

Farm Newsletter

March 2018



It's been a busy month for our farm vets with various meetings around the region (see below for a round-up of the Caesar Audit meeting), and a seemingly endless number of extra shifts to cover for various vets' skiing trips! I can't see us putting our feet up much in the next few months either as lambing is well underway and calving is just starting, unfortunately with lots of abortions.

Last week, Claire and Pam ran another fully booked **Lambing Course** for various interested clients and non-clients. We limit the number of students to 12 each year so that everyone has a chance to get stuck in. In the morning, there was a lecture covering care of the ewe in the run up to lambing, problems that occur around lambing, and how to correct lambs with abnormal presentations. Then we covered care of the ewe and lamb post-lambing. Over lunch there were plenty of questions and Ellen from Vetsonic spoke about their Immunocol Platinum range of colostrum and Mistral, their drying agent for lambing / calving pens. Then we headed out to a farm with 1000 ewes in the middle of lambing and practiced stomach tubing, castrating, ringing tails etc. on dead lambs before doing it on the real thing! Luckily the sun shone all day and there were plenty of laughs along the way. If anyone is interested in attending next year, please contact Pam now so you can be added to the mailing list—pamela.brown@alnorthumbriavets.co.uk

As the weather starts to warm up, worms and fluke will become an issue once again. We have purchased a computer programme from NADIS that allows us to access not just a generalised '**parasite forecast**' for the whole country, but also a far more specific postcode-specific forecast for your farm. This can be provided to you on a monthly basis by email if you are interested. If so, please contact Max at Alnwick—max.ling@alnorthumbriavets.co.uk

Summary of the Cow Caesarean Audit – Pam Brown

Last week, Sotirios Karvountzis from Mendip Vets came to speak to us. He coordinated the Caesar Audit that many of our farm vets, plus a lot of our farm clients, contributed to a few years back. The audit took place over 2 years and involved 50 practices, 500 vets and 4646 caesareans (although some data was incomplete) so it's the biggest survey of its kind ever conducted. Here are some of the interesting points that were discovered during analysis:

- The number of caesareans performed was evenly spread throughout the week in sucklers but in dairy cows, fewer were performed at the weekend, although this was not statistically significant!
- There was no significant difference between the 50 practices for cow survival to 14 days post-caesarean.
- 58% more cows died within 12mths of the operation when it was performed in April compared to August, presumably due to poorer cow condition and less access to grass in April.
- 54% more dairy cows died within 14 days than sucklers but by about 15mths post-op, survival rates were the same.
- 44% more cows died than heifers by 14 days.
- 233% more cows carrying twins died than those with singletons by 14 days.
- No significant differences found in survival between using gowns, gloves, different disinfectants etc. but tying the tail out of the way with string decreased cow deaths by 31% at 14 days post-op.
- 279% more cows died by 14 days if the farmer had attempted to pull the calf for over 30min.
- 43% more cows died by 14 days if their calf didn't remain with them.
- **There was no significant difference in survival rates at 14 days post-op. according to the number of years the vet has been qualified – PLEASE NOTE!**

Ultimately, I was most interested in hearing:

- **Number of cows that were put the bull and weren't in calf within 12 months = 29%**
 - **Within 50 days of the op 6 times more dairy cows exit the herd (mainly deaths) than sucklers.**
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LAMB SCOUR– USE OF SUPPORTIVE FLUIDS

Lambs may scour (have diarrhoea) at any age and for a variety of reasons. Scour can be caused by bacteria, viruses, parasites, nutritional issues and many other factors. The cause of scour cannot always be easily diagnosed for rapid accurate treatment. All animals that are scouring will be losing fluids as well as vital electrolytes and therefore fluid therapy that addresses these electrolyte imbalances is an important part of supportive therapy.

Scour happens because there is a failure of absorption of salt and water due to the damage to the lining of the intestines resulting in the passage of liquid faeces. As salts and water are lost into the faeces, the animal will become dehydrated and may develop acidosis, as well as other issues related to the loss of vital electrolytes. The animal may well lose weight or fail to thrive as it needs energy to repair the gut. Failure to correct the fluid and electrolyte balance may result in death and certainly a very slow return to normal growth rates.

No matter the cause of the scour, the treatment of a scouring animal should aim to:

- Address the cause
- Assess and correct dehydration
- Address acidosis/electrolyte imbalances
- Maintain energy

Any scouring animals that are too weak to stand or have lost their suckle reflex should be assessed by a vet as intravenous fluids may be necessary.

It is recognised that the feeding of milk to a scouring animal is beneficial as it provides the energy required to repair the gut as well as allow the lamb to function which cannot be provided by an oral rehydration therapy alone.

Rehydion Gel is designed to be fed with milk or if an animal is suckling, given directly into the mouth and the lamb is allowed to return to the dam, so minimising stress. **Rehydion Gel** is designed to counteract acidosis and addresses the issues of electrolyte imbalance effectively whilst allowing recovery, repair and growth to continue as the lamb is still receiving milk.

One bottle of Rehydion Gel = 160 feeds (2ml per feed). Feed each lamb 2 times a day until scour stops.

It is important to note that the animals will continue to scour until the gut is healed, so they may appear clinically well but still have loose faeces.



DIY ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION COURSE

John Macfarlane is trying to organise another course to train farmers to do their own AI. He has a couple of people on the list but needs a few more to be able to run the course.

- **Date**—TBC but likely to be May
- **Venue**—TBC but will be within our practice area
- **Duration**—Up to 3 and a half days
- **Cost**—£445.+VAT but this includes a £50 voucher towards semen

Please contact John ASAP if you would like to attend this course.

Don't Forget to Use...

Please remember to order your lambing / calving supplies at least 24hrs in advance if possible to avoid a wasted trip.

- **Bovela, Spirovac**—Cattle vaccinations given before turnout.
- **Rotavec Corona**—Vaccination for cows 3-12wks pre-calving to prevent scour in calves.
- **Ewe-Go**—For twin lamb disease.
- **Heptavac P**—For ewes 4-6wks pre-lambing. (£140 / 500ml)