

South Wales Farm Vets

Ty Newydd

Groes Faen

CF72 8NE

Tel; 01443 223751



Our Team



Mary Walters



Rhian Matthews



Morgan Richards



Tom Searle



Russell Fuller

Living And Working In Your Community

February 2021

Hello and welcome to the February Newsletter. This is the first of 2021 so Happy New Year and I hope you are all safe and well.

We are continuing to do our best to protect you – please try to maintain social distancing where possible. We have all the gear and some idea – please will you also wear masks if distance cannot be maintained.

Personally, I am struggling with glasses and a mask in the cold air. We all just have to do our best. In order to help with distancing, we have bought a lambing/caesarean table, housed in our shed at Tynewydd. It cleverly lifts and holds the ewe on her side – we look forward to giving you a demo!

Sadly, we are losing a member of staff at the end of next month. Laura has been back with us for nearly a year, doing two days a week with us and the rest at B&W Equine. It is very difficult to be very good at two separate disciplines like this and sadly for us, Laura has decided that horses win over farm animals. We have enjoyed having her back for the last year – she certainly came back to us at the right time and we have been very lucky to have her for a year. You never know, she may come to her senses and return for a third time – she will certainly be welcome.

Mary

Johnes Disease

It's time for another recap on Johnes! As I always say, it's a classic final year exam question - it is such a complicated disease, a real test of knowledge.

Symptoms: The typical presentation of a clinical case of Johnes is scouring and weight loss in an adult animal. This is the *end stage* of the disease - the bacteria are usually picked up around birth and cause no symptoms for years. 6-18 months before the final stages, the body starts to mount an immune response and antibodies can be found in the blood (not before). During this time, the infected animal may start to become less productive; lower milk yield, poorer calf, more cases of mastitis, lameness etc. On many farms, these sorts of less productive animals are culled, so that clinical cases are never seen and the presence of Johnes is unknown.

Spread of Disease: The bacteria can be spread through faeces, across the placenta, through colostrum and milk. The most susceptible animals are new born calves, and it is thought that 80% of infections occur in the first month of life. The older an animal gets, the less susceptible to the disease it is, to catching it and to succumbing to it.

Diagnosis: The earliest diagnostic test is an antibody test on blood/milk. Although the original infection is likely to have been picked up in calthood, the antibody response does not occur until the latter stages of the disease. This could be a gap of years, so when looking for the infection in a herd, a 'negative' animal will not necessarily remain negative. Repeated testing is necessary.

Prevention: There are two main parts to prevention – source and spread

Source—How it gets onto farm

Continued P.T.O.



Cow with clinical Johnes



Sian Fuller



Rachel Davies



Laura Grey



Sian Lloyd



Helen Dando



Tracey Huntley

Risk factors in order of importance:

- Buying in infected animals
- Using colostrum or milk from another farm
- Allowing another farm's muck to be spread on your land
- Co grazing/grazing after infected sheep
- Shared watercourses especially where the gap between stock is short
- Deer/rabbits

Spread— How it gets around the farm

In order to prevent spread, you need to know the status of your herd - to reduce the chances of an infected adult coming into contact with a susceptible young animal. In a dairy herd, calves can be removed from infected adults quickly and easily but in beef herds it is not so easy and the infected adult needs to be isolated with her calf.

This is a very brief run through of a complicated disease. As every farm is different each Johnes control plan is farm specific. If you would like any further information, please speak to one of the vets.

Colostrum and lambing

I'm sure you've heard the saying "Colostrum is Gold" so as lambing approaches, what's the big deal? Colostrum is vital for two major reasons; immunity and energy.

The 3 Q's of colostrum:

1. **Quantity:** 50ml/kg within 2 hours, 200ml/kg within 24 hours
2. **Quality:** Ewe's is best, powdered least good
3. **Quickly:** Before the quality drops and before the gut closes

Immunity

Ewe colostrum contains high levels of antibodies, essential to protect lambs from infections such as watery mouth and clostridial diseases. At lambing, ewe colostrum contains high levels of these protective antibodies but levels decline rapidly. To make matters worse the lamb's ability to absorb antibodies into the bloodstream declines so that by 24-36 hours after birth absorption stops. A protective mechanism in the lamb's gut means that if bacteria are ingested before colostrum we get premature closure of the gut that prevents either bacteria or antibodies crossing into the bloodstream, highlighting the importance of both hygiene and speed of colostrum intake.

Energy

Ewe colostrum is 15% fat, compared to cow colostrum which is approximately 6%. Fat content is important because lambs are born with a store of energy in their brown fat but this diminishes after 5 hours. Therefore, to cover both immunity and energy requirement, lambs need 50ml/kg bodyweight of colostrum within two hours of birth and a total of 200ml/kg in the first 24 hours. Studies show that triplets and small lambs particularly do not receive sufficient colostrum unaided so supplementing these lambs is especially important.



In order of preference colostrum can be supplemented with:

- Dam or another fresh lambed ewe's colostrum
- Pasteurised cow colostrum
- Powdered colostrum (check quality as it varies: look for colostrum powder mentioned in the ingredients list for better quality)

It is better to supplement quickly rather than worry about what with if a ewe has insufficient.

To summarise the take-home message is the 3 Q's: Quantity, Quality, Quickly.

If you would like to discuss colostrum further, please contact the practice.