

We are continuing with our aim to work more closely with our farm clients to provide a cost effective and proactive health care service. We want to help increase the productivity, and therefore the profitability, of your enterprise by improving your herd/flock's health. Keep a look out for our upcoming talks and on farm workshops.

Assessing lambing and calving performance

Now we are at the end of lambing and calving, it is important to assess your performance to identify and investigate problems (targets are in the tables below). Poor performance may be due to infectious disease, poor nutrition or husbandry/management issues. We are able to offer subsidised testing through MSD Animal Health to perform infectious disease screens on beef and sheep farms. On beef farms this will look for BVD, IBR and Leptospirosis and for sheep farms it will look at Toxoplasma and C.abortus (enzootic abortion). Please contact us if you would like to analyse or discuss your performance.

Indicator	Target
Barren cows	<5%
Calves born per 100 cows/heifers put to the bull	>95%
Calves weaned per 100 cows/heifers put to the bull	>94%
Cows calving within first 3 week period	>65%
Cows calving with first 9 week period	>90%
Adult cows with difficult calvings	<5%
Calf mortality- during pregnancy	<2%
Calf mortality- birth to weaning	<3%
Calving period	10-12 weeks
Replacement rate	<15%

Indicator	Target
Barren ewes	<5%
Lambs born per 100 ewes/ewe lambs put to the ram	>180%
Lambs weaned per 100 ewes/ewe lambs put to the ram	>160%
Adult ewes with difficult lambings	<5%
Lamb mortality- during pregnancy	<2%
Lamb mortality- birth to weaning	<10%
Lambing period	3-4 weeks
Replacement rate	25%

'Healthy calves=Healthy Cows'- Young stock Focus Farms

We are looking for a small number of dairy or beef farms to work with us on a young stock project over the next few months, sponsored by MSD Animal Health. You will be part of a focus group which will look at optimising calf management to improve herd health and minimise losses. Participating farms will be given a free colostrometer to analyse colostrum quality and 5 scour kits which test for rotavirus, coronavirus, E.coli and Cryptosporidium- results in 10 minutes. You will be entitled to a reduced charging rate for herd health work. This will include visits to assess calf health and a full report identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses, with an action plan to improve ongoing performance. Please contact Nicky Reynolds if you would be interested in participating.

Free Cat Neutering

Is your farm cat population getting out of hand? If so then Cats Protection, the UK's leading feline welfare charity, is currently offering to cover the cost of cat neutering. If you would be interested in controlling your cat population or need advice on catching feral cats then please contact the practice for further details.

Parasite Forecast- What to watch out for in late Spring/early Summer:

• **Parasitic gastroenteritis (PGE) in sheep and lambs after lambing**

- Ewes/lambs on safe grazing should not require treatment until lambs are four months old- guided by faecal egg counts of lambs.
- Ewes on contaminated pastures should have been treated with a persistent anthelmintic before turnout to prevent re-infection from pasture and reduce larval challenge to lambs.
- A warm April has increased the risk of Nematodiosis- February/early March lambs on contaminated pastures will need treating near the end of April/early May to prevent/control.
- Late March/April lambs should not face a significant challenge as they are not eating enough grass yet and adult sheep are not affected by *N.battus* larvae.
- Monitor faecal eggs counts of rams regularly as they are more susceptible than ewes to PGE.
- Benzimidazole (Group 1) wormers are usually recommended for *Nematodirus* control but will be largely ineffective against other gut parasite species.
- Faeces samples should be collected from lambs after treatment to ensure that *Nematodirus* parasites have been killed and that no eggs from other gut parasites are present.



• **Liver fluke**

- Farms with a known fluke problem should be dosed in April/May with a flukicide active against mature flukes.
- Do not use triclabendazole at this time as it may hasten the selection for resistance.

• **Blowfly strike**

- Can have a big economic impact due to disrupted grazing and rapid weight loss
- Effective daggings and topical preparations to prevent blowfly strike applied before risk period from mid-May onwards are very important.
- Some products have long meat withdrawal periods- take care when treating lambs.
- High cis cypermethrin pour-on preparations provide protection against fly strike for up to 6 to 8 weeks but may require re-application (Meat withdrawal period 8 days).
- Cyromazine applied before the risk period provides protection against blowfly strike for up to 10 weeks after topical application (Meat withdrawal period 28 days).
- Dicyclanil affords 8-16 weeks' full body protection against blowfly strike (Meat withdrawal period 7 and 40 days; 1.25% w/v suspension and 5% w/v suspension, respectively).
- Organophosphorus dips provide good protection against blowfly strike for up to six weeks (Meat withdrawal period 49-70 days).



• **Cattle nematodes**

- To control ostertagiosis later this year, dairy calves and suckled calves require preventive treatment for their first full grazing season unless they are on safe grazing.
- If pasture egg contamination is suppressed by pulse release or continuous release bolus, repeated or long-acting anthelmintic injection until at least mid-summer, most pasture larvae should have died off by that time and the pasture should remain safe for the rest of the season.
- Preventive strategies only work when cattle are set-stocked; movement of these cattle during the autumn onto contaminated pasture risks disease.

Other upcoming farm meetings include:

- *'Approaching "The sick dairy cow"'*
- *'The cost of coughing: The impact of lungworm in cattle'*
- *'Growing your profits: Assessing lamb growth and performance'*
- *'Lambing starts now: Pre-breeding checks and optimal ewe nutrition'*