

# White Lodge Farm Practice

01643 703649 farm@whitelodgevetclinic.co.uk

## Welcome to our Spring Newsletter!

With an unusually mild winter so far, we've benefitted from relatively little mud and cold related issues! However without a prolonged cold period, we may see high numbers of various parasites causing issues in 2022; parasite numbers are normally limited by being killed off this way!



It is now a requirement under the Red Tractor scheme to sign up to BVDFree England, to try to eradicate Bovine Viral Diarrhoea. We can advise individual farms as to the best route(s) to comply, with testing regimes/vaccination programmes designed to fit in with your system.

## THAT SOUNDS ORF-AL

Orf is a contagious skin disease caused by a Pox virus, although it mainly affects sheep, it can also affect goats and humans. Older and immunosuppressed people should be particularly careful around affected sheep. The disease is often carried by adult animals with very small lesions, and causes outbreaks at times of stress, such as lambing.

Classic scabby, painful lesions are often first noticed around mouths of lambs, and can also be found on teats of ewes and on the rest of the animal. Most animals naturally clear themselves of orf after a few weeks, but reluctance of lambs to suck, and pain of lambs sucking ulcerated teats can lead to mastitis in ewes and marked weight loss and death in severe cases in lambs.

The virus can be passed directly from sheep to sheep, or can last in up to 6 weeks in dried scabs in the environment.

Strict biosecurity and hygiene measures are the mainstay of preventing and treating orf. There is a vaccination, but this must not be used in flocks unaffected by the disease.

Please contact us with any questions about vaccination, or with any severely affected animals that may need medical treatment. Although there is no specific treatment for the virus, supportive medications may be necessary.



## BOVINE TB UPDATE

TB testing is now moving to six monthly. The only way in our area to continue annual testing is if your herd has been TB free for 6 years, and you sign up to the TB CHecS scheme. We can advise further if this applies to your farm.

Michael is still enjoying TB testing, and has probably met most of our farmers by now! Employing a TB tester is the only viable way of the practice continuing providing this service with the new 6-monthly rules. If there is a vet also needed for procedures while the cattle are in for testing, then please discuss this with reception when booking in your test.

### Badger BCG vaccine

As a result of the success of the culling programme (a 70% reduction in TB incidents in West Somerset), the culling

programme has been closed down. The only legal ways to



help control spread from wildlife to cattle are practising good biosecurity and vaccinating badgers. DEFRA are encouraging farmers that took part in the cull area to sign up for badger vaccination, which will be provided free to farmers for the next four years. As your vets, we endorse this programme, as there is some evidence that it helps to reduce disease in the badger population after a cull has taken place.

## Focus on: WATERY MOUTH - NO MORE SPECTAM!

'Spectam' has been discontinued this year, after a decline in sales, and difficulties in manufacture. This was the only licensed product to be used to prevent bacterial infections in lambs, and is usually used to help reduce the chance of 'watery mouth'.



Although challenging in a busy lambing period, ensuring excellent hygiene and colostrum uptake should mean that all preventative antibiotics are unnecessary, benefitting both animal and human health.

Watery mouth (WM) is caused by an E.coli infection that multiplies in the lambs gut, causing severe gut inflammation, and often leads to death of affected lambs. E.coli is a bacterium found throughout normal environments, but is found in particularly high numbers in wet and dirty bedding.

### Signs of Watery Mouth include:

Fatigue, a high temperature, drooling, constipation and a bloated appearance.

### Lamb immunity and colostrum

Ewes don't pass any immunity onto lambs while in the womb, but instead lambs take 100% of their immunity from the colostrum ingested soon after birth.

- A lamb needs about 50ml/kg liveweight immediately after birth, and about 200ml/kg in the first 24 hours.
- Quality as well as volume is important with colostrum, and this can be assessed with a Brix Refractometer, costing about £30. If quality is low, or with twins or triplets, then you should consider supplementing lambs.

- Ideally using colostrum from another ewe who has lost a lamb, or one with a strong single is best, followed by cow colostrum (from a high health herd), and powdered colostrum if no fresh colostrum is available.
- Tail docking and castrating should be avoided before 24h of age, as these will put lambs off drinking sufficient amounts of colostrum.

### Hygiene

To prevent build up of dangerous levels of bacteria, strict hygiene is extremely important in lambing environments

- Keep all pens well bedded, and change regularly with fresh bedding. If bedding cannot be fully changed, then adding a good depth to create a barrier will help
- Fully remove bedding and disinfect individual pens between every use
- Ensure good ventilation of buildings to help keep moisture levels to a minimum
- Ensure all equipment is clean and disinfected between each use
- Ensure afterbirth is removed ASAP from lambing pens
- All lambs should be isolated (with the ewe) in a separate area from the rest of the flock, and strict hygiene maintained between isolation and 'healthy' pens



Ensuring good colostrum management and hygiene in newborn lambs also plays a very important part in preventing other diseases, such as joint ill, a bacterial infection in the joints.

If you have any specific concerns about preventative antibiotics, or treatment of any potential outbreaks, then please call and speak to one of our vets about potential options. There are other treatments that we stock, or can order in on a case-by-case basis if necessary for individual flocks.



## CALF SCOURS?

Instead of guesswork to treat scouring calves, and manage the rest of the herd, we now have an in-house test to establish if calves have one of the four main causes of scour: E. coli, coronavirus, rotavirus, and cryptosporidium. The test can be run on about a teaspoon of faeces, and results are back within the hour. A vet will phone to discuss the results and the best treatment plan.