South Wales Farm Vets

Ty Newydd

Groes Faen

CF72 8NE

Tel; 01443 223751

Our Team

Mary Walters

Rhian Matthews

Clive Moynan

Morgan Richards

Tom Searle

South Wales Farm Vets

Living And Working In Your Community

February 2020

Hello and welcome to the February Newsletter. Anyone else had enough rain?? We had a very welcome cold snap for all of about 4 days two weeks ago – let's hope that there's more of that to come.

We had a busy January – full of TB testing, and the start of lambing. Russell held a well-attended meeting at the Llantrisant Golf Club on Wednesday 15th January about minerals, specifically with regards to suckler cow nutrition. We had arranged to do some mineral analysis of silage on some of our farms – with some interesting results! It was a very interactive meeting, hopefully informative as well.

The following week, Tom held a meeting, again at the golf club, reporting on his recent cobalt trial in sheep. As usual with research, it probably produced more questions than answers, with a few suggestions of further research from the floor.

This month, Tom is holding two practical lambing courses on February 4th and Saturday 8th at Pencoed College. These courses are probably more suited to the less experienced sheep farmers and are particularly good for youngsters just starting to be involved or anyone wanting a refresher. Places are limited so please phone and book yours.

Also in February, Sian and Russell are holding a meeting about reducing lambing losses from birth to weaning. The meeting is being held in two venues – Heol y Cyw Rugby club on Tuesday 11th Feb at 7pm, and Nelson Rugby Club on Thursday 13th Feb. Again, places are limited to just 20 per venue, you need to be Farming Connect registered also but we can assist your registration you would like to attend. Places are on a first come first served basis, again please phone the office to book your place.

One bit of lovely news in the Practice – Morgan got engaged in January to her now fiancé, Tom Hanks of Ty Canol Farm. We are all thrilled for them, and are looking forward a good party!

Mary

Suckler cow mineral nutrition

All farmers are aware of the need to supply cattle with adequate levels of minerals and trace elements. In order to help this process, silage samples were taken from across the practice and analysed for mineral levels. Some results were consistent, whilst others showed large amounts of variation.

Mineral	Maximum	Minimum	% deficient
Calcium	1.02 %DM	0.39 %DM	73%
Magnesium	0.25 %DM	0.15 %DM	60%
Phosphorus	0.45 %DM	0.20 %DM	27%
Copper	9.9 mg/kg DM	5.2 mg/kg DM	80%
Cobalt	0.44 mg/kg DM	0.01 mg/kg DM	7%
Selenium	0.20 mg/kg DM	0.06 mg/kg DM	0%
Iodine	1.84 mg/kg DM	0.13 mg/kg DM	93%

Table 1: Percentage of farms deficient in minerals tested

From the results, it may seem that every farm in the practice needs to run around with a tub of Iodine supplementing cattle. However, bear in mind that these are single samples of forage, taken from a single

Sian Fuller

Russell Fuller

Rachel Davies

Sian Lloyd

Helen Dando

Tracey Huntley

field, at a single point in time. As such, the forage analysis should serve as an indicator of which minerals to test cattle for.

Also, many farms will feed compound cake to cattle at some point during the year. All cake manufacturers will add a mineral premix into cake, which will automatically make up some of the shortfall, particularly as cattle can store some trace elements in their body for up to a year.

One common theme was that a lot of farms have high levels of heavy metals, notably Molybdenum and Lead. These are likely to have come from spreading human sewage or old mine workings. The key effect of these is to reduce availability of trace elements, notably copper. Where there are concerns over antagonism, testing should be carried out before supplementation as many of the trace elements, especially copper and selenium are toxic.

Cobalt Trial Meeting Summary

Thank you to all who came to my Cobalt in the Lamb meeting. Here's a summary for those who couldn't make it.

Cobalt is a trace element utilised by rumen microbes to produce vitamin B12. The vitamin B12 is then absorbed into the body where it is important in protein, carbohydrate and fat metabolism making it essential for growth. Growing animals are more susceptible than adults to vitamin B12 deficiencies, and sheep more so than cattle. Lambs have minimal stores of vitamin B12 in the liver so they rely heavily on vitamin B12 in colostrum and milk to maintain growth until the rumen starts to function.

Cobalt is present in soils and plants. Periods of wet weather, and/or high grass growth rate, reduce cobalt levels within the grass.

Farming Connect funded the trial which compared cobalt boluses (Animax Cobalt) with vitamin B12 injection (Smartshot) on 3 farms. The farms were in our area, with a variety of land types and sheep breeds, had a known cobalt deficiency and were routinely using supplements.

The trial started when lambs were 20kgs (minimum size for the bolus). 70 sets of twins were recruited from each farm, with half receiving each treatment. Lambs were monitored for blood levels and weight/growth.

Vitamin B12 blood levels varied across the three farms but all showed improvement in blood levels post supplementation. One farm experienced a setback in growth mid trial, as neither the injection nor bolus was able to provide sufficient supplementation, and required additional oral cobalt drench.

On comparison of blood results, the bolus performed better than the injection, however, when examining Daily Live Weight Gain there was no difference between the two products.

Vitamin B12 deficiency is the second most common cause of poor growth in lambs. This can be diagnosed by blood sample. There are various products available to help supplement and prevent deficiency with limited data comparing the products. This trial highlights potential issues with the duration of action/ efficacy of products and the importance of monitoring weights to alert to treatment failures.

The vitamin B12 injection has the advantage it can be given from three weeks of age, preventing early stunting of growth. The majority of the data for this product however is based on trial work in New Zealand and more work is needed to prove it works from 3 weeks of age in Wales. Based on this trial, recommendations with regards to selecting a product come down to management reasons, costs and ease of administration.

For more information or to discuss further please contact the practice.

Upcoming events

Practical lambing courses:

Tuesday 4/2/2020 & Saturday 8/2/2020 at Pencoed College, Pencoed, Bridgend CF35 5LG

Reducing lamb loses from birth to weaning:

Tuesday 11/2/2020 Heol-Y-Cwy Rugby Club, CF35 6HR

Thursday 13/2/2020 Nelson Rugby Club, CF46 6EA