



MARCHES VETS FARM ANIMAL NEWSLETTER –AUGUST 2016



Purchased sheep

Do you think these replacement ewe lambs are carrying resistant worms? The answer is that you just can't tell. So, even if the seller says that they have been wormed prior to sale, it is still safest to treat purchased sheep with a **group 4 or 5 wormer on arrival**. These wormers, **Zolvix** and **Startect**, are vet only products. And because they are relatively new products, they remain quite expensive compared to the other wormer groups. We are keen for you to have the benefit of using them, so are pricing them as keenly as we can. As a ball-park figure, dosing a 70kg yearling ewe will cost about £1 (and less if you have large numbers). The 1 litre pack size of Startect is being withdrawn after this season, leaving only a 5 litre option. For this reason, in most cases we are suggesting that you use Startect as a quarantine drench this year, as it will be a less practical option in future when we only have the large packs available. For small numbers of sheep we keep a pack of Zolvix from which we can dispense just the amount needed.

The other main disease risks to consider with purchased sheep are **sheep scab** and **liver fluke**. For scab the options are:

- plunge dipping (not showering) in OP
- Cydectin 1% injection – this is the preferred injection option, but should not be used if the sheep have ever been vaccinated with Footvax
- Dectomax injection – the default option for sheep that have had Footvax. It's important to treat sheep as soon as you get them back home. If you leave them for a few days and any scab mites get in to the environment, sheep could become re-infested as Dectomax does not persist long enough in the sheep to prevent this.

We don't recommend Cydectin 2% injection for quarantine treatment. This product is very persistent – that might seem a good thing for scab, but it also means that it selects strongly for resistant worms. If your merchant doesn't stock Cydectin 1%, we can order it in for you at a competitive price (it's a lot cheaper to use than the 2% injection anyway), or ask your merchant to order it.

For **liver fluke**, the options are:

- if you think the risk of the sheep carrying liver fluke is low, don't treat but collect some faeces samples 10 weeks after arrival and have them checked for liver fluke eggs
- dose with closantel (Flukiver) or nitroxylnil (Trodax) twice at 6 week intervals

In both instances, make sure the sheep aren't grazing ground with fluke/snail habitat meanwhile.

Once sheep have been quarantine treated, they should be **held on concrete for 24 hours before being turned out onto ground that has carried sheep this year, but that doesn't have any fluke/snail habitat.**

Keep purchased ewes separate from the resident flock for as long as possible, preferably until after lambing. Watch closely for **lameness** and examine any lame ewes and try to determine what is making them lame. If you think you may have brought in **Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis or CODD** and you didn't have it in your flock before, you need to do all you can to avoid spreading it. So, contact us to come out and examine the sheep and advise you.

Vaccinating replacement ewes against abortion

This needs doing **before the ewes go to the ram**, and not within the last 3 weeks before. If you pay for the vaccines at the time of collection, the cost of the 2 vaccines (against **toxoplasmosis and EAE**) is £6 per head. Don't forget that Toxovax needs ordering in advance – so as soon as you know how many doses you will need, let us know when you will want it and we can forward order for it. Sometimes we are able to get Toxovax at very short notice, so if you find yourself short, just contact the practice and we'll see what we can do. In most commercial flocks, vaccinating ewes once before they go to the ram for the first time is sufficient to control these diseases, so ewes do not need booster doses.

Weaning

Hopefully, everyone will have weaned their lambs by now – but I know some of you haven't! The problem with weaning late is that it can impact on next year's productivity. If ewes are in poor condition at weaning, you need to give them time to improve in order to decide whether you will keep them to tup again. And if you wean late, you won't know whether your thinner ewes are going to regain condition, so you won't know how many replacements you will need. So, if you are only weaning now, check udders, teeth and feet as you wean and pull out those that are definitely to be culled. Then go back through the potential 'keepers' and pull out all the thin ones (less than BCS 3) and make a note of how many there are. The thin ewes want to go on to good grazing, and be handled every couple of weeks to see if they are gaining condition. If you have more thin ewes than usual and they don't quickly pick up after weaning, it's worth calling us out to see if there may be an underlying disease problem.

Prioritising grazing

Weaned lambs require short, leafy grass with a low worm burden if they are to grow on and finish. Cobalt deficiency is a common cause of poor growth rates or lambs failing to finish. If your lambs haven't been supplemented, it's worthwhile having some blood sampled to see what their levels are. It's also good to keep an eye on worm burdens in weaned lambs, as these can quickly rise at this time of year. Regular worm egg counts and regular weighing of lambs will help to pick up any problems before there has been too much damage. And if you haven't already used a **group 4 or 5 wormer on your lambs** this year, now is a good time to do so. You get maximum benefit from using a highly effective product when the worm challenge is high.

Treat any **purchased store lambs** on arrival with a group 4 or 5 wormer too, especially if the lambs will run over grazing ground used by your breeding flock. All lambs that are being kept on into the autumn should be given a course of **Ovivac P Plus, 2 doses 4 weeks apart.**

Thin ewes also want to be on short, leafy grass, but it's less important for them to be on pasture with a low worm burden. If you are short of quality grazing, it's better in the longterm to give the best grazing to the thin ewes and to consider selling lambs as stores.