



Ark Vet Centre

FARM NEWSLETTER SPRING 2024

RCVS | SETTING
VETERINARY
STANDARDS

HAPPY HEALTHY LAMBS

With lambing fast approaching or already started for many it is important to recap on the steps necessary for healthy lambs and a successful spring. The most crucial stage in a lamb's potential development is within the first 48 hours after birth and getting this period right is critical in increasing the number of weaned lambs in the summer.



Colostrum

Colostrum is vital in lamb health and getting colostrum management right can reduce rates of neonatal disease such as watery mouth, joint ill and scour. Studies show that lambs suckling unassisted in the first fifteen minutes of life have a 90-95% chance of being alive 90 days later. Lambs rely heavily on the passive transfer of protective antibodies in colostrum to give them protection against disease.

The ability to absorb the antibody proteins offered in colostrum reduces after 6 hours. It is imperative lambs receive the right quantity of good quality colostrum quickly. A newborn lamb requires 50ml/kg of colostrum within the first 4 hours of life.

Good colostrum quality starts with good conditioned mothers and there is a clear link between the ewe's energy and protein intake over the last 3 weeks of pregnancy and colostrum production. Therefore, it may be prudent to discuss with us or your nutritionist the best diet for housed ewes in the lead up to spring. Sheep should be body condition scored at least 6 weeks before lambing and action taken to ensure ewes are in appropriate condition; with lowland sheep between BCS 3-3.5 and upland sheep BCS 2.5.

Hygiene Protocol

Good hygiene in the lambing pens reduces early lamb losses and the incidence of neonatal disease. Bacteria builds up as lambing progresses and can infect a lamb through ingestion, the navel or through docking, tagging or castrating. Small steps can make a monumental difference -ensuring that feeding equipment is spotless and that lambing pens are disinfected and kept dry and well bedded goes a long way in having a successful lambing.

- It is important that lambs should have their navel dipped immediately after birth and then again 6 hours later. This plays a huge role in cutting down infection rates in neonatal lambs.
- Castration and tagging equipment should be dipped in surgical spirit between lambs again to help cut down infection.
- Individual pens should be cleaned between use. If this is not possible lime can be used between occupants with the pen re-bedded with ample straw.
- Our practice ethos is to be able to kneel in the bedding of a pen without your trousers feeling damp. If this is not the case it may indicate poor drainage or less than adequate bedding. This can lead to increased infection rates and hypothermic lambs which suckle less unassisted.

It is important to have a straight forward plan in place to ensure the needs of each lamb is met and we would encourage you should discuss treatment protocols with us in a flock health plan ideally before lambing starts.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW LOOK

FARM NEWSLETTER

In this issue we will be looking at some top tips for a healthy lambing, a look back at our beef farmer meeting from earlier this year and we also discuss the importance of fertility testing your bulls.

Please let us know if you have any questions or suggestions for further topics!

ANTIBIOTICS IN THE LAMBING SHED?

At this time of year we often discuss with clients the role of antibiotics at lambing.

Treatment of lambs with an oral antibiotic has its place but it is not a substitute for good management.

Antibiotic resistance is an increasingly major issue and prophylactic use should be reserved for higher risk lambs such as triplets, bad lambers and mismothered lambs. The use of systemic injectable antibiotics should be limited to clinical cases such as for lambs with active joint or navel ill or sheep who have suffered from a bad lambing or mastitis. Prophylactic use of these antibiotics where each lamb is injected is bad practice. There will always be lambs that do need treatment but the blanket use of antibiotics is not cost effective, has been shown to have little effect on overall lamb health and dangerously increases the risk of antibiotic resistance on farm.



Remember to like our Ark Vet Centre – Farm Facebook page to keep updated on meetings, information and all things farm.





SUSTAINABLE AND PROFITABLE BEEF PRODUCTION MEETING

We had a great turnout at our 'Sustainable and Profitable Beef Production Meeting' and our speaker for the evening was Joe Henry, President of the Sheep Vet Society and a vet from the North East Of England.

He discussed many topics and his take home messages are below;

- ⇒ **Sustainable profit levels linked to environmental sustainability**
- ⇒ **Benchmark your farm to see where you are now**
- ⇒ **Cull poor performer cows**
- ⇒ **Heifer selection**
- ⇒ **Increase fertility by being proactive**
- ⇒ **Reduce impact of disease**
- ⇒ **Select for less work – maternal genetics**
- ⇒ **Feed to condition score and stage of gestation**
- ⇒ **Shorten the winter**
- ⇒ **Graze rotationally**
- ⇒ **Use legumes to fix nitrogen**
- ⇒ **Remember we are producing beef**
- ⇒ **Genomics and feed efficiency**

AI COURSE?

If you are interested in an AI course then please let the practice or one of our vets know and we can get one organised.

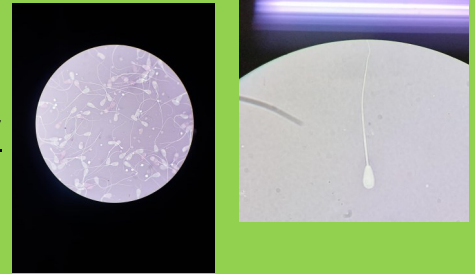
Farm Animal Same Day Faecal Egg Count Service

Submit samples on a **Wednesday before 12pm** for same day results

12:00 PM



BULL FERTILITY



Now is the time to consider fertility testing bulls, prior to them going back out with spring calvers. When thinking about fertility in your herd, there are various components; most attention often goes to the cows along with external factors such as nutrition and disease management, however we often forget that bulls are half of the equation.

At least 30% of bulls in Scotland are subfertile/infertile, which can have a huge impact on the number of cows in calf at scanning time, as well as the calving interval. On average, the aim is for a bull to get 90% of cows pregnant in a 9 week period to ensure a tight calving interval. Every day that a cow is over the target 365 day calving interval, it is estimated to cost the farmer £1 per day, per cow. Therefore, ensuring bulls are in optimal condition gives the best chance of improved fertility and therefore improved profitability!

Bull fertility examinations generally involve:

- 1) Full clinical examination (checking eyes, teeth, heart, lungs and mobility)
- 2) Assessment of testicles and penis
- 3) Rectal examination of the accessory sex glands
- 4) Microscopic evaluation of the quality (morphology and motility) of semen
- 5) Correcting any mobility issues prior to turn out is also vital as lameness can have a huge impact on a bull's fertility and performance. Our Vet Technicians Davie and Neil are able to assess and trim bull's feet with our foot-trimming crush by prior arrangement.

By identifying these subfertile/infertile bulls, it gives you confidence in your bull management, as well as allowing you to reduce bull numbers and increase profitability.

If you would like to find out more about our bull fertility and foot trimming services, please contact one of the team!

