

Continued from previous page ...

- 2) Keeping a closed flock, as disease can be brought in by carrier sheep showing no clinical signs.
- 3) Lower stocking rates and outdoor lambing may help to prevent bad outbreaks.
- 4) Cleaning and disinfecting buildings and food and water troughs regularly.

Liz Aubrey

Abortion Vaccines – Place your orders now.

With tupping season getting closer on the horizon, now is the time to get your abortion vaccines ordered if you know your requirements and injected if you have your breeding replacements selected or sourced already. Don't forget that Toxovax needs to be given at least 3 weeks pre-mating and Cevac Enzootic Vaccine at least 4 weeks pre mating.

We aren't aware of any supply issues at the moment but as we know from previous years Toxovax supply can be fickle and due to its short shelf life demand can often exceed manufacturing supply capacity in peak weeks. If you know what your needs are then please order your Toxovax for your desired delivery date asap to avoid disappointment. (Orders are non cancellable once placed).

Drugs Supplies

Milking Cow Tube supplies remain very limited with only a couple of options available currently. If your normal tube isn't available please speak to one of the farm vets for advice.

Sheep Breeding 2020

This will be on us before we know it. As always the safest way to secure your vital supplies of reproductive drugs for AI and ET is to get them ordered and in your home as early on as possible. We are not aware of any expected supply issues with sponges or PMSG but based on the challenges of previous years these can come from nowhere so our advice would be to order as soon as you can. Please remember to order both your sponges and PMSG at the same time so you know you have both drugs needed before you start your breeding programme.



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Monday to Friday 8.30am—7.00pm
Saturday 8.30am-12noon
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Well as I write this on the last day of July the sun has finally come out, despite my scepticism! The rollercoaster of weather has made silaging variable. As we know, the old adage of “you are what you eat” is particularly pertinent to our ruminants. Mineral contents seem to be brewing up to be particularly variable compared to previous years. This extends beyond the usual trace elements of copper, cobalt and selenium, to macro-minerals such as phosphorous. Poor fresh cow performance in dairy cows should be investigated at the earliest opportunity to avoid problems building. We are able to do same day blood tests for calcium, magnesium and phosphorous which can be particularly rewarding in clarifying a problem quickly.

Diseases that have been knocking around for many years have reared their heads too in the last couple of months. Leptospirosis is a bacterial cause of abortion and illness in cattle. A vaccine has been available for over 25 years, but it is still occurring for the first time on farms. Similarly, BVD is still to be found circulating on unvaccinated farms or lapsed vaccinated farms. With so many animals around our part of the country, it's a good idea to keep up-to-date with your disease history and vaccinations. Neospora is another cause of abortion in cattle that we see regularly. Some farms have been managing it for more than 20 years and the good news is that with careful thought and breeding plans it can be minimised over time with regards to mother-daughter spread and incidence within the herd. A more difficult thing to manage is where there is infected of a few animals from a single point source. The source is dog faeces, and infected dogs excrete oocysts of Neospora in their puppyhood. In that respect it is very similar to Toxoplasmosis in cats. The concern that is particular to dogs though is that they tend to be walked through fields on public footpaths where cows graze. Direct contamination of forage is a critical point of infection. The same is true that infected faeces which contaminate conserved forage such as hay or silage in the feeding areas can also cause infection. There is little evidence that the oocysts survive the ensiling process.

Other than that- here's to a warm August!"

Richard Knight



Abortion in Cattle continued: Neospora

Neospora caninum is a protozoan parasite that predominantly infects cattle and dogs. It is one of the most common infectious causes of abortion in cows, and something that we often encounter when carrying out abortion investigations on farm.

Cows become persistently infected with Neospora. The parasite encysts within the cow and then reactivates in the future to cause repeat abortions during the cows life - often without showing clinical signs.

It is spread in two ways:

Vertically : This is the most important route of transmission. The infected mother will give the parasite to her calf while still in the womb. In infected dams, this occurs in up to 95% of cases. If the calf is not then aborted, it will grow up persistently infected and will be at a high risk of aborting and infecting its own calves! (There has been no evidence of direct cow-to-cow spread)

Horizontally: Dogs and foxes can also be infected by Neospora by eating the placenta or raw meat of infected cows. They will then shed oocysts (eggs) in their faeces. These oocysts are persistent in the environment, and if they contaminate cattle feed or water sources then they will spread the infection to other cows.

Control:

To confirm a cow has aborted due to Neospora, a blood sample from the dam is required along with the foetus for postmortem investigation. At this stage it is important to rule out other infectious causes such as BVD, IBR and leptospirosis.

There are no vaccines or treatments for neosporosis – so control strategies are based on good biosecurity and management practices.

- **Identify infected animals** with blood testing: Neospora positive animals should not be in the breeding herd – whether they are culled, or in the case of dairy farms, bred to beef and not sold for breeding.
- **Strict Hygiene** – ensure that calving pens are cleaned regularly and placentas/aborted foetuses/dead calves are disposed of quickly to ensure dogs do not get to them
- **Biosecurity** – Ensure that feed and water sources are not accessible to dogs to prevent contamination from infected animals.

Abortions caused by Neospora carry a high hidden cost – it is worth investing in these measures to reduce the impact of the disease.

If you think you have issues on farm – please get in touch with the veterinary team, who can assess the risk and help plan a control strategy.

Gus Cassie

Orf in Sheep

This year we have seen an increase in Orf cases in our clients sheep. It's a tricky disease as it can take a while to eradicate and it is highly contagious to not only others in the flock but humans as well (so always wear gloves!). Infection spreads rapidly through the flock and can be especially severe in housed sheep due to high stocking density.

What is it?

Orf is a virus that affects the skin in sheep and goats, usually the skin around the mouth, gums and teats. It mainly affects young animals in their first year of life as usually when they are older they have built up some immunity to it, but infected lambs can transmit the virus to ewes while suckling.

How is it spread and why is it an issue?

The virus can spread through direct contact with infected animals, but it can also live in fomites which can be found on surfaces such as in trailers and around feed and water buckets/troughs. Due to lesion location in the infected animals (lambs around the mouth and ewes around the teats) it can mean ewes may refuse to allow the lambs to suckle and also the lambs may find it uncomfortable to do so. This can lead to starvation of the lambs, and furthermore the starving lambs may spread the disease when trying to steal milk from other ewes. It can also lead to mastitis in the ewes if she is not expressing milk as regularly as she normally would.



Treatment

Under normal circumstances Orf resolves itself without any treatment in 4-6 weeks, and at present there is no practical means of killing the virus once an animal is infected. The key is to try and keep the lesions clean in order to prevent secondary bacterial infections. Hibiscrub or other antibacterial solutions can be applied to the lesions to keep infections at bay. This also helps to dry out the scabs and encourages them to fall off the animal. Another key thing to do in the face of an Orf outbreak is to isolate those with visible lesions to try and minimise the spread to the others.

If an outbreak occurs it is really important to fully clean **and** disinfect the building, especially feed and water troughs as the virus can live for several years in the environment, meaning cleaning alone is not sufficient.

Prevention

1)Vaccination- Live Orf vaccines are available which cause mild orf lesions. Vaccination can be very useful during a disease outbreak as you can 'infect' all animals ensuring they only develop mild lesions. If any replacements are bought into a flock which has already been infected or vaccinated then it would also be useful to vaccinate them.



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