

ISSUE 87 Autumn 2024

Livestock NEWS

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Inside this issue:

- Staff News
- Sheep Quarantine
- Repeat Breeders
- Teaser Tips
- Blue Tongue



ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY

Staff News

We are delighted to welcome a new member to our team.

India Hoey

India joined us at the beginning of August after graduating from the University of Nottingham. India is originally from Cheshire and spend 3 months travelling Central America before making the move to Cumbria.

Outside of work India enjoys travelling the world and likes getting out and exploring the fells.



Congratulations



Its a Girl! Congratulations to Annie and Graeme on the arrival Margot Grace Hutchison on the 8th September weighing 8lb 3oz.

Congratulations to Karen who has recently gained her higher level 5 Apprenticeship as a Farm Veterinary Technician. Karen has been working towards this over the last two years and is the first cohort that have undertaken this qualification. Her dedication to the role and apprenticeship has gained her a distinction for her work. She is now one of only 35 qualified Vet Techs in the country and the only one in Cumbria! Well done!



Congratulations also to Emma who graduated from Harper Adams on the same day! Over the last few years Emma has been studying towards a Masters in Ruminant Nutrition and qualified with a distinction - the only one awarded this year!

Autumn is here, and so are the sheep sales

It's an ideal time to review your quarantine treatments and protocols to ensure that along with new animals, you're not introducing any unwanted surprises into your flock. Each farm is different, and the practicalities of quarantine can vary, so it's important to tailor your approach to your farm's specific needs. Below are general guidelines for quarantine treatments, but we always recommend consulting with one of our vets for personalised advice.



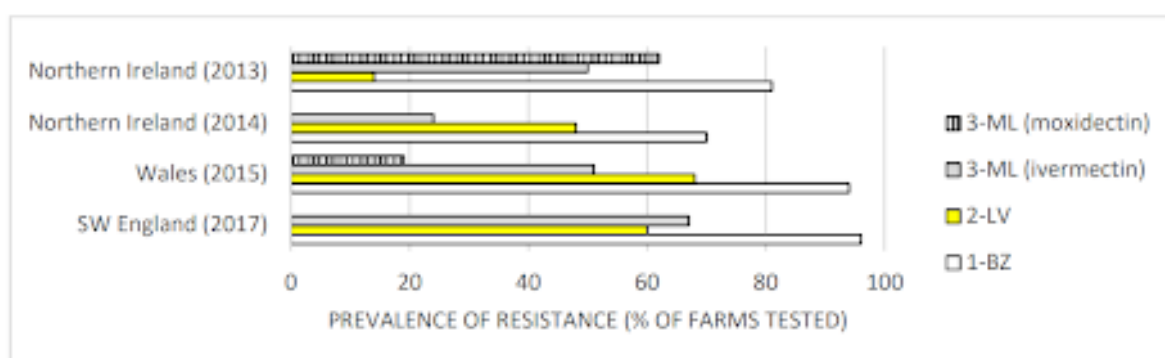
By Chris Bailey

Worm Resistance

Wormer resistance in the UK was first identified in 1984 for white wormers, in 1996 for yellow wormers, and in 2007 for clear wormers. Since then, the number of flocks affected by resistant worms has steadily increased. Research conducted in Southwest England in 2017 revealed that 90% (9 out of 10) of farms had white wormer resistance, and 60% (6 out of 10) had resistance to either clear or yellow wormers. The emergence of multiple-resistant worms—those resistant to more than one class of wormers—is becoming more common. Resistance takes years to develop naturally on a farm, but buying in stock already carrying resistant worms is the fastest way to introduce the problem. If your farm already has suspected resistance, importing resistance to another class of wormer could significantly reduce your management options.



Figure 1. A recent prevalence survey report demonstrates anthelmintic resistance from across the UK.



Worm Treatment for sheep

As a general rule, all incoming sheep should be treated with the new orange class wormer, Zolvix, which has shown very low levels of resistance. Since sheep can still shed worm eggs for a few days after treatment, it's best to house them temporarily or graze them on land that won't be used by sheep again (e.g., fields that will go into cropping or be grazed by cattle or re-seeded). Afterward, graze them on "dirty" pasture (previously grazed by lambs) so that any worms or eggs that survive the treatment are diluted by the farm's existing worm population.

Sheep Scab and Liver Fluke

Sheep scab is an increasing problem, and long meat withdrawals after treatment can be frustrating, especially if you're selling stock. Resistance to the injectable wormers used for scab is also on the rise, so these products should be avoided. Ideally, all incoming sheep should be dipped for scab. If you lack dipping facilities for small groups, consider timing your purchases to coincide with a whole-flock dip by a mobile dipper. In some cases, injectable treatments may be necessary. If no itchy sheep are observed, one injection serves as a safeguard, but treating infected sheep usually requires multiple doses. Be mindful that scab mites can survive for up to 16 days off the host, so avoid using the same handling facilities for quarantined and home flock sheep. For liver fluke, buying sheep from unknown sources poses the risk of importing this parasite. On farms where liver fluke is already a problem, regular dosing will likely occur. However, the risk lies in introducing triclabendazole-resistant fluke. Closantel-based products can kill adult fluke resistant to triclabendazole but not the immature ones. A second treatment is necessary six weeks later. Keep sheep on low-risk pasture post-treatment, as they can pass liver fluke eggs for up to three weeks.

Foot Rot and Other Diseases

Most farms have some level of foot rot, but different strains exist, with some more severe than others. Immunity is often strain-specific, so introducing new strains can lead to flare-ups. Contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD) is another infectious lameness that can cause serious issues when introduced to a naïve flock. To minimize the risk of bringing in new strains, newly arrived sheep should be isolated for two weeks and footbathed three times during that period (a 3-5% formalin solution can be used). Any lame sheep should be treated with injectable antibiotics and isolated for an extended period.

Final Considerations

Other infectious diseases can be introduced with new sheep, so isolating replacements for three weeks allows you to monitor for any issues. Some diseases, such as orf and enzootic abortion, can be vaccinated against, and accreditation schemes exist for disease-free flocks, such as for maedi visna. However, some diseases (e.g., OPA, Border disease) are harder to detect, so there is always some risk involved when buying stock.

Repeat Breeders

Repeat breeders continue to be a challenge across a number of dairy herds, with each day open estimated to cost in excess of £4. This means it is important to identify non-pregnant animals as early as possible to give them the best chance of being successfully bred again quickly, particularly through the use of synchronisation protocols and fixed-time AI.

Despite this, however, there remains a proportion of animals which fail to conceive. This may be due to any of a number of factors including luck, previous reproductive or systemic disease, failure of the sperm and egg to be transported properly within the uterus, and failure of the cow to recognise that an early pregnancy is developing.

The use of embryo therapy, also known as cowstoppers (or “waiting for God” embryos as I found out from colleagues in Switzerland recently!) can help cows with impaired sperm/egg transport, or which fail to recognise an early pregnancy. The cow (or heifer) is inseminated on heat (either natural or following a sync) as per usual and an

appointment is made a week later to transfer an embryo in addition. The idea is that if the cow has an issue with getting the sperm and egg to meet then this part of the process has already occurred in producing the embryo, and if she is just failing to recognise a developing pregnancy then by implanting an embryo in addition to the one she already has then the signals to her uterus are doubled, improving her chances of establishing the pregnancy properly.



By [Rob Simmons](#)



We tend to find that cowstoppers result in a successful pregnancy 50-70% of the time, with around 20% of pregnancies being twins (ie both the AI and the embryo hold). Most of the pregnancies tend to be born to the insemination, suggesting that the cow just isn't receiving enough signals that she's pregnant in the majority of these cases.

For more information please speak to your vet, or contact our advanced breeding team.

Teaser Tups

Why use a teaser tup?

Teaser tups can be used to improve breeding performance in flocks in both early and conventional lambing systems. The 'teaser' is a tup that has been vasectomised.

He retains his testicles and therefore desire to serve ewes but due to his vas deferens tubes being partly removed, he no longer produces semen containing sperm.

Introducing a teaser tup to a group of ewes will stimulate the ewes to cycle and encourage them to ovulate. When any tup (fertile or teaser) is introduced to a group of ewes, the ewes generally have a "silent heat" 3-4 days after introduction. This heat is not fertile but is a necessary precursor to a fertile oestrus at the start of every breeding season in sheep. Ewes will then have two peaks of normal oestrus 17 and 25 days later.

Hence, when a fertile tup is introduced **without** a teaser, there is little chance that he will start to father lambs until the ewes have their second heats at 17 and 25 days.

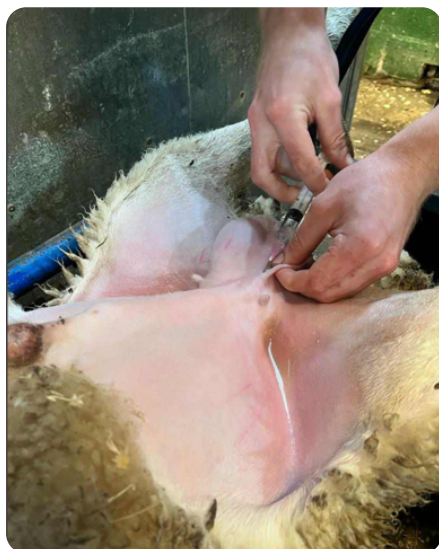
Introducing the fertile tup after the teaser has been with the ewes for 14 days means that there is a higher chance of pregnancy at the start of the breeding period. It can help to make the lambing season significantly more compact and maximise the number of lambs born at the beginning of lambing.



By [Catherine Davies](#)



How are teaser tups produced?



Selected teaser tups should be proven as fertile, structurally sound and passing the same pre-breeding checks as fertile rams. Ideally a yearling tup should be chosen after his first breeding season, however well grown mature ram lambs can also be used effectively. It is vital he is clearly identifiable so the wrong animal is not used as a teaser!

The vasectomy surgery is typically carried out under sedation or general anaesthetic and is a relatively straightforward procedure. It is important to note that the tup may remain **fertile for up to 6 weeks after**

he is vasectomised due to sperm residing in his accessory sex glands.

Suggested protocol for using a teaser.

1. Day 0 – Introduce the teaser to the ewes (aim for 5 and half months before expected start of lambing.)
2. Day 14 – Remove the teaser and introduce the breeding tups.

In AI systems, teasers can be used after the removal of the CIDR or Sponge to detect when the ewes are in oestrus, helping to more accurately pinpoint the time for AI.

In Embryo Transfer (ET), teasers can be used to increase superovulation rates (produce more eggs) from donor sheep. Similar to AI, teasers with the recipient sheep in ET systems can be used to more accurately identify oestrus timing for Embryo implantation afterwards.

Ensuring good results?

Choose a healthy, proven tup to be made into a teaser. Try to avoid using elderly tups.

It is critical that ewes have absolutely no contact with any tup (teaser or not) for at least 2 weeks and ideally a month before the teaser is introduced. This practically means keeping them at least 1 mile apart.

Aiming for a ratio of one teaser to between 50 and 100 ewes is generally effective. When adding the stock rams, go for a low ratio of one tup to 20 ewes to maximise pregnancy rates in a short breeding season.

Ensure ewes are in good condition and check your breeding tups are fertile beforehand. The use of teaser tups can be an incredibly effective way of tightening or advancing your lambing period. To find out more about the practicalities of surgery contact your local veterinary practice.

Bluetongue

Bluetongue is a viral disease of cattle, sheep and camelids which is spread by certain species of biting midge, there is no direct animal to animal transmission. Animals in the UK can be infected by several routes -

- Infected midges can be blown across the channel or North sea and bite animals in the UK
- Animals become infected as above and then spread the infection to midges in the UK, that then bite other animals (circulating infection)
- Infected animals can be imported and infect midges in the UK which then bite other animals

Sheep tend to show more symptoms than cattle with fever, lameness, abortion, crusting on the head, swollen head and a cyanotic (blue) tongue. In cattle and camelids the disease tends to be less severe and the only symptom may be milk drop. It is notifiable and APHA should be contacted if there is a suspicion of disease.

A number of cases have occurred in the UK, currently primarily on the East coast as this area is the biggest risk for blown insects. Zones are in place and animals need to be both pre- and post-movement blood tested if they leave the zone to live. These tests need to be booked into the lab but are being paid for by APHA, contact the surgery if you require more information.

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