

# MARCHES VETS

## FARM ANIMAL NEWSLETTER –OCTOBER 2016



### Lambs, pasteurellosis and worms

Several of you have experienced increased lamb losses over the past few weeks. In most cases where we have carried out a post mortem or a carcass has been submitted to APHA, the cause of death has been systemic **pasteurellosis** caused by *Bibersteinia trehalosi*. It's a bit confusing that pasteurellosis is not caused by a pasteurella, but this situation arises because the bacterium that used to be known as *Pasteurella trehalosi* has been re-named *Bibersteinia trehalosi*. The P part of **Ovivac P** or **Heptavac P** provides protection against systemic pasteurellosis, although the datasheet recommends that even **lambs that have had a primary course of 2 doses may need a booster dose prior to periods of high risk** to gain maximum protection. Most of the losses we know of have been in lambs that haven't been vaccinated at all. But we have also seen losses in fully vaccinated lambs. In these cases we notify the vaccine manufacturing company, MSD, who will then fund some investigation. Recently, where we have seen pasteurellosis in vaccinated lambs, the animals have all been suffering from **heavy worm burdens that will have affected their response to vaccination**.

Every year, the level of **worm challenge** on the pasture builds up over the summer and is usually at its highest in the late summer and early autumn. However, we have even been seeing significant worm problems when lambs have been moved to grazing that has not had lambs on it for the first part of the season. The reason the worm challenge has been so high is likely to be two fold. Firstly, because the weather has favoured the worms and secondly because **wormer resistance** is now so widespread that on many farms none of the standard wormers (groups 1, 2 and 3) are fully effective. This can mean that although you may have wormed lambs several times over the summer, each worming has only killed a percentage of the worms (maybe less than 50%), so the worm burden has just kept increasing. If you haven't already done so this year, using a **group 4 or 5 wormer** (Zolvix or Startect) will generally boost lamb performance. Starting to integrate these products into your worm control programme is a good thing to do to help extend the effective life of the other wormer groups. However, the longterm solution to wormer resistance problems lies not just in using newer, more effective products, as in time the worms will develop resistance to these, too. The answer is to **manage grazing so that lambs are not exposed to a high worm challenge**. On mixed farms, this shouldn't be too difficult, but it does require some forward planning and often a change in farming practices. Clean grazing could be provided by growing forage crops to finish lambs, putting grass into an arable rotation or alternating with cattle on an annual basis.

One of the main drivers for wormer resistance is **over-use of wormers in adult sheep**. And one of the times when ewes are often wormed unnecessarily is pre-tupping. If you need to treat for liver fluke, use a product that is just a flukicide and not a fluke and wormer. This means avoiding products such as Fasimec Duo, Cydectin Triclamox and Combinex. Another reason for inadvertent use of wormers is for the control of sheep scab. Injecting sheep for scab every year will select for resistant worms within a few years.

If lambs are scouring now, but are on lush autumn grass, it's difficult to know if it's the grass making them scour, or they need worming. A **worm egg count** will help to determine whether or not worms are the cause. Furthermore, if you've recently wormed your lambs and suspect that the wormer hasn't been fully effective, the best way to check is to do a worm egg count at a set time after worming. The ideal time to sample is as follows:

- Group 1 –BZ      10 to 14 days after worming
- Group 2 – LV      6 to 7 days after worming
- Group 3 – ML      14 days after worming

Samples need to be fresh (preferably still warm) when they are collected.

Lambs that have suffered from worms are likely to benefit from a **cobalt/selenium drench** or injecting with vitamin B12.

## Liver Fluke in Sheep

The NADIS disease risk forecast based on temperature and rainfall over the summer months has yet to be produced. However, **current thinking is that the risk of disease due to liver fluke will be low in our region.** This means that the risk of acute fluke in sheep – which happens when sheep ingest massive numbers of fluke over a short period – is low, and on most farms, fluke treatment can be delayed until November. Most fluke present at this time of year will be immature fluke, so any treatment needs to be with a flukicide effective against the immature stages. Triclabendazole remains the product of choice in sheep at this time of year, except on farms where triclabendazole resistance has been identified.

## Treating cattle at housing

**First and second season grazing cattle will generally benefit from worming prior to or at housing.** A pour on ivermectin type wormer will control gastro-intestinal worms, lungworm and lice, and if you use one of the persistent products such as Cydectin, Zermex or Dectomax, this can be done up to several weeks prehousing. **Adult suckler cows are best not wormed.** So, for lice control in cows, use a product targeted against ecto-parasites, such as Spot On, Flypor or Swish. **Cattle are best not treated for liver fluke until after housing.** Young, growing cattle can be treated with triclabendazole from 2 weeks after housing, whilst suckler cows are best left until 8-10 weeks after housing and treated with a product containing nitroxylnil (Trodox injection) or oxyclozanide (Zanil drench). Combination fluke and wormers may seem like an easy option, but in reality they're a compromise and are best avoided.

## Vaccinating cattle against pneumonia

Vaccines work best if they are given prior to a disease outbreak and when animals are not under stress. So, **for spring born single suckled calves, the ideal time to vaccinate is prior to weaning and housing.** For purchased cattle, it can be difficult to decide whether to vaccinate as the animals arrive on the holding, or whether to give them a day or two to settle in. The best option will likely vary from farm to farm, but the important thing is to vaccinate. There are a number of pneumonia vaccines and no one vaccine protects against all the common infections, so it's worth reviewing your vaccination policy with a vet on an annual basis.

## Handling and storing vaccines

**Most animal vaccines should be kept between 2 and 8 degrees Celsius.** If they are warmed or cooled to temperatures outside this range, their efficacy may be reduced. So, when you purchase and collect vaccines either from the practice or from an animal health merchant, either make sure that you are going straight home afterwards, or bring a cool box in which to store the vaccine. And when you get home, do you know if your medicines fridge is at the correct temperature? A recent survey of farm fridges suggests that it's very likely that it isn't! The centre of the fridge will have the most constant temperature and this is the best place to store vaccines. **Keep bottles in their boxes, as light will also adversely affect efficacy.**

For vaccines that are supplied as a freeze dried pellet and solvent, efficacy starts to decline once the vaccine has been made up. These vaccines need to be used immediately. With all vaccines, once the container is broached, efficacy will start to decline. An unbroached vial may have a shelf life of a year or more, but **once the vial is broached, the contents should be used within the time stated on the data sheet (this may be as little as 2 hours) and any unused product discarded thereafter.**

## Other topical issues

- **suckler cow condition** – if cows are lean, wean early
- **staggers or hypomagnesaemia** remains a risk if cows are on lush pasture, or poor quality forage
- **target ewe body condition score for tupping is 3 to 3.5.** This means that you can only feel the bones of the spine with firm pressure.
- supplementing ewes with **selenium** prior to tupping may help to lift scanning rates