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FEBRUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER

MEDICINE TRAINING MEETING (RED TRACTOR REQUIREMENT)

We are running another **medicine training day on Friday 18th February at North Tawton Rugby Club**. The course will run from **10:30am to 3pm**, pasty lunch and other refreshments provided throughout the day. The cost for this course is £60 + VAT for first attendant from the farm and £30 + VAT for any additional attendants. This course has been approved by Red Tractor and everyone will receive a certificate of attendance.



It is now a Red Tractor requirement that at least one person holds a certificate of competence in administering medicines. Please register your interest with any of the branches. We typically run this course twice a year – let us know if you cannot attend this date but want to be informed ahead of the next meeting.

MANAGING CALF SCOUR – Prevention begins with the provision of an adequate volume of good quality **colostrum** (corresponding to 10% of the calf's bodyweight) given in a timely manner (<6 hours from birth), together with **excellent hygiene** in the calving areas and calf pens, including appropriate disinfection. Diagnosis of the scour is also crucial to allow the implementation of specific controls.

If calves do develop scour, then it is crucial that an oral rehydration solution (ORS) is provided, such as **Hydrafast**. This replaces electrolytes lost through scour, with agents to maximise electrolyte absorption and a plentiful and readily utilised source of energy. Most alternative ORS does not provide such a balance of electrolyte with energy, and we have experienced much better outcomes with this latest generation ORS compared to previous.

In the face of an *E. coli* scour outbreak, **Locatim** can be administered at birth. This is a "bovine concentrated lactoserum" produced from cows that have been vaccinated against scour and is a colostrum supplement. Outside of the UK, Locatim also has a licence against viral scour. It is expensive at £23/calf however, so we would strongly encourage prevention, particularly when you also consider that calves which suffer from scour are also **18 times more likely to develop pneumonia**.

EWE BODY CONDITION SCORING & METABOLIC PROFILING

As lambing begins, maintaining the appropriate body condition in ewes and feeding correctly in the pre-lambing period will greatly reduce problems in the flock and significantly improve outputs, both in terms of lamb survival and growth rate, and ewe performance and scanning results next year. Ewes should have a Body Condition Score (BCS) of between 2.5 and 3 at lambing, with hill breeds a little less. This BCS should be maintained throughout the "transition period" (approximately 6 weeks before and after lambing) to minimise the risk of metabolic disease (such as twin-lamb disease and milk fever), difficult lambings, poor colostrum and milk production, and susceptibility to infection. If the flock has a history of problems in this transition period, or if you wish to ascertain if you can increase efficiencies within the flock, a blood test from a sample of 6 representative ewes allows metabolic profiling to be performed. This involves analysing key compounds in the blood, which together with a forage analysis and BCS, reveals a lot of information about the flock which can be used to prevent problems. Speak to any of the farm team for more information.

DISBUDDING GOAT KIDS

If you are kidding and plan to have the kids disbudded, it is vital that you do this when they are less than one-week old. Goats' horns develop very quickly, especially in male kids, and if left older than a week it is unsafe and not sensible to try to remove the buds. The blood vessels and nerves supplying the area in older kids make the process of removing the buds very difficult and more likely to cause harm. After one-week old, the area is so well developed that the horns are very likely to grow back regardless of how much tissue is removed at disbudding. We are able to remove buds under sedation with electrocautery at the North Tawton surgery whilst you wait; this is the safest and most effective way to disbud the kids. As the skull in goat kids is very thin, we avoid removal with a typical calf disbudding iron to prevent brain damage, which is a recognised risk when using an iron.

We are pleased to welcome back to vet Clare Akers after maternity leave – just in time for a busy spring!

SHOULD WE WORM EWES AT LAMBING TIME? Until four years ago the advice was always to worm *all* ewes at lambing/turn out to prevent pasture contamination and reduce infections in lambs. “An observational study of ewe treatments at lambing on early infection in lambs on UK sheep farms” (Learmount and others, 2017) found however that there was no difference in lamb worm egg counts at 10-16 weeks of age based on whether the ewe had been treated or not: in other words, **blanket treating the ewes has NO impact upon the rate of worm infections in lambs**. Further research has found similar outcomes. As a result of these repeated findings, it is now recommended that **ewes should only be target treated** based on **body condition score** (thin ewes treated), **dag score** (dirtiness around hind quarters), and **age** (ewe lambs treated as less immunity).

Recent research completed by Jonathan, which surveyed 111 farms across the SW, found that over three quarters of respondents treated ewes around lambing time, with over half of them still worming all the ewes. This is likely to increase the rate of development of anthelmintic (wormer) resistance (AR) which has been demonstrated to have severe welfare and economic concerns.

A useful tool to help decide whether to worm ewes or not is to perform a **faecal egg count (FEC)**. Jonathan also found that FECs are massively underutilised, especially for ewes but also for lambs, as shown in the graph. FECs should be performed regularly to monitor changes in worm burdens, which can change rapidly depending on climatic conditions and pasture availability. Using FECs will ensure that wormers are only given when necessary, reducing overall anthelmintic usage and slowing the rate of AR. FECs also allow anthelmintics to be given judiciously **before** the onset of clinical disease (e.g. scour), therefore preventing any dips in growth rate. A post-treatment FEC allows an assessment of the efficacy of the treatment and likely rate of AR. Farms that perform regular FECs (**including cattle farms**) use much less wormer, saving time and money, as well as preserving the working lifespan of anthelmintics on the farm.

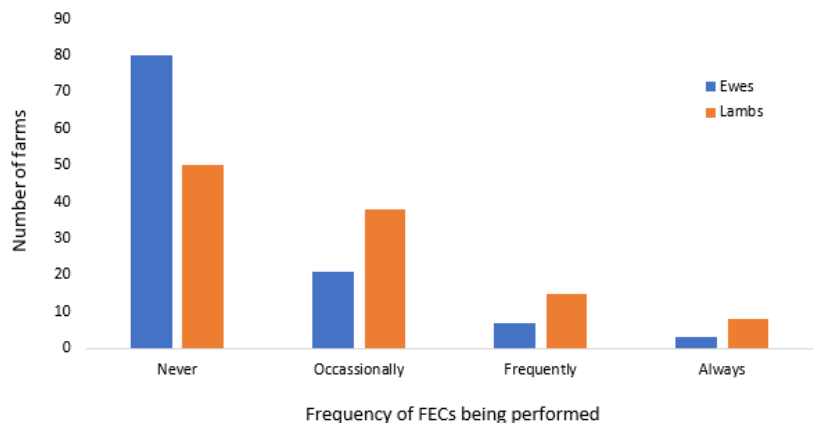


Figure 1: The relative frequency of FECs performed by farms on samples gathered from ewes or lambs prior to administration of an anthelmintic to either group.



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