Farm Newsletter
May 2018

alnorthumbria
veterinary group

I think many of us are wondering if there is some warm sunshine round the corner despite the fact we are now into May! Most of us have had our heads down getting on with lambing and calving, but it is worth bearing in mind that we are starting to see *Nematodirus* eggs and *Coccidia* oocysts in our faecal egg counts. Egg counts help to diagnose the cause of scour or ill thrift, and we encourage everyone to bring in 5 samples from each group of lambs, before they are dosed so we can recommend the appropriate product to use.

Semen testing of bulls has got underway as well as the PDs for the autumn calvers. Now is a good time to think about getting your BVD vaccinations done and testing groups of calves for BVD before turnout.

Calving Course

It is hoped that we will be running a calving course in the autumn. After the success of the lambing course, we have done over the last couple of years, we would like to offer a calving course. It will discuss the nutrition and management of the cow around calving time, practical tips for calving, when to call the vet and the aftercare of the calf. If anyone is interested in attending then please email: Anna.Bruguera@alnorthumbriavets.co.uk

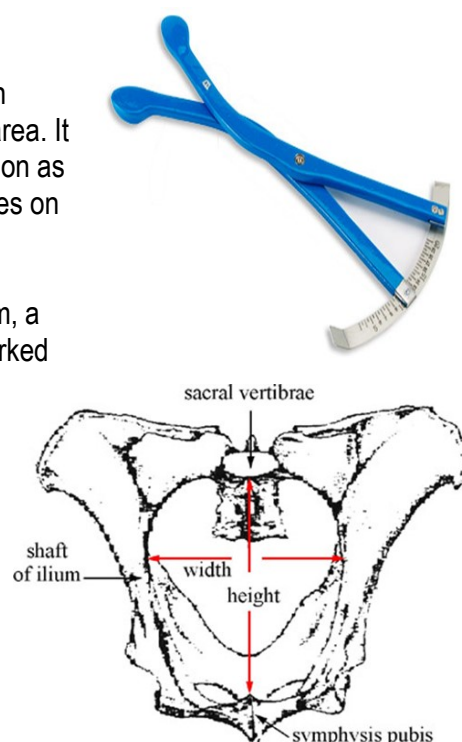## Measuring the size of heifers' pelvis to reduce calving difficulty

Most of us will be well into our spring calving now, but have a think about the heifers that you have struggled to calve with a small pelvis.

The use of a pelvimeter to measure the pelvic area is a technique that has been developed to try to identify the heifers that have a smaller than average pelvic area. It can be done pre-bulling to identify any problem heifers, which can then be sold on as stores and not enter the breeding herd, reducing the number of calving difficulties on farm.

The technique is based around two measurements that are made via the rectum, a vertical measurement and a horizontal measurement. The area can then be worked out. The pelvic area grows at a fairly constant rate from 9 to 12 months of age. From 10-15 months of age it grows faster, compared to 16-24 months of age. The three things that influence pelvic area in yearling heifers are:

Genetics of the sire and dam
Breed
Nutrition

To decrease calving problems in heifers, remember that you must work on the two major factors that cause the problem; size/weight of the calf, and the area of the pelvic opening in the cow. These factors can be modified by using sires with good estimated breeding values (EBV,s) for birth weight and eliminating heifers before breeding with a small pelvic area.

sacral vertibrae

shaft of ilium — width — height

symphysis pubis

Don't Forget to Use…

- **Clik, Clickzin, Ectofly, Dysect** sheep pour-ons for blowfly etc.
- **Swish or Spotinor** to prevent fly problems in cattle.
- Worming and anti-coccidials for lambs.
- **Ovivac P** vaccinations for lambs.
- Boluses and injections to prevent trace element deficiencies.

R.A.B.I: Supporting northern communities through the seasons

For many in farming, it's been a tough start to 2018. In the north of England, persistent and heavy rains followed on swiftly from extreme snowfalls – and to make matters worse, a lot of these weather-related problems came whilst people were in the midst of lambing and calving. Feeding animals and planting crops became an arduous job in the face of fodder shortages and flooding.

The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (R.A.B.I) has been around since 1860 and is farming's oldest and largest welfare charity. In 2017, we gave out grants of close to £2 million to people of all ages in financial need. We have welfare officers across England and Wales who understand the difficulties people in farming often encounter. Our welfare officer for Northumberland and County Durham, Tom Armstrong, reported in April that many people in his area had lost sheep in snow drifts and were dreading the prospect of lambing. Numbers were down, having a knock-on effect later in the year when they came to sell their stock. A long, wet winter also meant extra feed costs, an expense farmers wouldn't normally expect to have in spring.

During times such as these, R.A.B.I can help those in financial need by providing grants for immediate domestic and household expenses. While we cannot help specifically with business costs, if the harsh winter has left you, or someone you know who works in farming, unable to pay household bills please get in touch.

 Call our confidential Freephone Helpline 0808 281 9490

Blowfly Strike in Sheep

Blowfly strike results from the invasion of living tissue by the larvae of greenbottle, blackbottle and bluebottle flies. Unfortunately flies have no respect of farm boundaries and so prevention is key.

Most of the flies life cycle is spent off the sheep, but the adult lays eggs on soiled fleece or dead animals. When the eggs hatch the larvae then invade the living tissue. As they do so they produce toxins which are absorbed into the sheeps' blood leading to illness, and it also acts to attract further flies. Anyone who has witnessed fly strike in sheep will know what an unpleasant disease it is. Affected sheep will often isolate themselves from the flock and be seen nibbling at the back end. Around the tailhead is the most commonly affected region, but they can also be affected around the shoulders, back and withers. Daily inspection of sheep is necessary throughout the summer to ensure it does not go undetected.

If there is a heavy worm burden within the flock it will put them at increased risk since any soiled fleece will attract the flies. The same applies for sheep suffering from footrot since the flies can be attracted to these pungent lesions.

Options for prevention are as follows:

- CLiKZiN pour-on: prevents flystike for 8 weeks after administration with a meat withdrawal period of 7 days.
- CLiK EXTRA pour on: protects against flystike for 19 weeks with a meat withdrawal period of 40 days.
- CLiK pour-on: protects against flystike for 16 weeks and has a meat withdrawal period of 40 days
- Dysect Sheep pour on: Protects against flystike for 8-10 weeks and has a meat withdrawal period of 49 days.
- Ectofly pour on: Protects against flystrike on areas where product applied for 6-8 weeks, meat withdrawal period is 8 days
- Spotinor spot-on: treatment of established flystrike– no long lasting action and meat withdrawal period of 35 days.

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