

Continued from sheep news—

Coccidiosis

How do lambs become infected with coccidiosis? The oocysts are hardy and can survive for at least a year in the environment. Ewes will also put out a small number of oocysts onto the pasture. Young lambs, when they become infected, put out huge numbers of oocysts (in the region of 1,000-10,000s of eggs per gram) in their faeces. This means infection can build up quickly on pastures/in buildings. Clinical signs can range from failure to grow through severe scour to rapid death. They are most commonly seen in lambs 1-2 months old but older lambs can be affected. Once lambs have been infected with coccidial oocysts, they do develop immunity. The aim is to allow them to develop immunity but not disease.

The first stage in control is to try and reduce the challenge faced by lambs. Keep water and feed troughs clean, move creep feeders frequently and try and avoid putting batch after batch of lambs through the same fields. The lambs most at risk are young lambs put in a field that has been heavily contaminated by previous inhabitants.

Although there is an in feed medication available both in creep feed and in buckets, lambs may not take enough of the drug for it to be effective especially when they become ill and their appetite is reduced. If it does work well, lambs can develop disease when the medicated feed is withdrawn as they haven't developed any immunity.

Targeted treatment is often necessary to prevent lambs succumbing to disease. Two drugs are available to treat coccidiosis in lambs. Both are effective in treating disease, but they do have pros and cons. One has no meat withhold and a high safety margin but no persistence and may need to be repeated after 3 weeks. The second has some persistence so timing of treatment is less critical and oocyst outputs are reduced more, but it has a 42 day meat withhold, a narrower safety margin (repeat treatment or overdose may make lambs ill) and isn't licenced for use in lambs over 20kgs due to its environmental impact.

When to treat? It is important to look critically at your farm situation to try and control coccidiosis effectively—the farm vets will be happy to discuss the options for your farm. However, in general, if you have a few lambs affected in a batch, treat the whole batch and try to move them after a few days onto a cleaner pasture. If you know you had issues in a particular field last year, it is possible to treat lambs in that field 10-14 days after they are turned out to try and prevent a recurrence.

Remember our farm vets are here to help so if you want to discuss any problems with your growing lambs call the surgery.

Judith Lee



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Tuesday 8.30am-6.00pm
Wednesday & Friday 8.30am-5.00pm
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PRACTICE NEWS

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May 2018

With the lambings all bar finished, calvings again take centre stage. This year seems to be marked out by a great number of large calves, a quirk of feeding conditions and quality through the winter no doubt. It's always worth having a refresher on whether and how hard to pull a calf, so as to have the best chance of a favourable outcome. The most common calving difficulty this year seems to be a large calf, or a small maternal pelvis leading to a narrow birth canal.



A narrow birth canal is most commonly a problem in heifers, especially those which are under-weight and have not grown out as well as might be expected. These are the ones most at risk of needing a large amount of traction, which could be 150 to 250 kg of pull (bear in mind that some calving aides can pull in excess of 250 kg which can cause considerable damage to your cow and calf).

If a calf under traction is not making real progress through the birth canal then a caesarean may well be indicated, depending on individual circumstances.

Some rules of thumb to go by are:

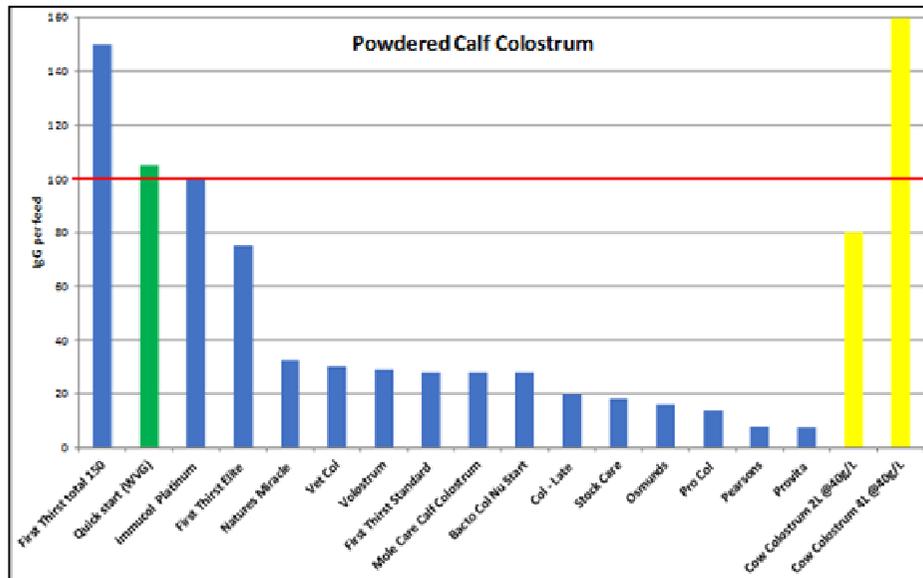
- 1) If the front feet (or hindfeet) are crossing over on entry into the birth canal then the shoulders/ hips may be too big, or the pelvis too small to allow a healthy birth.
- 2) The calf's shoulders are not engaged in the birth canal until the front feet are out as far as a hand's breadth past the fetlocks. If it was a struggle to get to there, then it's only going to get tighter.
- 3) When coming backwards, the calf's pelvis has not entered the birth canal until the back legs are out as far as a hand's breadth past the hocks (that is a lot of leg to come out). Likewise, if you struggled to get it to there, it's only going to get tighter. The umbilical cord is a lot more vulnerable to trauma and premature rupture when the calf is coming backwards, too. Once the hips are out in a backwards calving then it is a matter of urgency to get the calf out quickly.

In calvings we attend, we often give an epidural injection of local anaesthetic to stop the cow straining. As well as removing pain, stopping her straining also dramatically reduces the risk of trauma to the uterus and birth canal.

Richard Knight

Food for Thought – Colostrum

As you all know colostrum is vital to get your calves off to the right start. The sooner they get their colostrum after calving and the more they get at the first feed the less risk there is of them getting inadequate antibody transfer. This is all due to a clever mechanism in the gut – at birth the calves gut has small holes in it allowing antibodies to be absorbed but these holes also allow bacteria through so over the next few hours these holes close to protect against bacteria. In addition, once something hits that gut wall for the first time the closure of these holes is accelerated. Therefore, if a calf has a little suck and gets 300-400ml of colostrum but then sits down again the gut wall will then close prior to further feeding. Holstein cow colostrum averages approximately 40g/L of IgG (antibodies) and a beef cow slightly more. A calf requires a bare minimum of 100g of IgG but ideally nearer 200g.



Rule of thumb = 10% of bodyweight within 6 hours (ideally within 2 hours)

There are many powdered colostrum products on the market but these vary vastly, as you can see from the graph above. Many of these products are called 'colostrum supplements' which means they are a supplement on top of what the calf would normally receive from the cow, and in some cases due to the low IgG content I would question if there is any benefit over just feeding milk powder! There are also products called colostrum replacers these contain a far higher level of antibodies and should reach the required antibody level.

Of course we all know cows rarely calve in the middle of the day and therefore many people use a powdered colostrum to feed the calves straight away to ensure they have had something to get them through the night. However, depending on the product used this could be detrimental by instigating the gut wall to shut preventing the absorption of antibodies at the next feed.

Food for thought continued -

Considering the graph and what we know about gut closure I would strongly advise considering what product you are using and how you are using it as a number of these products will not provide adequate IgG and some provide less than the equivalent of 500ml of cow colostrum. At Westmorland Vets we are stocking Quickstart Colostrum speak to one of our staff for our NEW USER 10% OFFER.

Kirsty Ranson



Sheep News

Well it hasn't been a great start to 2018 with sheep in poor condition and weather conditions delaying grass growth. Lambs haven't got off to a flying start so this year, more than ever, it will be important to control disease in young lambs and make sure that they aren't suffering from mineral deficiencies especially cobalt.

Provided you have vaccinated against clostridial diseases like pulpy kidney and lamb dysentery, the main challenges to growing lambs are coccidiosis and worms. At this time of year the main worm challenge will be from nematodirus.

Nematodirus

This gut worm is unusual in that its long lifecycle means that last year's lambs infected the pasture for this year's lambs. Ewes play a very limited role in the spread of disease. The eggs hatch in large numbers when there has been cold weather followed by a warm spell. It is possible to try and predict when the eggs will hatch from the weather conditions so keep an eye on the nematodirus map (pictured) on the SCOPs website (www.scops.org.uk). Today (27th April) if present conditions persist, a hatch is predicted in 7-10 days with lambs needing treatment if they are grazing affected pastures in around 14-21 days. Fields and farms will vary depending on their height above sea level and aspect. If coccidiosis and nematodirus hit a lamb crop simultaneously the effects can be devastating. Unless you have had white wormer resistant NEMATODIRUS diagnosed on your farm, white wormers are the drug of choice to treat this disease.

