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

Farm Animal Practice

Newsletter November 2026

As the nights are drawing in and autumn is well underway, Tom takes us through some commonly encountered issues with store lambs. We introduce our new vet Liz who will be starting with us in December and Tony update s you on the current Bluetongue situation.

Staffing Updates



We are delighted to be welcoming Liz Macintosh who will be joining the team full time from the start of December, and is looking forward to meeting everyone.
Liz graduated from Glasgow vet school in 2009, before moving to New Zealand where she initially worked in mixed practice and then in dairy practice in the Waikato region of the north island.
In 2019 Liz completed a teaching degree through the University of Waikato and taught science for a few years before returning home to Scotland in 2024.
Upon returning home, Liz has worked as a mixed practice vet in Fife.
Liz enjoys getting involved in health planning, building working relationships with farm clients and sharing in their successes. Having both a teaching and veterinary focused career to date, Liz is excited to put both things into practice in her new role at the R(D)SVS.

In other news, Ali, who is well known to you all as the foundation of the practice, just celebrated a milestone birthday. We wish her many happy returns!

One of our students is doing a research project on traditional (conscious, manual restraint) versus knockdown (sedated) disbudding in dairy calves. If you are a farmer, vet or student with an interest in calf rearing then please take 5 minutes to complete the survey.

Pasteurellosis In lambs

Pasteurellosis is a common cause of lamb losses at this time of year. The main bacteria involved are Bibersteinia trehalosi, Mannhaemia haemolytica and Pasteurella multocida. While sheep of any age can be affected, significant outbreaks are most commonly seen in lambs. These bacteria normally live in the upper respiratory tract and tonsils of healthy sheep. However, stress or damage to the respiratory tract, including that caused by respiratory viruses, can allow them to multiply and cause disease. The lungs are primarily affected and although weak lambs with frothing at the mouth may occasionally be seen, sudden death is the most common presentation. Septicaemia can develop rapidly, killing lambs before clinical signs are observed. The impact of the disease is not only limited to deaths. Lung damage caused by Pasteurellosis can significantly reduce performance, with studies reporting 50% reductions in daily liveweight gain and increases in finishing time of 10–34%.



Lungs from a lamb with pasteurellosis showing marked consolidation

Outbreaks are often caused by a combination of factors. Common stressors include changes in weather, weaning, handling, mixing groups and transport. Other contributing factors can be overlooked, including trace-element deficiencies, particularly selenium and cobalt, as well as worm and fluke burdens and tick-borne disease. Parasite burdens can build up on pasture over the summer,

resulting in a high challenge for lambs in the autumn. Significant parasite burdens are also a common finding at post-mortem examinations of lambs that have died from Pasteurellosis. Investigating reduced growth or ill-thrift before the high-risk period can therefore help identify and address these underlying problems. Where parasite burdens are suspected, faecal samples can be submitted to the practice for worm and fluke testing. Freshly produced individual samples from 5–10 lambs per group give the best chance of accurately assessing the level of challenge.

Blood sampling a proportion of lambs in a group can be carried out in cases where trace element deficiencies are suspected.

Pasteurella components are included in some clostridial vaccines and are also available as standalone Pasteurella vaccines, however recent issues with availability have been challenging. Vaccination can help reduce the severity of outbreaks, but it is important to remember that protection is not 100%, particularly where significant underlying stressors remain. The duration of protection provided by Pasteurella vaccination is less well established and is likely to be considerably shorter than the protection provided against the clostridial diseases included in combined vaccines. Lambs vaccinated in spring may therefore have reduced protection by autumn. Boosting lambs before high-risk periods is strongly recommended, particularly where Pasteurellosis has been a problem previously.

If you have any queries on preventing lamb losses, please get in touch with us at the practice and our vets will be happy to discuss further.

Bluetongue Update

We have all read about the devastating effects of BTV-3 down south. There was very high level of disease in sheep – severe illness and mortality. The timing of the infection across the south of England severely impacted on ram fertility – the virus replicates in the testicles and renders the ram infertile for up to 100 days. Speaking to colleagues in Devon – a lot of rams were testing infertile. This put pressure on ram sales across the country.

We have talked to all of you about vaccination – vaccine supply became an issue but we managed to supply vaccine where wanted – and we appreciate the patience of you all whilst we sourced the vaccine.

Looking ahead to next year – with the weight of infection down south, and the spread of infection north – we will be expecting Bluetongue to be an issue. Vaccination for sheep and cattle is recommended. Hopefully vaccine supply will be better in the Spring, and you may have more choice of vaccine.

The whole of Scotland, along with England and Wales, is now a Restricted Zone. This means animals can move freely across the UK. A general licence is required - (EXD671(GB)). This does state that if animals are showing signs of disease, then no animals can be moved from that premises. It also recommends that animals to be moved are vaccinated. As with any purchase/movement – please keep biosecurity in mind, vaccinate as required, and

speak to us for any advice before any purchases

Farm Animal Hospital Donations

We are always on the look out for donated teaching cases for our FAH. Ill thriven lambs or cull ewes for example can have a lot of teaching value for the students and can provide valuable flock surveillance information back to you.

- All animals must be fit to transport
- Drew can collect cases from farm
- R(D)SVS will pay £50 for a bovine case and £30 per group for small ruminant/pigs for donated teaching cases, on completion of a suitable invoice for payment
- All donated teaching cases will go for post-mortem and disposal at R(D)SVS, and you will be informed about the gross post-mortem diagnosis and any relevant findings.

Please contact Ali at the practice if you have anything suitable or would like to discuss donating.

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