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FARM NEWSLETTER

CATTLE

BLOAT

This is abdominal distension of the rumen. This problem can be caused by excessive grain intake, or by an obstruction that means the beast cannot burp! At this time of year though, 'frothy bloat' is the main worry. The problem is caused when the animal ingests legumes such as clover and alfalfa, at their most dangerous when pre-bloom. Kale, rape and turnips can cause similar problems. We do not know why some animals bloat, and others don't.

Bloat can occur within 4 hours of the onset of clinical signs. The most worrying aspect is that the first sign you may see of bloat will be a dead animal. If an animal is going to be a problem, then bloat will occur within 3 days of being let on to the pasture. This is an emergency!! The distended rumen inhibits breathing and the beast can be seen mouth breathing. Extra pressure on

vital organs within the abdomen can cause them to rupture. Treatment consists of removing the gas. In mild cases, passing a tube down the oesophagus and putting external pressure on the rumen should cure the problem, though this isn't always possible due to the pockets of gas. More severe cases will require a trochar directly into the rumen. Once as much gas as possible is removed, an anti-foaming agent needs to be added. Vegetable oils and liquid paraffin will both remove the foam, releasing the gas.

Remove the animal from the problem pasture. Ideally, keep the animal indoors and feed on straw/poor quality hay. Otherwise put on poorer quality, fibrous grass. Keep a close eye on the animal as the problem can easily recur.

SUMMER MASTITIS

Summer Mastitis - caused by the bacteria 'Actinomyces Pyogenes'. This is a problem that primarily affects dry cows and heifers prior to, or at, calving. The animal presents with a hot swollen udder. On stripping the teat, foul smelling, purulent material can be extracted. The bacteria are transmitted by flies and so are seen in cows out to grass, near lakes or woodland. Animals that can access rivers and submerge their udders are at an increased risk.

In terms of treatment, the infected quarter is normally lost. The aim is prevent the infection entering the bloodstream. Strip the quarter as much as possible, and treat with both

intra-mammary tubes and systemic antibiotics. **Combiclav** is a suitable choice of antibiotic. A dose of anti-inflammatories (**Metacam/Finadyne**) will help reduce any fever and ensure the animal keeps eating and drinking. Whilst infected, the foetus will not be growing, and abortion is not uncommon.

In terms of prevention, keep the animals away from areas where there is likely to be a large fly population. Use sufficient fly control. Regularly check the udders for any teat lesions or swelling/heat. Dry cow tubes and **Orbeseal** will help prevent infection from entering the udder. **Stockholm Tar** can be used to form a barrier with the teat. As a last resort, house the animals.

SHEEP

ABORTION

1. **Enzootic Abortion**
-'Chlamydomphillus abortus' is the bacteria causing this disease. Ewes abort within the last month of gestation, with numerous animals often being infected. Replacement sheep introduce the problem to a flock which show no clinical signs until the abortions start.

The bacteria are spread from infected placentas/vaginal discharges which contaminate the bedding, which the ewes then eat. Lambs born to infected mothers can also be carriers. When the ewe is infected, there is no immediate effect, and the bacteria lie dormant for a year. Around a month before lambing the next year, the placenta becomes

inflamed and the ewe aborts. The placentas are often orange/red and have a leathery appearance.

Once a ewe has aborted, she is unlikely to again. This ewe is still a carrier though, so will be emitting the bacteria to infect others.

Only a vaccination programme can control this problem. A ewe will need one vaccination in her lifetime, which must be done 4 weeks pre-tupping. We have this vaccine (**Cevac**) in stock so please phone with your order.

2. **Toxoplasma** - is a second cause of abortion which ewes can be vaccinated against. The Toxoplasma are found in cat faeces, which in turn are deposited in feed stores, hay and straw, which the ewes ingest.

If a ewe is infected during early/mid pregnancy, then the foetus is reabsorbed, or she gives birth to a mummified foetus. Infection late into the gestation causes stillborn/weak lambs which are non-viable. A few lambs will be born alive, well and with immunity. In terms of diagnosing the problem, sending samples off is best but the placentas have white necrotic foci on them, often described as 'frosted strawberries'.

Once infected, a ewe is immune for its lifetime. Therefore, vaccination is needed in naive ewes to prevent abortion storms. This vaccine can be done up to 3 weeks pre-tupping, and can be given at the same time as **Cevac**. Last year, we were very

short of the vaccine. If you need some **Toxovac** this year, please phone us with exact numbers. Once ordered, the vaccine is non-returnable. You will need to pay for the vaccine on collection.

In terms of prevention, control the cat numbers! Neutering the cats will reduce the problem; cat-proof all feed/feed areas.

Please remember that both Enzootic Abortion, and Toxoplasma are ZONOTIC diseases, which means that humans can catch them too!

RAM FERTILITY

It will soon be time for the rams to go in. A ram's semen is produced 7 weeks before it is used, so any remedial action must be taken 2 months before the tups need to be in action. Supplementing the diet will aid semen production but remember to avoid high intakes of calcium and magnesium.

At tupping, the rams want to be BCS 3.5 - 4.0, as they can lose 2 BCS during tupping. Check the testicles for any lumps and bumps. The testicle should slide freely around the scrotum. They should have the consistency of a ripe tomato! Soft balls have reduced semen production. If you have any concerns, ask a vet to check the testicles, as tests can be done to check fertility. The rams' testicles need to be at least 36cm in circumference. The bigger - the better!

Other things to check include feet. Any footrot or other infection will hinder movement, and therefore interfere with weight gain and serving. Check the glands around the neck for any signs of infection. Any fever will adversely affect semen production. The teeth should be

checked to ensure the ram can eat well enough to gain weight. Look for any broken teeth, gaps in teeth, molar abscesses or undershot jaws.

Shear the ram to avoid any heat stress. Treat for both internal and external parasites. Vaccinate against Clostridia and Pasteurella. Buy any rams for tupping at least a month before they are needed to ensure they are properly acclimatised, and their rumens have adjusted to the new diet.

SHEEP MEETING:

Horse & Groom, Milcombe

13th July 2011 7.30pm

Sponsored by Novartis Animal Health - All Welcome.

'Significance of Strategic Worming for Sheep'