



**nantwich
farm vets**



JANUARY 2020 EWESLETTER

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Hello all,

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!!

It is a long time since I had chance to write a ewesletter! How did you find 2019?! We saw a lot of barren ewes at scanning however the lambs born had plenty of grass to go at for a large proportion of the year. The lamb price could always be better..... We had a good harvest but sadly the rain had to come eventually and the autumn/winter has been pretty miserable so far!

Since I last wrote we have moved premises to Chester Road which has made life for us a little easier in terms of parking availability and office space! Let me know if you would like a tour 😊

This month I have written about medicine usage at lambing time.

As it remains a hot topic in the press, the main article in this ewesletter is about responsible use of antibiotics in the sheep industry, with a special focus around lambing time. *Amy*

RESPONSIBLE USE OF ANTIBIOTICS

RUMA (Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance) guidelines use a REDUCE – REFINE – REPLACE approach to lowering antibiotic use in the animal health industry.

REDUCE

This is where we question areas of antibiotic use within sheep flocks and discuss whether there are other measures that could be undertaken to avoid their use entirely in particular situations. Some of these might include

- Vaccination
- Biosecurity
- Improved hygiene

REFINE

This means we should, where possible, review our use of medicines and check we are using them appropriately – are we using the correct doses, the correct choice of medicine, the correct route of administration, for the correct length of time?

REPLACE

This is where we look for opportunities to use other types of medicine or disinfectants in place of antibiotics. For example, a ewe which had a bad lambing – could she benefit from a pain relief injection alone rather than an injection containing an antibiotic which is potentially unnecessary?

None of the above is an attempt to eliminate antibiotic use in sheep flocks all together, there is still a role for their use where animal health is concerned, we just need to make a collaborative effort to use them only when necessary.

Flock health plans, as specified by Red Tractor for those of you who are farm assured, have a section on antibiotic use in the health and performance review.

To my knowledge there is no use of “critically important antibiotics” in Nantwich Farm Vets’ sheep flocks which is the first check.

Prophylactic use of antibiotics

There are, however, many flocks still using prophylactic or blanket antibiotic treatments at lambing time

1. Antibiotic use to prevent abortion

This is usually done because enzootic abortion has been diagnosed in the flock in a previous year however this may have been a substantial time ago.

There are abortion vaccines on the market which are effective against enzootic abortion and toxoplasma abortion therefore there should be no need for antibiotic treatment of ewes except in exceptional circumstances where the vet should be involved.

Some best practice guidelines with respect to protecting your flock against infectious abortion are listed below.

Discuss vaccination with your vet



Buy in as little as possible

If you do buy in, try your best to ascertain the disease history in the flocks they have come from and what vaccinations they might have already received

Either mix bought in animals before you put them to the tup so they can mount immune responses to diseases they are

naïve to before they become pregnant, or better still manage incoming stock as a separate flock until after lambing time to minimize spread of any diseases in the lambing shed

Protect sheep feed from cats and other vermin

Isolate any ewes that abort immediately and do not foster lambs onto them

Dispose of abortion material and infected bedding immediately

Identify ewes which have aborted or had dead/weakly lambs and treat appropriately



2. Antibiotic use to prevent neonatal lamb disease

Newborn lamb treatments such as oral antibiotic pumps should only be used in a targeted way to high risk individuals. It is not necessary or appropriate to administer an antibiotic treatment to every lamb born.

Lambs born early in the season before pens become significantly contaminated and/or big strong singles would be examples where antibiotic treatments could be omitted and low birthweight lambs or lambs born at the end of the lambing season may be cases

where antibiotic use could be justified.

The risk of disease can be minimized with various control measures which can be discussed and planned well in advance of the start of lambing.

There are certain newborn lamb diseases such as lamb dysentery which can be vaccinated against. NB. All ewe vaccines that are given to pregnant ewes rely on transfer of antibodies via colostrum to the lambs therefore a robust colostrum protocol is crucial.

3. Joint ill

Injecting all lambs at birth to prevent joint ill is not an appropriate routine management plan.

The most common causes of joint ill in lambs in Britain are:

- *Streptococcus dysgalactiae* (<4 weeks old)
- *Erysipelothrix rhusiopathiae* (>4 weeks old)

It is essential that testing is done to identify the causal pathogen and target treatment appropriately.

Alamycin/Engemycin DD for example, is rarely effective.

It may be recommended that severe cases that are unresponsive to treatment are euthanised.

The earlier cases are treated, the more chance of a successful outcome.

Again, vaccination may be a possibility for reducing cases

Management practices which can reduce disease seen at lambing time

Area	Details	Reasons
Nutrition	Correct energy and protein content Correct trace elements balance Ensure optimal body condition of ewes	Good quality and quantity of colostrum Optimal lamb birth weights Lamb viability
Hygiene	Dagging/shearing ewes properly Control lameness	Reduce build up of bugs in lambing shed
Colostrum management	50ml/kg bodyweight as soon as possible after birth Total 200ml/kg over first 24 hours of life	Immunity of lambs
Regularly wash hands or wear gloves		Minimise infection spread and risk of zoonotic disease
Hygiene during husbandry procedures	When stomach tubing, ear tagging, castration/tailing Clean and disinfect equipment	Reduce joint ill/spinal abscesses
Stress in newborn lambs	Provide suitable shelter during periods of adverse weather conditions Optimal timing of stressful husbandry procedures	Avoid immune suppression and disease susceptibility caused by stress
Navels	Treat with iodine once at birth and again once lamb is dry	Prevent joint ill

REF: "Responsible use of antimicrobials: Good Practice Guidelines" SVS July 2017

Focus on Heptavac-P Plus

Heptavac-P Plus is one vaccine which we sell a lot of so for those of you who use it I thought to reflect on why we are using it and the correct protocol, and for those of you who don't use it on your sheep flocks perhaps I can persuade you that it is a good idea.

What does it protect against?

The clue is in the name! Heptavac-P Plus protects our sheep against *7* clostridial diseases *PLUS* *Pasteurella*. These are shown in the table.

Some of the diseases you may have heard of, others not. They can affect all ages of the flock. The main issue with these diseases is that they will cause

sudden death and you will not have any prior warning of sickness usually. The bugs that cause the diseases are naturally found in soil or in the animals themselves and cause disease when an opportunity presents. These diseases always take fit animals not poorer ones. Once you have had a clostridial disease or Pasteurella diagnosed, usually on

post mortem following death of a sheep, it is a bit too late to do anything about it as there are no treatments either.

Pasteurella is often seen in late summer/autumn months in fit growing lambs. These diseases can also result in death with minimal clinical signs.

Agent	Disease	Risk group
<i>C. perfringens</i> Type B	Lamb dysentery. Haemorrhagic enteritis	Young lambs
<i>C. perfringens</i> Type C	Struck. Necrotic enteritis	Adult sheep
<i>C. perfringens</i> Type D	Pulpy kidney	All ages
<i>C. septicum</i>	Braxy. Malignant oedema	Old lambs. Adult sheep
<i>C. novyi</i> Type B	Black Disease	Adult sheep
<i>C. chauvoei</i>	Blackleg	All ages
<i>C. tetani</i>	Tetanus	All ages

What is the correct protocol for use of Heptavac-P Plus?

First of all it must be noted that all vaccines must be stored correctly at the correct temperature (in a fridge 4°C) and once opened, used within the time recommended by the manufacturer, for Heptavac-P plus this is 10 hours.

The dose is 2ml, administered under the skin.

Sheep must have TWO doses as their PRIMARY course in order to obtain immunity from the vaccine. These 2 doses can be given any time from 3 weeks old. In order for immunity to be passed to lambs the ewe lambs or ewes must receive a booster in the 4-6 weeks before they lamb every year thereafter. This ensures the antibodies are passed into the colostrum and consequently into the lamb. These antibodies are essential for the first few weeks of life but shortlived.

Good colostrum management is essential for flocks using



Heptavac-P Plus in order to successfully get these antibodies into the newborn lambs.

It is worthwhile to vaccinate the newborn lambs with their primary course at 3 and 7 weeks of age to give them their own immunity as growing lambs are prone to these diseases particularly when they experience stressors such as weaning and changes in diet. (Even if their mothers had their own booster pre-lambing).

The length of action of the different components of the vaccine vary. If you have a lot of fat lambs still on the ground as

you approach autumn/winter then it may be worthwhile giving a Pasteurella-only vaccine booster (or Heptavac-P Plus again if easier) at 6 months old or 6 months after the Heptavac-P Plus primary course.

It can be quite daunting to get timings right. If you have any questions about the vaccination schedule or want to tailor timings more specifically to your flock then please give me a call.

If the schedule is not carried out correctly you could be wasting your time and money and more importantly you won't be protecting your stock.

Is there a cost benefit?

One dead lamb (loss of the lamb + disposal costs) would cost more than 150 doses of Heptavac-P Plus – easy maths!

Refs: MSD Animal Health

LAMBING HAMPER

Our Nantwich Farm Vets lambing hamper includes the essentials you need for the lambing season ahead. Hamper includes lambing ropes, arm length gloves, vet lube, iodine navel spray, stock marker, lamb feeding tube and syringe, lamb bottle and teat, digital thermometer, head torch, note pad plus other Nantwich Farm Vets goodies. All in a handy storage tray, £60 (ex VAT)



Lambing Course 2020

Topics covered

- Lambing – theory and practical
- Recognition and treatment of health problems of ewes around lambing time
- Care of the new born lamb

When – Tuesday 11th February 2020 2pm till 4.30pm

Cost – £35

To book your place call 01270 610349

