weeks and can synchronise ewes to some extent. It relies on ewes and rams being isolated from each other, out of sight, sound and smell, for a minimum of 2 weeks (ideally 6) before ram introduction. Any sexually mature ram will produce this effect but to avoid some ewes becoming pregnant earlier than expected a vasectomised ram (teaser) is the most effective choice. Introducing a teaser will cause a non-detectable "silent heat" three to four days later. Two peaks of normal oestrous activity follow around 18 and 26 days after introduction which mean teasers should be replaced with fully fertile breeding rams no later than 2 weeks after teaser introduction.

Vasectomy is a simple procedure, done under local anaesthetic and mild sedation. The surgery should be performed at least 4 weeks prior to the intended teaser use to and ensure no semen remains and to allow healing.



Sian Fuller



Rachel Davies



Laura Grey



Sian Lloyd



Helen Dando



Tracey Huntley

A fit fertile ram

As more ewes are going to cycle together, we need to ensure there is sufficient ram power and the rams present are fully fertile. A ratio of 1 ram per 25-30 ewes is recommended with teasers and 1 ram per 10 ewes when synchronising.

Method	Season advancement	Synchronisation
Ram effect	Minimal effect	Variable
Regulin implant	Yes	No
CIDR/ Chronogest	Yes	Yes

Table 1: Different methods of breeding cycle manipulation

Approximately 60% of rams that fail a fertility examination do so based on a physical element alone. The practice Facebook page recently showed a video demonstrating a pre-breeding examination. It is recommended that rams running in a single sire group have a full fertility exam including semen analysis 6 weeks before their intended use.

Ewe vaccination

As tugging slowly creeps closer in what has been a very odd year, it is time to select the ewes going to the ram and consider how to address any problems you may have faced last spring. Two of the most common causes of abortion are toxoplasmosis and enzootic abortion, both of which are preventable by vaccination.

Toxoplasmosis is caused by a parasite spread by cats. It is very resistant, able to survive over 500 days in some conditions. Symptoms can vary from empty at scanning to abortions or weak live lambs. Treatment is unrewarding but a vaccination given at least 3 weeks before the first breeding period is usually sufficient to protect for life.

Enzootic abortion is the single most common cause of abortion in the UK. It is caused by a bacteria which is shed by infected ewes from the placenta, foetal fluids and vaginal discharge. Losses due to enzootic abortion can be catastrophic, it is possible that ewes infected after lambing one year can still abort the next. While treatment with oxytetracycline injection can reduce losses in the face of an outbreak, prevention of the disease by vaccination is the best way to control the problem. Vaccination given at least 4 weeks before the first mating is usually sufficient to protect for life and both vaccines can be administered simultaneously.

Quarantine Treatments

While doing FAWL reviews we frequently discuss quarantine treatments. As we approach breeding sheep sales, this is something you should consider for any new sheep. The current SCOPS recommendations for quarantine are shown below.

Choose your risk category from the three options and then carry out ALL the treatments shown in your choice of either gold, silver or bronze columns

	Scab risk (no dip)					Scab risk (dip)					No scab risk				
	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Gold	Silver	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Gold	Silver	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Gold	Silver
4-AD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5-SI	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mox (inj)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓										
Do				✓	✓										
OP						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Mox (oral)							✓	✓				✓	✓		

- Key: Gold Standard Silver standard Bronze standard
- 4-AD = Zolvix 5-SI = Startect Mox (Inj) = Moxidectin injection
Do = Dectomax OP = Organophosphate dip Mox (oral) = Moxidectin oral drench

As some of these products are expensive we are now offering individual or small numbers of doses of Zolvix to aid the quarantine treatment procedure.