



Newsletter

February 2021

Happy New Year to you all! The challenges of Covid-19 continue to be with us, as well as uncertainty over the impacts of Brexit. This month Ali has contributed a piece about some supply issues and changes to ordering and as we start thinking about lambing and calving Rob and Rachel remind us about some important things to bear in mind.

Ordering update

A plea from Ali....

We are currently at the mercy of manufacturing delays (of various products and sizes) on top of brexit delays. Therefore some orders are taking longer to come in to stock or to be delivered than normal. Please bear with us, and to make Ali's life easier if you could plan ahead and get orders in a couple of days in advance of when they will be needed that would be most useful!

In particular any MSD products are going through various ordering changes and so whilst these are being ironed out orders may take at least 2 working days to get here. MSD products include Cepravin DC tubes, Nuflor, Nuflor Mini, halocur, and a whole range of vaccinations (BVD, lept, heptavac, enzovac, toxovac, huskvac..... the list goes on!)

We will hope to keep you updated if you are waiting on a product coming back into stock, and in the meantime if you could phone in ahead with orders and then phone back on the day before coming in to collect and we can let you know whether it's worth your travels or not. Given the ongoing Covid situation we will still be leaving drug orders labelled out in the porch to help keep Ali safe so if she knows you're coming she can leave it out on the right day.

Your help and understanding is greatly appreciated! Also a note on FWEC results – depending on the time of day samples are dropped off and staffing levels results can take 2-3 days to be reported. If you haven't heard anything after that please do call and check and if anything is more urgent make a note on the submission form and we will aim to get results to you as quickly as possible.

And a final point – a few people have been organising private TB tests for moving cattle around/exporting cattle, we have to gain approval for such tests from the APHA prior to us coming out and so again a plea for planning in advance and at least letting us know when you need a test by so that we can get the ball rolling.



Calving difficulties

In the run up to calving the last thing you want is to have to call the vet out to a difficult calving, so what can be done to help prevent calving difficulties? Known risk factors for difficult calvings are male calves and twins, and unless you have a high percentage of twins you were probably not looking for them if you did get your cows scanned this year. So not much can be done at this point of the year except to remember that if something doesn't feel right and calvings aren't progressing as you would expect and the calf doesn't feel oversized for the cow then it could be two of them in there all tangled up. If you calve a cow and the calf looks a bit on the small side it could be worth going back in with a clean glove to check for a twin (alive or dead) as if calving has been going on for a while the cow may be exhausted by this point. Dam body condition can have a part to play in calving difficulties with the thinner cows being more at risk from our latest results than the fatter cows. The reason behind this is yet unclear but could be down to a lack of energy resources available to the animal to draw from. If still a couple of months off calving it

could be useful to go through the group and separate out any particularly thin conditioned animals. This could lead to them becoming a separately managed group which can be provided extra nutrition in the last 3 weeks pre calving starting.

Heifers again are at higher risk of requiring assistance at calving and so being aware of heifers nearing their due date and keeping a close eye on their behaviour could lead to early intervention and a better outcome for cow and calf.

If you are worried about the condition of your herd and would like more advice then please get in touch and we can go through condition scoring and possible nutrition plans tailored to you.

Ewe nutrition: Minimising lamb losses and maximising production.

Profitability of lowland flocks is impacted by lamb's losses during pregnancy and the neonatal immediately post-lambing. Reasons are multifactorial including maternal genetics, nutrition, mothering ability and neonatal husbandry. In a recent study UK-wide survey led by the dick vet team, on average flocks lost 8.6% (range: 6.0-12.9%) in lambs in the first 3 weeks post-lambing. Although the importance of specific risk factors is likely to vary between individual flocks, ewe nutrition is thought to be an important driver across UK lowland flocks.

In another study, funded by AHDB, we used a 300-ewe lowland flock to investigate the impact of ewe nutrition on lamb production. We analysed ewe nutrition prior lambing using metabolic profile data with lamb data from every lamb born including taking a blood sample to assess if lambs had received sufficient colostrum. Firstly, we found that in twin and triplet bearing ewes with low blood albumin had increased odds of losing a lamb between scanning and 48 hours post-partum. Decreased blood albumin is associated with long term protein deficiency or chronic disease. Protein deficiency is likely to impact on foetal growth and contribute to ewes producing insufficient colostrum. Lambs provided with inadequate colostrum will have limited immunity to tackle disease such as watery mouth (failure of passive transfer or FPT). In our study we found that triplet lambs were at more risk of FPT when their dams had insufficient energy. Ewes with multiple pregnancies are at increased risk of energy deficiency and if this is not corrected ewes may not produce sufficient colostrum or give birth to weak lambs.

As we also followed lambs through to weaning, we investigated if FPT had an impact of lamb growth rate. We found that twin or triplet lambs were at increased risk of reduced daily live weight gain (<230g per day) until weaning. Providing oral antibiotic to half these lambs at birth, had no impact of their DLWG. Suggesting that preventing FPT is integral to lamb growth and efficiency of well-managed lowland production systems. So, what does this mean for ewe? (Excuse the pun!). **Consider booking a metabolic profile 3 weeks prior lambing:** the FAP team collect details of feed composition and take blood samples from a sample of 4-6 ewes from each management group. With the DHHS team we can advise how to maximise ewe nutrition to meet each groups requirement. **Provide sufficient colostrum within 6 hours:** Ensure lambs receive ~50ml/ kg within 6 hours by having full belly. **Record lambs born and investigate lamb losses:** Recoding lamb losses can be as simple as noting down the number of lambs that leave the shed each day or using the average number of dead lambs in a sack and minus this from the total scan number. If you suspect you have previously had lamb losses above 5% of lambs scanned prior turn out, please call the FAP team for further investigation.

Covid Update

With Scotland back into lockdown we just wanted to reassure all of our clients that the Farm Animal Practice are still able to provide all necessary services. We currently have a full complement of staff so should be able to accommodate any visits that you require.

To keep everyone safe and well we would ask that you notify us ASAP if you or anyone on the farm has symptoms of COVID or is self-isolating, so that we can make relevant decisions on the safe provision of services.

We will continue to keep access to our reception limited so if you require any medications etc please let us know in advance. A reminder that we do not always receive our delivery first thing in the morning so please drop us a call before making your way in to collect.

We would ask everyone to ensure that they wear a face mask when entering any buildings on the vet school site as per the University of Edinburgh COVID policy.

If anything changes we will let you know via Facebook or the newsletter. But if you have any questions or concerns please get in touch.
