

Hello and welcome to the February Newsletter, I hope the start to your year has been a successful one.

Bit of a mixed bag weatherwise – we've had torrential rain and bitter cold! At least the days are getting longer. My father, who made an 81 year study of these things, thought that 6th February was the first day that you really noticed the spring – nearly there.

We have started lambing in earnest again. The dry summer seems to have had the effect of reducing lambing percentages – fewer triplets and twins, more singles and empties. Don't forget that we offer bloods in pregnant ewes three weeks before lambing to check their nutritional status – and consequently the colostrum quality, quantity etc – in time to do something about it. Also, I'd encourage you to not underestimate the effectiveness of pain relief at lambing (Loxicom/Metacam) – any difficult lambing, mastitis, twin lamb disease and not forgetting lambs that have a hard time on the way out – bit of a pull, cracked ribs, will all benefit.

Prescription only medications (POM) including drugs like antibiotics, anti inflammatories, eye ointments etc can only be dispensed by us to 'animals under our care' – which means that we need to have been to your farm and know what goes on, at least on an annual basis. For farms that have not had a visit within the last 12 months, we are not able to dispense these meds. If you want these POMs, you will have to arrange a POM visit before we are able to dispense.

Enjoy February, roll on the 6th

Mary

Naval Iodine supply issues

There is a risk of reduced availability/high cost of strong iodine for navel dressing this spring. This has arisen due to production ceasing at the main source in Chile, causing prices to quadruple.

Lower iodine concentrations (often quoted as below 7%) are considered to be less effective in drying and disinfecting the navel.

Navel dressing is important however most cases of joint ill and other bacteraemic conditions follow inadequate colostrum intake and / or a contaminated environment. The most important things flock farmers can do to avoid these conditions is therefore to ensure an adequate supply of quality colostrum and decrease the environmental challenge of pathogens by:

- Management of the body condition and nutrition of pregnant animals (consider forage analysis and metabolic profiling in later pregnancy, both of which can be carried out with SWFVets). We can blood sample ewes to determine both their energy and protein levels and this should be done 2-3 weeks before lambing. FARMING CONNECT currently have vouchers that would cover the cost of this type of testing. Under fed ewes will produce less, poor quality colostrum, whilst over fed ewes will have large lambs, which may be slow to suck. Aim for BCS 2.5-3 at lambing.
- Ensuring a high quality and quantity of clean colostrum intake in the first hours of life. Ewe's colostrum is best, cow's is next, and supplements are not replacers of true colostrum. Lambs need 50ml/kg as soon as possible after birth, reaching 200ml/kg in the first 24 hours.
- Provision of a clean and dry lambing/calving environment. Reducing infection pressure is key – disease is caused by infection overcoming colostrum.

Cont. PTO

Directors:

Mary Walters

Rhian Matthew-Davies

Morgan Hanks



South Wales Farm Vets

Ty Newydd

Groes Faen

CF72 8NE

Tel: 01443 223751

The above points have been successfully utilised by many farms, especially when Spectam Scour Halt became unavailable. It helped many systems realise that preventative antibiotic use is unnecessary.

It is not appropriate to use tetracycline antibiotic sprays (Engemycin or Alamycin Spray) for treating the navels of neonatal animals – they do not dry them effectively and it is an unnecessary use of antibiotics. Similarly, it is not appropriate to plan to use blanket systemic/oral antibiotic prophylaxis to control neonatal infections.

Alternative navel dressings

Navel dressing can help reduce some risk and there are alternatives to iodine on the market. Agents that dry the area with some lasting antibacterial activity are likely to be the best choice. The following have minimal research to support its use currently but will be useful options if iodine products are unavailable.

Alternatives include:

- Vetericyn Super 7 Plus spray/dip – sodium hydroxide and alcohol in electrolysed water (which produces sodium hydroxide), with sodium bicarbonate. Small study showing reduced navel drying time in calves compared with 7% iodine tincture with no increase in infections.
- Repiderma spray – chelated copper sulphate, zinc chloride and alcohol in butane. Small study showing no significant difference in navel drying time or signs of navel infection compared with 4% iodine.
- 4% chlorhexidine, or a 50/50 mix 4% chlorhexidine and alcohol – there are limited studies reporting equivalence with 7% iodine

It is important to scrutinise the safety datasheet for whatever product is used, including the requirements for disposal.

In summary

Ensure an adequate supply of quality colostrum through management of the body condition and nutrition of pregnant animals, ensure good colostrum intake and provide a clean and dry lambing/calving environment.

If alternatives to 7% iodine are required as navel dressings:

- Agents that dry with residual antibacterial activity are likely to be the best choice.
- Do not use tetracycline antibiotic sprays.
- Products with iodine concentrations lower than 7% will be less effective and so are not recommended.
- Scrutinise the safety datasheet for whichever product is used.

Please contact the surgery if you would like further information.



This month's author
Morgan Hanks

BVD eradication in Wales

Over the last few years, the Gwaredu BVD scheme has provided funding for screening of youngstock, as well as further investigation when BVD is found in herds. Many of your farms achieved Bronze, Silver and now Gold status, indicating no BVD detected on screening. Well Done!

The funding ceased at the end of 2022. However, this does not mean we should stop testing. We can still sample 5 animals, that are 9-18 months old, to see if they have been exposed to the disease, yearly (usually at your herd Tb test). These results, if negative, can be reported to Gwaredu BVD, who will then still issue yearly certificates determined by your status. The cost of the sampling will now be paid for by yourselves at £64 VAT inclusive, but your status from the free testing is carried forward.



By maintaining good biosecurity, vaccinating and monitoring your young stock with testing, you increase your chances of remaining BVD free.

Another way to test youngstock for BVD infection is by using the tag and test system. You can order your usual official tags with the tag and test element. As each calf is born you test for the BVD virus via a sample of ear tissue taken as you place the tag. This ensures any BVD persistently infected animals are spotted early and removed.

The Welsh Government is currently in consultation on whether to make BVD testing mandatory. Whilst we await the results of this consultation, we are here to support you in becoming BVD free.

Office opening hours

Monday – Friday (Except Bank Holidays)

8.30am - 5.30pm

Emergency out of hours service

Weeknights 5.30pm - 8.30am

Saturday & Sunday all day