



**nantwich
farm vets**



DECEMBER 2015 EWESLETTER

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LAMBING COURSE!

I am going to run a lambing course, provisionally in the first week of Feb 2016. Please let me or the practice know if you are interested in attending and points you would like covering.

I will require a few dead lambs as fresh as possible so those of you who will be lambing during that time please let me know if I can have a few to demonstrate with please!

Hello all,

I hope you have had a successful tugging time! The earliest lambings I have heard about from you so far will have started already! I always look forward to lambing time but I'm not sure you all feel the same!

Hope you all have had a wonderful Christmas and all the best for 2016!

Recently Peter and I went to see a presentation by Joe Angell who has completed his PhD at the University of Liverpool Vet School. He has been researching contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD) which is a foot disease of sheep which some of you may have come across. I have shared some of the information communicated in this Ewesletter.

Amy

FOCUS ON CODD

It's really important to distinguish CODD from footrot, as they are often confused, but it tends not to respond to the treatments used for footrot.



Moist and sore at the top of the hoof (coronary band), loss of hair here as well



As you can see from the pictures, the lesion starts from the coronary band at the top of the hoof. It then progresses to varying degrees under the wall and sole of the hoof and can result in the shedding of the whole hoof horn capsule which is very painful for the sheep. Once the lesions have progressed it can be very difficult to distinguish from footrot. It causes severe lameness which has implications for animal welfare. In one of his papers, Joe Angell shows pictures showing severe bone damage on X-rays associated with CODD. The foot can heal but the regrown horn is usually deformed.

Sheep Services at Nantwich Farm Vets:

- Monthly routine visits
- Flock health advice
- Tup vasectomies
- Emergencies out of hours
- Routine screening eg. MV blood testing
- Basic post-mortems
- Skin scrapings
- Faecal egg counts
- Monitoring lamb growth rates
- Condition scoring
- Pre-breeding examination of tups



The disease is thought to be caused by a *Treponema* bacteria, however other organisms may play a role. *Treponemes* cause digital dermatitis in cattle and have lately been found in other lesions on cattle.

CODD is highly infectious. It is recommended that individuals showing the disease are isolated for treatment. Treatments that have been found to be effective against CODD include tilmicosin (*Micotil* – vet treatment only) and large doses of *PenStrep*. Home-made topical antibiotic sprays using lincomycin/spectinomycin powder can also work on individual animals. (NB. Some of these protocols are not licensed). If the majority of the flock is affected by CODD then antibiotic footbaths may be considered.

If CODD is not already present in your flock a major risk of it arriving would be through buying in stock. It is therefore recommended that new stock are examined carefully and quarantined for at least 3 weeks on arrival to your farm in order to protect your flock from incoming disease.

It should also be borne in mind that *Treponema spp.* may be passed on via hoof trimming equipment. It would be wise to dip equipment in disinfectant in between trimming different animals on the same farm and certainly between farms.

If you would like further information on CODD or how to address it in your flock please get in touch.

METABOLIC DISEASE IN LAMBING EWES

As we approach lambing time, we need to keep a close eye on ewes' health. Most metabolic problems seen are due to a mismatch between the supply and increased demand of the necessary nutrients in the pregnant ewe.

Twin lamb disease is commonly seen in the last trimester of pregnancy as a result of energy demand by the growing lambs exceeding energy supply in the diet. When blood glucose is low, ketones are produced as an alternative energy supply. They can be used by some tissues but not the brain – hence the neurological signs seen (see table on next page). Situations which may predispose cases of twin lamb disease, in addition to straight forward inadequate diet, include diet change, severe weather change, other disease in the ewe eg. worms preventing her absorbing as much food, poor dentition and over fat or over thin ewes.

Hypocalcaemia is an imbalance of calcium intake through the diet and calcium demand by the ewe for skeletal development in the foetus in late pregnancy and in lactation. Risk factors for seeing this disease include lush pasture with low calcium levels, some low calcium cereal diets and too much calcium too early in pregnancy resulting in poor development of homeostatic mechanisms to increase calcium availability in late pregnancy.

Hypocalcaemia and twin lamb disease can be seen in conjunction. On an individual animal basis it can be difficult differentiating between them based on clinical signs and often not financially viable to carry out diagnostic blood tests. Treatments for both problems can be given simultaneously so this is often done. Diagnosis becomes more important when needing to protect the rest of the flock left to lamb and put measures in place for the next lambing season to stop cases happening again.

Hypomagnaesemia ("staggers") is usually seen post lambing in ewes with multiple lambs at foot grazing young fast growing pastures. Unfortunately the first sign of a problem with this disease may be a dead sheep but if caught in time, treatment can be successful.



Head pressing in a ewe with twin lamb disease



Checking ewes' teeth before tupping is very important. They must be able to eat enough to support the lambs growing inside them. Incisors can easily be seen (picture below) but feel along the jaws for gaps/swelling/pain indicative of molar problems too.



Hypomagnesaemia in a ewe

The table below shows some of the clinical signs to look out for in lambing ewes and treatment protocols for the metabolic diseases. It can be useful to have some of these products on hand in the event that they are needed.

Condition	Clinical signs	Treatments
Pregnancy toxemia (twin lamb)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation from the flock • Dullness and depression • Blindness • Wide-based stance • Star gazing, drooling, head pressing • Recumbency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50-100ml <i>Glucose 40%</i> iv • 50ml propylene glycol or 50ml <i>Cetophyton</i> orally for several days whilst inappetent • Rehydration solutions orally • Palatable energy rich diet: consider isolating from the flock to ensure food intake and close monitoring • Severe/advanced cases: <i>Colvasone</i> but be aware this may cause abortion – sometimes it is preferential to sacrifice the unborn lamb in an attempt to save the ewe
Hypocalcaemia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation from the flock • Slow to stand • Recumbency • Cold ears • Constipation • Disorientation, panting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50-80ml <i>Calciject 6</i> sc in multiple sites.
Hypomagnesaemia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lying on side • Fitting • Sudden death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10ml <i>Calciject 5</i> iv • 40-50ml <i>Magniject sc</i> • Mild sedation if fitting

Good management is key to prevention of metabolic diseases. Ensuring ewes are in the correct body condition throughout the year and minimising stress particularly in the last trimester of pregnancy is very important. A reminder of ewe condition score targets:

	Tupping	Mid-pregnancy	Lambing	Weaning
Lowland	2.5	2	2	2
Upland	3	2.5	2.5	2
Lowland	3.5	3	3	2.5

If you would like any help/advice on any of the topics discussed please get in touch.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

For condition scoring: www.beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/returns (publication on nutrition and forage – sheep)

For vaccinations and synchronisation treatments:

www.msd-animal-health.co.uk/Species_Pages/Sheep/Masterclassvideos.aspx

For worms and fluke: www.scops.org.uk

For worm forecasting, sheep diseases, lambing topics: www.nadis.org.uk