



info@northparkvets.co.uk

NORTH TAWTON

Tel: 01837 82327

OKEHAMPTON

Tel: 01837 658777

HATHERLEIGH

Tel: 01837 810455



JULY 2021 NEWSLETTER

SHEEP EVENT – “PUTTING EWE FIRST”

Finally, something for ewe to look forward to! You are invited to a day off your farm to mingle amongst like-minded farmers. The vet group SWISH (South West Initiative for Sheep Health) that Jonathan and Elske are founding members of, have organised an on-farm learning day on 29th July 10:30 – 17:30. The event is kindly hosted by **Matt and Pip Smith at Trefranck Farm, St Clether, Launceston, PL15 8QN and sponsored by MSD.**

There will be focus discussion points from renowned experts on topics including; sheep health, pasture management and the future of UK sheep farming, as well as proactive trade stands from a range of agricultural companies to help you prepare for changes ahead. **There is a suggested charitable donation of £5 per person on the gate.** This day is not only to raise awareness, but to raise money for the chosen charities; all profits from the event will support Cornwall Air Ambulance, Team Grace supporting the Lily Foundation and Farming Community Network. Please RSVP to North Park so that the event has a rough guide as to anticipated numbers.

Malignant Catarrhal Fever (MCF) is a sporadic disease affecting cattle, caused by ovine herpes virus 2. Sheep carry the virus and are not clinically infected, but can transmit the virus to cattle, which almost always die as a result. The exact route of transmission is not known, and the virus can spread up to 1km through the air. There is no cattle to cattle transmission and usually cases are very sporadic and only individual cattle are affected. Recently however, we have dealt with a large outbreak on one farm, where several adult cattle died. Clinical signs are many and varied, however the most common presentation is known as the “head and eye form”, where the eyes become cloudy and blind, there is crusting of the muzzle and production of large volumes of purulent discharge from the nose, together with overall depression, loss of appetite and a very high temperature (usually >41°C). Death typically follows within 7-10 days if not euthanised sooner. Our recent case however was the “peracute form”, where only mild symptoms developed and the cattle died within 24-36 hours of previously being normal. This type of large peracute outbreak has only ever been reported in the UK on a handful of occasions and fortunately it now seems to have run its course. There is no treatment for MCF and currently no vaccine is available. It is important to investigate suspect cases however to rule out other common diseases which have some similar presentations, including IBR.

Teaser rams are a useful way of bringing your lambing period forward and tightening up the whole lambing period. This may help you reach the higher lamb prices in spring and also reduce labour requirements and costs associated with an extended lambing period. Teasers are made by vasectomising rams – they are left with their testicles so that they are still able to produce testosterone which is crucial for the “teasing” to work, whilst not being able to achieve a pregnancy. It is recommended that one teaser is used for 50-100 ewes. Ewes should be isolated from all rams and teasers for several weeks before the teasers are introduced (IDEALLY at least one mile to prevent sight and smell and for one month). A typical timeline is to remove teasers after two weeks with the ewes and replace with rams at a ratio of 1:20 (max 30). To achieve a really tight lambing period rams are then removed 26 days after the initial introduction of the teasers – most ewes will be served on days 18 and 25 after introduction of the teaser. We would recommend fertility testing rams wishing to be used in this way. We regularly perform ram vasectomies at the North Tawton surgery each summer. Contact any of the farm vets if you would like any more information.



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