

February 2010



DAMORY VETERINARY CLINIC

Sheep Newsletter

NEWSLETTER TOPICS

Barren Check

Testing for twin lamb disease

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Barren Check

If your scanning results, show a barren rate of more than 2% we can offer a subsidised blood testing service to screen for toxoplasmosis. This is the most common infectious cause for barren ewes. Under the scheme we can blood sample six barren ewes, with the lab costs paid by Intervet/Schering Plough. If we find toxoplasmosis is involved then a vaccination programme can be instigated. Toxoplasmosis is carried mainly by cats, so all flocks are at risk through contaminated feed/bedding.

This service is available until March 31st.

Testing for twin lamb disease

For spring lambing flocks, it is often worthwhile to take 6 blood samples a month before lambing to assess the ewes' energy status and susceptibility to twin lamb disease. The result will be instant with an on-site test. If problems are found then we can look at the nutrition of your flock with a view to making changes to reduce the risks.

Liver fluke

Now is the time to test for liver fluke. Any fluke in the sheep should now be producing eggs, which will be shed in the sheep's faeces. To screen your flock we would strongly advise that you bring in pooled dung samples from your sheep. If infection is found then treatments can be given before turnout to reduce the contamination of pastures in the spring.

Bluetongue Strategy 2010

We are advising all our clients to continue vaccinating all cattle/sheep/goats and camelids for Bluetongue 8 during 2010, although there were no cases of Bluetongue recorded in the UK during 2009, and a DEFRA screen of UK animals during the Autumn revealed no incidence of Bluetongue exposure to any serotype.

Given this information, many are questioning the need to vaccinate, so why are we advising that vaccination should continue.

One of the reasons we did not see Bluetongue 8 last year was due to the fact that the vaccination programme during 2008 and 2009 was such a success (especially in our region), so the stock all had a good immunity. This will have meant that if any infected midges/stock did find their way over the channel the infection could not become established here.

France had 75 cases of Bluetongue 8 reported during 2009, and some of these were on the North coast of France. This indicates active infection is still present in France, hence we are still at risk from:-

Migrating midges. If weather conditions are right this method of transmission still poses a threat to the UK, especially in our area, this is how the UK first got Bluetongue in 2008.

Imported stock. 11000 Bluetongue susceptible animals were imported into the UK from Europe last year. Although these are post-import tested they still pose a risk. Whilst we remain a BTV-8 protection zone movement from other BTV-8 zones is permitted.

The bulk of your stock are already protected by previous vaccination, and will only need a single booster to maintain immunity for another year. Remember previously vaccinated cattle, and all sheep irrespective of previous vaccination history, just need a single dose. Cattle that have not been previously vaccinated will require 2 doses three weeks apart.

Bovilis BTV 8 should be available in all sizes from the end of February. It will be available in 20 and 50 dose bottles as before. We would advise vaccination of most stock during March/April. For those who do not wish to wait, there may be limited supplies of vaccine from other manufacturers, but these are proving intermittent and unreliable. Price should be similar to last year. The scenario we saw last year where DEFRA cut their vaccine price to get rid of short dated vaccine will not happen this year.

Currently in the UK we can still only vaccinate against Bluetongue 8, (although Bluetongue 1 is present in France). To the best of our knowledge this situation is unlikely to change. (There is a BTV-1 vaccine approved for sheep should the need arise, but currently there is no combined vaccine for BTV 1 and 8 authorised for UK use, and it remains illegal to use a BTV-1 vaccine in the UK).

If you have any questions on Bluetongue, please ring the surgery and speak to one of the Vets.