THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies

Farm Animal Practice

Newsletter November 2022

With Christmas fast approaching, we hope that your animals are looking in fine fettle. In this newsletter, Jane reminds us of the importance of bovine respiratory disease in housed cattle. Rob also summarises the results of a vet student research project which surveyed lowland sheep farmers about parasite control (advertised in the Autumn 2021 newsletter) and how the outcomes may influence approach to parasite control in your flock. Alberto also outlines his research project on mastitis in sheep, and how you can get involved in his survey.

We will be open as usual for routine work over the festive period aside from Sat 24th to Tues 26th December, and Sat 30th December to Tuesday 3rd January, during which time we will be providing our normal service for out of hours emergencies. Please plan ahead for any drug orders you may need over this time as the majority of our suppliers run limited services over the Christmas period.

Wishing you all the best for the festive season and a happy and healthy 2023 from all of us at the Farm Animal Practice.

Mastitis in sheep

Mastitis is a common problem that many of you will have been faced with in sheep, but relatively little is known about it – unlike in dairy cattle for example. Therefore Alberto's Resident research project is seeking to estimate the incidence of clinical mastitis in sheep, describe the common methods used to diagnose, treat and manage a case of clinical mastitis, and identify potential risk factors and areas in need of further research.

I would be grateful if you could complete my research questionnaire on sheep mastitis by scanning the QR code below, or clicking on the link. Thank you very much.

https://edin.ac/3S9fYX8

Respiratory Disease in calves

With housing of cattle being imminent (or having happened already) Bovine Respiratory Disease (BRD) has the potential to start affecting stock.

Pneumonia in calves has a significant economic and welfare impact on the industry, and is estimated to cost upwards of 50 million pounds annually. The cost of the disease to you is often hidden, a result of reduced intakes and subsequent reduced live weight gains.

The cause of disease is often multifactorial, a result of exposure to bacteria, viruses and environmental challenges. Housing represents a significant risk period for disease.

Many of you will already have pneumonia vaccination programs started in preparation for housing, as these ideally need to be completed before stock come in and experience the environmental and disease challenges of being housed.

Some of you may already be working with Bovilis Intranasal RSP Live, which is licensed for immunisation against respiratory disease caused by Bovine Respiratory Syncytial Virus (BRSV) and Parainfluenza Virus 3 (Pi3). These viruses are common causes of disease in calves and can cause disease in their own right but also cause damage to the respiratory tract that allows secondary bacterial infection.

MSD have recently announced a change in the licence of this product, meaning it can now be used from birth. This allows the earliest protection possible for calves and hopefully means administration can be integrated into existing neonatal management protocols.

If you would like any advice on this product or any other respiratory vaccine products, please get in touch with the practice.

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Current anthelmintic protocols and associated professional advice provided to control gut nematodes in UK lowland sheep flocks

Over-reliance on anthelmintics (wormers) is a concern for the sustainability of control of parasitic gastroenteritis in UK sheep flocks. This pilot study aimed to find out how knowledgeable UK lowland sheep farmers feel when considering anthelmintics and their source of guidance. An online survey was distributed to UK lowland sheep farmers, and 128 responses provisionally analysed. Interesting findings included:

• Farmers that used one anthelmintic group for their ewes were more likely to also use one product for their lambs (66%) than multiple (28%).

• The majority of farmers (43.9%) used Group 3 (clear) wormers in their breeding ewes. The most frequently used in the lambs was a Group 1 (white) wormers (43.5%) followed by Group 3 clear treatments. For those that used two products in both ewes and lambs, this was most commonly a combination of a white and clear wormers.

• **Take home message**: *This work suggests that the potential for Group 3 (clear drench) resistance is high*. Any treatments should be followed up with a post treatment faecal egg count to assess efficacy (14 days post treatment for all treatments: except 7 days for yellow treatments).

• The majority of farmers wormed all ewes and lambs at multiple points during the grazing season, mostly coinciding with routine husbandry procedures.

• Only 3.9-7.8% farmers treated based on observational factors alone (for ewes or lambs respectively), including poor condition and scouring.

• Anthelmintic dosing focused on estimating weights either at the individual or group level. These methods could lead to underdosing and promotion of resistance.

• **Take home message**: *This work suggests potential for underdosing of treatments which could lead to the development of anthelmintic resistance*. Opportunities available for integrating weigh scales to monitor growth rates and targeted selected treatments in lambs.

Nematodirosis and liver fluke control

• Anthelmintic group selected is possibly informed by parasite risk (e.g. white drench in lambs for Nematodirus species) and tendency to use those with persistent cover (Group 3 clear drenches).

• Larger flocks conducted FWECs less frequently or not at all, and only 5.5% of farmers used SCOPs nematodirosis forecast to inform treatments. Liver fluke treatments also tended to be blanket treatments, rather than targeted.

• **Take home message***: Further monitoring for nematodirosis could be encouraged*, through accessing the nematodirosis forecast and using faecal testing to monitor during risk periods (usually May-June, although in some areas can occur in autumn fat lambs). Similar approaches can also be taken for fluke, with collecting faecal samples from 5-10 ewes at weaning and scanning to monitor for fluke eggs.

Lowland sheep farmers highlighted that they value advice from vets and SQPs on parasite control, yet the nature of advice may be focused on treatments rather than routine monitoring. For integrated and sustainable parasite control, we recommend contacting the practice to develop a health plan tailored for your flock for the coming year.

If you are keen to participate further in supporting research into better worm control practices, please complete the following nationwide survey from our colleagues at Liverpool University Veterinary School:

Questionnaire survey on parasite control in sheep

As part of a project on parasite control in sheep, we are running a questionnaire to collect information about the diverse management methods used by UK sheep producers. This will take around 20-30 minutes to complete. It is completely anonymous. After completion of the survey, if you wish, you can enter a prize draw to win one of ten £25 Amazon vouchers.
Please follow this link to the survey :

https://liverpool.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/eld-parasite-control-7

We are always interested to hear of cases that you think would be useful for the Farm Animal Hospital for student teaching, e.g. barren ewes post-scanning or poor-doing calves. We can collect these animals for free and any diagnostic results will be reported back to you.

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