MARCHES VETERINARY GROUP
FARM ANIMAL NEWSLETTER –MARCH 2017

Critically Important Antibiotics

Certain antibiotic classes are categorised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as critically important antibiotics for human use. The European Medicines Agency(EMA) has further categorised these CIAs according to the risk to humans from the use of these antibiotics in animals and has recognised fluoroquinolones and 3rd and 4th generation cephalosporins as the most important of the CIAs or 'highest priority critically important antibiotics' (HP-CIAs).

Products that are prescribed by the practice and contain these HP-CIAs are:

3rd and 4th generation cephalosporins	Excenel Naxcel Cobactan Cephaguard
Fluoroquinolones	Baytril Marbocyl Advocin and Advocin A180

So, what does this mean for the use of these products?
HP-CIAs should not be used as the first choice treatment unless evidence has shown that no other licensed antibiotic would be effective. This evidence might be that other treatments have been ineffective, or in the case of mastitis that antibiotic sensitivity testing has been carried out.
Some of these products are favoured because of their short meat or milk withhold times, but this is not a justification to continue to use them if an alternative antibiotic (albeit often with a longer withhold time) would be effective.

As yet, we have not really made changes within the practice to address the use of HP-CIAs – but we must. For those of you using these products as a routine, we will need to discuss effective alternatives with you. And to increase awareness we will be labelling the HP-CIA products with a red sticker.

The bottom line is still that we need to be working together to reduce the total amount of antibiotics used on farms, not just the CIAs.

Feeding Ewes post-lambing

For a ewe to produce enough milk for twin lambs to grow at 300g per day, her energy requirements almost double compared to before lambing – for a 75kg ewe the requirement rises from 19MJ per day before lambing to 34MJ per day at 2 to 3 weeks post lambing.

It's actually quite difficult to get that amount of energy into a ewe. And that's why ewes should lamb down in condition score 3, so they can mobilise some of their own reserves ie.they milk off their backs. Ewes that lamb down too thin can't do this, and they will not achieve target milk production. Furthermore, thin ewes that are struggling to rear two lambs are at a greater risk of diseases such as hypomagnesaemia and mastitis.

Another problem with thin ewes is that they will be passing out higher numbers of coccidia and worm eggs than fit ewes. Their lambs will also start to graze at a younger age because they are hungry, so they will be more challenged by parasites such as coccidia aand worms.
So, **thin ewes at lambing time will generally result in:**

- **more sick ewes post lambing, especially mastitis**
- **a greater risk of coccidiosis in lambs**
- **more worm problems in lambs later in the season**

In production terms, the result of ewes being too thin at lambing is likely to be higher ewe and lamb losses and lambs taking longer to finish.

There's a relatively easy longterm solution to this, and it doesn't involve lots of preventive treatments or vaccinations. It's simply to **regularly handle ewes throughout the year and then manage them according to their body condition**. It really is the most valuable thing you can do and will make more difference to the returns from your flock than anything else.

However, if your ewes are too lean when they are lambing this year, there's no quick fix. Creep feeding lambs to take the pressure off the ewes will help, as will preventive strategies to reduce the risk of disease in lambs due to coccidiosis and worms. For the control of coccidiosis, the most effective treatments are dosing the lambs with a product containing toltrazuril (Baycox) or adding a coccidiostat (Deccox) to lamb creep. Providing medicated buckets is very 'hit and miss' and generally less effective. Effective worm control is less straightforward – it requires planning grazing management and monitoring lamb growth rates and worm egg counts.

The most **common reasons for ewes being thin** at lambing are inadequate nutrition and lameness. When only a few ewes are very thin, there may be an underlying disease problem such as **Johnes or Ovine Pulmonary Adenocarcinoma**. These diseases are relatively common but often go unnoticed in a flock for years before their presence is confirmed. By that time the disease will have spread within the flock. So if you have ewes that just fade away it's better to investigate this sooner rather than later.

Scouring calves. We now have kits in the practice lab to identify the common causes of calf scour, enabling us to make a diagnosis more quickly and advise on the best treatment and control. Maintaining hydration with electrolyte solutions is the mainstay of treatment for calf scour, whatever the cause.