



Autumn calving is well and truly under way – with plenty of grass all summer, we are seeing lots of larger calves and therefore a higher rate of assisted calving's compared to this time last year.

On the sheep side, we have been out on farm carrying out teaser tup surgery as well as continuing with worm egg counts in this year's lambs. Remember, ewes tend not to need a pre-tupping worming dose, so if you are in any doubt regarding this, contact the practice or drop in some samples for a worm egg count.

With the wet weather, we should be considering fluke treatments around housing. Be sure to use the most appropriate treatment for the correct life stage of the fluke.

Tup Testing Analysis – Size Does Matter!

As part of her recent farm externship at Alnorthumbria, Elizabeth, a final year student from Glasgow Vet School, analysed records from 639 tups tested by our vets during the last five years (September 2014-19). In her study she found that, overall, nearly a quarter of tups (22%) fail the fertility test.

Scrotal circumference has the biggest impact on the pass/fail rate: 82% of shearling lambs with a scrotal circumference over 32 cm passed the examination, whereas only 40% of shearling lambs under 30 cm passed. For mature rams, 88% of those that had a scrotal circumference over 36 cm passed, while the passing percentage decreased to 71% if the circumference was under 34 cm.

Regardless of their age, 86% of rams with a scrotal circumference of 30 cm or more produced samples with a gross motility scored as 3 out of 5 or more (good); whereas only 17% of those with testicles below 30 cm produced samples with a score of 3 or more.

From this study, we can conclude that scrotal size really does matter, so if you can, take your measuring tapes to those tup sales!

There is still time to fertility test tups this season, so if you have bought anything new in, or have any queries regarding current stock tups, speak to a vet at your local branch.

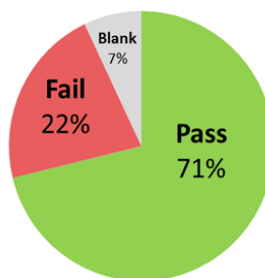


Fig 1. Total percentage of tups that passed or failed the fertility test, or had no grade recorded on the form (blank)

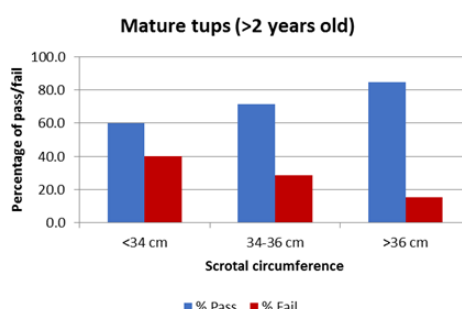
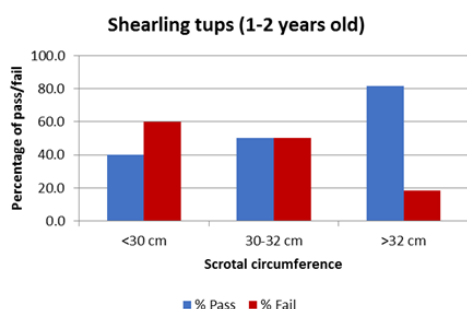


Fig. 2 and 3 Percentage of shearling (left) and mature (right) tups that passed or failed the fertility test based on their scrotal circumference.

Dates for the Diary!

Alnwick Rugby Club Sponsored Game Saturday 12th October

We are pleased to be sponsoring the first team home game against Kirkby Lonsdale this year. As usual we will be providing food & light refreshments for clients, at Alnwick Rugby Club from 1pm onwards. Please RSVP to your local branch if you are interested.

Alwinton Show—12th October

Once again the practice will have a hospitality tent at Alwinton Show, providing refreshments and snacks. Feel free to stop by and say hello to our staff there.

Young Farmer Workers Talks – Tuesday 29th October

Similar to last year, we will be holding a selection of talks on the 29th October, aimed at younger farm workers. This will be at the Percy Arms, Chatton with a 6.30pm start. The talks will focus on biosecurity and include an overview of farm management software.

Dinner is included. Please RSVP to your local branch.



Johne's Disease in Sheep by Daisy Rankin

Johne's in sheep is not as well publicised as it is in cattle - it does not cause the same tremendous watery diarrhoea in sheep as it does in cattle. Due to the insipid nature of the disease in sheep, and the methods of testing available, diagnosis is difficult and hence the disease is greatly underdiagnosed in the UK sheep industry.

Johne's is considered an 'iceberg disease', meaning that the majority of infected sheep will show no clinical signs. In fact, for every clinical case, there may be 10-15 sheep sub clinically affected. The causal bacterium, *Mycobacterium avium subspecies paratuberculosis* infects lambs early in life when they come into contact with the faeces of an affected sheep, or via the placenta, colostrum or milk of an affected ewe. The clinical signs of chronic weight loss, poor body condition and poor fleece do not become apparent until the sheep is around 3 to 4 years old, however, in the mean time the affected animal will have begun shedding the bacteria within the flock, known as a 'carrier' or 'subclinical' case. Over this time, ewes may be more susceptible to worm and fluke burdens and can give birth to lambs with lower birth weights. As the disease progresses, the bacteria causes massive thickening of the gut wall and, in sheep, leads to generalised ill-thrift in older ewes, often without any scour.



Though there are multiple different tests for Johne's, none of them are perfect. The best way to achieve a diagnosis is to perform post mortems on any animals showing clinical signs. Johne's is characterised by a marked thickening of the gut wall, though this will not show in subclinical animals, and it is a very final way to reach a diagnosis! Blood and faecal samples may also be tested however; the bacteria takes a long time to culture and blood samples have been shown to give a high number of false negatives, meaning that an animal that is infected with Johne's may go undiagnosed. There is no treatment for Johne's and the disease is very difficult to eradicate, therefore preventing it entering your flock in the first place is vital.

Control of Johne's can be through various methods. Culling of older, thin ewes on suspicion of Johne's (or another 'iceberg' disease such as OPA) is a starting point. On top of this, we can utilise blood tests, and though they may not be the most sensitive tests, positive results should always be trusted. Management plays a massive role in the control of Johne's in sheep flocks, by minimising exposure e.g. cleaning lambing pens well, ensuring dry standing areas around clean water troughs etc. We now have access to a vaccination, which could be used in flocks with a known problem to reduce the issues caused.

Last month at our latest farmers' evening, we heard from Eddie Scott about the Gudair vaccine and its role in both preventing and controlling Johne's disease within a flock. Research indicates that the Gudair vaccine can reduce the number of deaths due to Johne's by 90%, and also reduce the amount of Johne's causing bacteria excreted in sheep manure by 90%. The cost of a vaccine is approximately £3 per dose and it is a one off dose, for life.

AHDB Strategic Farm Launch

AHDB will be hosting a launch event at South Farm, NE19 2LW. Though the programme is mainly focussed on sheep, the holding also has a pedigree suckler herd. There will be discussion on both sheep and sucklers, with a farm walk and lunch and will touch on business and productivity aspects of the enterprises. For more information, or to express your interest in attending, please contact KE.events@ahdb.org.uk

Fluke Exposure Diagnostics

This is the time of year where we would be looking to use our newest test available for predicting fluke issues — copro-antigen ELISA, a blood test that shows exposure to the fluke parasite.

We advise testing ewe lambs so we are able to tell if animals have been exposed to fluke *this season* and hence giving us a forecast of fluke in the whole flock.

Don't Forget to Use

At this time of year, there are plenty of vaccinations and treatments to remember...

- **Respiratory vaccines** such as Rispoval 4 in calves, two doses, four weeks apart ideally finishing two weeks pre-housing or intranasal vaccinations if dosing at housing.
- **Trace element boluses** can be used if there is a known deficiency, but take care not to over-dose.
- **Cevac *Chlamydophila*** and **Toxovax**— Abortion vaccines in ewes, to be given at least four weeks pre-tupping.
- **Fluke treatment** such as Endofluke in sheep and Fasinex 240 in cattle (triclabendazole products).

