

Hello and welcome to the December newsletter – yes, December!!

Last month we welcomed Rachel back from her maternity leave. Rachel will be working with us on Mondays and Thursdays, and it is certainly good to have her back.

Last week I went to the Total Dairy conference in Stratford-upon-Avon. It consisted of two days of talks and workshops solely about dairy farms. I've returned feeling very enthused if a bit bombarded with information and it will take a few more days to filter through to the relevant bits! One of the topics was pain relief – confirming my belief that there are few times when meloxicam (Metacam/ Loxicom) is not indicated!! One speaker presented evidence that its use pays for itself in cases of calf scour – something we have known about for mastitis (even the mildest cases), disbudding, dehorning and castrating for a while. Next month, I'm going on a Johnes update day in Bristol – looking forward to it already.

Rhian, Morgan and I are going on to the South Wales on call rota for Avian 'Flu over Christmas, so we have been learning all about the disease and what is expected of us if called out. It certainly looks like a very unpleasant disease – hopefully the introduction of new biosecurity and housing measures ([gov.wales/avian-influenza](http://gov.wales/avian-influenza)) will slow its progression

Lastly, I'd like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas from us all. I hope that you manage to take some time off and that you enjoy some well deserved time with family and friends. We are, of course, available over the whole time for emergencies.

Mary

### Albumin in Sheep

Albumin is a protein found in the blood of most animals. It helps carry hormones and minerals but its main function is to maintain oncotic pressure ie stops fluid leaking out of the blood into surrounding tissue. Albumin is made by the liver and is composed of amino acids.

We can test for albumin levels on blood samples. Interpreting albumin levels can give us a reliable indication of long-term dietary protein intakes as well as liver functionality. But why is this important? There is research to show twin carrying ewes with a low albumin level are more likely to lose a lamb between scanning and 24hrs post birth. Low albumin results can also be an indicator of underlying disease, for example liver fluke or a high worm burden.

Over the last few years I have done a number of pre-lambing metabolic profiles in the three weeks before lambing. I find most people who scan and feed according to foetal number can ensure the ewes are in a correct energy balance in the run up to lambing. However I frequently see ewes with low albumin levels and from discussion with the labs this is a nationwide issue.

My take home from this is we focus a lot on the pre-tupping/tupping and pre-lambing periods but the rest of the pregnancy can be forgotten in the ewe. Ensuring ewes maintain BCS throughout this period will ensure good placental development and placental weight, both of these are driving factors in lamb survival and daily live weight gain.

I would monitor ewes BCS through the pregnancy, consider the quality of the grazing/forage they are on and in some instances

Cont.

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supplementing feed. It must be noted that currently there is no research exploring the economic benefit of increasing albumin levels ie comparing the cost to improve albumin through dietary supplementation and the economic benefit on improving lamb survival

The other area to consider is parasite control as a parasite load will adversely affect albumin levels. For example a fluke burden will cause protein loss and also liver damage reducing its ability to produce albumin, this is why flukey ewes can have a swelling under the chin.

Generally fit well adult ewes do not need routine worming. Ewe lambs can be at risk of worm burdens over winter, this can be exacerbated if they are in lamb. Good fluke control with appropriate timing of products for likely age of fluke present will reduce the opportunity for liver damage. I would recommend monitoring of faecal samples at the lab to work out parasite burdens (fluke and worms) overwinter and to aid timing of treatments.

### Fluke Control In Cattle

With cattle being housed/already housed for the winter, this is a great opportunity to treat animals for fluke. The best advice is to time the fluke product post housing with the age of fluke it kills, plus ensuring the animal is actually infected and needs treating – check faecal samples at the lab! See the below table for a quick guide. Please bear in mind some products are combined with a wormer and you may be worming animals that do not need it, be specific and feel free to call us for further advice.

Active Ingredient	Administration Route	Example Trade Name	Stage of Fluke Killed	Time Post Housing
Triclabendazole	Oral	Fasinex	2 weeks onwards	2 weeks onwards
	Pour-On	Cydectin TriclaMox	6-8 weeks onwards	6 weeks onwards
Closantel	S/C Injection or Pour-On	Closamectin Injection Closamectin Pour-On	7 weeks onwards	7 weeks onwards
Nitroxynil	S/C Injection	Trodax (or equivalent)	8 weeks onwards	8 weeks onwards
Clorsulon	S/C Injection	Ivomec Super	10 weeks onwards	10 weeks onwards
Oxyclozanide	Oral	Zanil & Rumenil	10 weeks onwards	10 weeks onwards

### Small Ruminant Advanced Breeding 2022 Figures



This was our first full breeding season at South Wales Farm Vets. The new laboratory worked well, adjustments to the shed improved efficiency and we had a great supportive team of staff to help with the work. In summary we did the following:

Laparoscopically artificially inseminated 120 ewes and 4 does. This was done to both frozen and fresh semen

Frozen over 150 straws of ram semen

Flushed 22 ewes, achieving a total of 106 embryos. Over 70 of these were freshly implanted and the rest were frozen for use in following years. We achieved an average of 4.8 freezable or implantable embryos per donor flushed.

Breeding Soundness Examined and semen analysed 58 rams as part of prebreeding exams, post purchase examinations, fertility investigations and before using the ram for laparoscopic AI.

If any of this work interests you for 2023 please call us at the office or see our website

[www.southwalesfarmvets.co.uk/south-wales-advanced-breeding.html](http://www.southwalesfarmvets.co.uk/south-wales-advanced-breeding.html)

This month's author Tom Searle

### Christmas Opening hours

The practice opening hours over the festive period are as follows:

Dec 23rd: Closing early, office shutting lunchtime

Dec 24th, Dec 25th, Dec 26th & Dec 27th: Emergencies only (practice closed)

Dec 28th & 29th: Open as usual

Dec 30th: Closing early, office shutting lunchtime

Dec 31st, Jan 1st & Jan 2nd: Emergencies only (practice closed)

Jan 3rd: Back to normal

