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## JANUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER

Happy New year from all vets and staff at North Park Veterinary Group! We hope that 2022 will be a healthy and prosperous year for you and your animals and we are looking forward to supporting you to achieve this.

**CALF SCOUR VACCINATION** – Spring calving herds should start thinking about vaccinating their cows to prevent scour outbreaks in the calves. Vaccinating the cows 3 to 12 weeks before calving will ensure high levels of antibodies in the colostrum. When calves are fed adequate amounts of colostrum from vaccinated cows, these antibodies have been demonstrated to reduce the severity of diarrhoea caused by bovine rotavirus, bovine coronavirus and enteropathogenic E. coli. It has also proven to reduce the shedding of virus by calves infected with bovine rotavirus or bovine coronavirus, therefore reducing the disease pressure for the other calves in the group. Calves that suffer from scour are also **18 times more likely to develop pneumonia** (Heinrichs and others, 2010).

**DON'T WASTE A BARREN EWE** – Ewes that are scanned barren are culled out quite quickly most of the time, but they can hold quite significant information. A barren percentage of more than 5% often indicates a fertility problem. Blood sampling 5 or 6 of these ewes will give you a good idea whether the fertility problem has an infectious cause such as Toxoplasma, a trace element deficiency, or something else.

Barren ewes are also very useful to uncover any so called “iceberg diseases”. These are chronic wasting diseases of sheep that often go unnoticed but can be economically costly. They are called “iceberg diseases” because the noticeably thin ewes are the visible tip of the iceberg, with the majority of their negative impact hidden below the surface. Examples of such diseases include MV, OPA and Johnes.

**SPECTAM DISCONTINUED** – CEVA animal health have permanently discontinued the production of Spectam Scourhalt. Control of watery mouth in new-born lambs will rely more than ever on ensuring provision of good quality colostrum, which in turn is reliant upon ewe nutrition, as well as hygiene within the lambing shed.

The Sheep Veterinary Society has recently produced guidance for all vets in the UK providing details of alternatives to Spectam Scour Halt, but – as with Spectam – these can only be used in a targeted approach, once disease has been confirmed, and only for high-risk lambs. There are no alternative licensed oral antibiotics for lambs. Decisions on what product to use, and the appropriateness of using any product at all, will need to be made on a flock specific basis – please speak to one of our vets and they will be able to set up an appropriate plan.

Body condition scoring the ewes and incorporating a pre-lambing metabolic screen, by blood-sampling a small selection of the flock, will provide good information regarding the nutritional status of the ewes. It is also important to perform a suitable forage analysis to accurately calculate feeding requirements. All of this will help to prevent diseases such as milk fever and twin lamb disease, ensure good colostrum and milk quality and quantity, whilst preventing the ewes getting too fat or thin which can lead to other complications. In many cases, with good forage, you can cut back on concentrate feeding, significantly reducing overheads. Contact us for further info.

## SHEEP LAMENESS & THE “FIVE POINT PLAN”

Winter and spring are often high-risk periods for lameness problems in a flock. We bring the sheep together for lambing and the wet ground is a perfect breeding ground for the bacteria that cause scald and footrot (*Dichelobacter nodosus*) and contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD). Bringing the sheep in for scanning gives you a good opportunity to address any lameness problems. The lameness 5-point plan is a useful tool to use when managing a lameness problem:



**QUARANTINE:** Identifying any lame animals and separating them into a quarantine area (indoors or outdoors) will prevent disease from spreading through the flock. Similarly, newly purchased animals should always be kept separate from the main flock for a minimum of 4 weeks after arrival. Foot bathing these new arrivals 3 times, 5 days apart and identifying and treating any lameness cases will reduce the risk of bringing in disease.

**TREATMENT:** Prompt treatment of lame animals will increase the chance of recovery and will reduce the infection pressure on your fields/in sheds. Depending on the type of infection a spray and/or an antibiotic injection might be needed to treat the lesions. It is crucial to accurately diagnose the cause of the lameness. For example, CODD is incredibly aggressive and infectious and will require different treatment strategies to scald.

**AVOID:** Reducing the risk of infection is a big part of controlling lameness on farm. Wet and muddy areas where sheep like to gather are high risk for spreading the disease. We can't control the weather, but we can prevent areas getting too muddy by moving food troughs around or placing multiple water troughs in field.

**CULL:** Animals that need treatment more than twice in a season should be marked and culled. These animals will harbour the bacteria in their feet and act as a constant source of infection for the other sheep.

**VACCINATION:** Can break the vicious circle during an outbreak of lameness, but is most effective when used before entering a high-risk period.

Speak to one of our vets in case you have any questions or would like a vet to come out and investigate.

**NEW PRODUCT: Sensiblex™** is a smooth muscle relaxant that is used at calving to help relax and dilate the soft tissues of the cervix and vulva of the cow or heifer in cases where this has not sufficiently occurred. This may help with the safe delivery of the calf, both for mother and calf. Sensiblex™ is available in 50ml (5doses) or 10ml (single dose) bottles and is injected intramuscularly. Once you have injected the cow it's best to leave her for 30min before continuing to try to calve her. If nothing has progressed, it is probably time to call the vets for assistance!

We are pleased to announce that **Charmaine Quinlan** has passed her TB training assessment and is now qualified as an **Approved TB Tester**. She is a great addition to the team and will help us get through the extra workload created by the new 6-monthly testing requirements.

**Please note that from next month all invoices and newsletters will be emailed.**



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