

National Johne's Management Plan



The national Johne's Management Plan was launched in March this year and aims to take control of Johne's disease within the dairy industry. Backed by the majority of milk processors it encourages farmers to find out the status of their herd and take steps either to protect herds that are free or reduce the spread of Johne's in infected herds.

As part of the plan herds are required to establish their Johne's status and then decide on one of six recommended strategies. For any of the herds that have not yet done any testing to establish their status or require advice on which strategy is best for their farm then please don't hesitate to contact us. More information on the plan can be found at www.actionjohnes.co.uk

Winter Meetings

That time of year is nigh, the nights are drawing in and we are looking forward to yet another year's winter meeting series. Exact dates are to be confirmed but topics will hopefully include:

October: Pneumonia in Cattle
Nov/Dec: Abortion in Sheep
January: Worming Sheep
April: TB in Camelids

Please look out for these talks and contact us to register interest as they have proven to be very popular. We hope its because you find them interesting but most likely, you just enjoy the fish and chips!

We're backing BVD Free!

The BVD free scheme was launched on 1st July and is a national campaign which aims to eradicate BVD from the national herd by 2022. The scheme aims to eradicate BVD through the Identification and removal of PI animals and is based upon a national database that will hold information on herd tests and Individual animal tests. After two years of testing, participating herds will be awarded a risk level indicating the likelihood that animals from these herds are BVD Free.

So how does it work?

- **Join the scheme!** The scheme is FREE to join. Either go to www.bvd.org.uk and download a form, pick one up from the surgery or wait for us to send you one.
- **Talk to us about your herd and BVD!** Many of our herds are already screening annually but for those who aren't, talk to us about the best way to screen your herd. We can also discuss the risks of BVD entering your herd and the best steps to take to protect it. Although the focus is mainly on breeding herds, fattening herds are encouraged to test the accidental calves born too!
- **Use BVD Free status to sell animals!** BVD Free animals are healthier animals.
- **Look for BVD Free animals when buying.** The status of individual animals or their herd can be looked up on the BVD Free website using ear tag number or CPH number. BVD Free animals will reduce the risk of pneumonia on stored cattle and provided healthier animals for breeding herds.

BVD is thought to cost the cattle industry 39.6 million pounds a year and in a herd where BVD is present £36 per suckler cow. Within the last few years in the practice we have witnessed first-hand the damage BVD does to herds. We now have the opportunity to remove this disease forever handing on a healthier, more productive national herd to future farmers. Sign up to the scheme, talk to us about testing and let's break free from BVD.



Blood Sampling in Ewes

Pregnant ewes are under a lot of strain, especially when carrying multiple lambs. Getting the nutrition right for these high risk animals is tricky and if we wait until the ewes start showing signs that they are struggling or lambs are dying, it may already be too late! Blood tests can find evidence of deficiencies in the diet, often before the animals start to show signs and changes can be made before animals go downhill. The biggest nutrition related problem with regards to heavy in-lamb ewes is metabolic disease, but there are many other problems which may affect them, including weak and poor birth weight lambs, poor protein intake leading to poor colostrum and milk yields, low magnesium leading to staggers and low copper leading to swayback. **So, what do we test for and how is it useful?**

Measuring Energy Levels- Beta hydroxybutyrate (B-OHB)

This chemical is produced by the liver when sheep start to break down fat to create energy. This indicates that the animal is not getting enough energy from the feed in order to meet its demands and so has to resort to breaking down its own fat stores (the animal is 'negative energy balance' or NEB). Ewes at(continued page 2)



Vitamin D - deficiency and supplementation in camelids



Vitamin D is either consumed in the diet or made in the skin through the action of UV light. South American Camelids (SACs) are susceptible to VitD deficiency, most commonly because the low level of UV light during our British winter provides inadequate opportunity for the VitD to be synthesised in the skin. This means that animals are likely to become deficient and supplementation is therefore very important.

Growing SACs with VitD deficiency develop the condition rickets, usually during their first year of life. Signs include lameness, reluctance to run and play, poor growth and increased periods of time spent lying down. A hunched posture may be noticed due to signs of pain. Some animals develop deviations of the limbs, and fetlock, carpal (knee) and stifle joints may be swollen along with a reduction in appetite.

In order to prevent rickets in growing camelids (up to 2 years old), it is recommended to supplement them with either injectable or oral forms of VitD through the winter months. A dosing programme is outlined below:

Injectable (Duphafal AD3E Forte)

Dose rate is 100-iu/kg bodyweight under the skin →0.2mls per 10kg (last approximately 8 weeks at this dose) Dose every 2-3 months from October through to March/April.

Oral VitD products

Dose rate is 1000IU/kg by mouth every 4-weeks. A paste containing 100,000 IU/10ml → 1ml/10kg or 5ml for a 50kg cria. Ensure the dose rate is correct for the individual being treated, rather than a "one size fits all" approach.

Excessive supplementation of VitD can induce toxicity, which can cause serious and even lethal poisoning. It is therefore not recommended to exceed the above preventative doses and please note different products contain different levels of VitD so it is important you check the product carefully.

We are currently updating our clients contact details! If you would like to receive emails with details of our talks, parasite forecasts and current news then please contact us on 01327 350239

(continued from page 1) ...Highest risk of going into NEB are those carrying twins and triplets, due to the very high energy demand for the lamb development. If NEB goes too far, ewes are at risk of going into "metabolic disease" (also known as twin lamb disease). This is caused by the high levels of B-OHB and other fat metabolism products, in addition to the low glucose triggering neurological signs due to their effect on the ewe's brain. Animals with twin lamb disease may initially appear dull and drop back from the rest of the flock and go off feed. As the disease progresses they begin to develop neurological signs, including apparent blindness, incoordination (they may walk as if drunk), become unable to rise, star gaze (tilting the head up towards their back), paddling their legs and if not caught early enough can quickly progress to death. Treatment only works in roughly 1/3 cases and so prevention is always better than cure. High levels of B-OHB across the blood samples indicates there is not enough energy in the feed ration. Ideally ewes should be scanned to check for lamb numbers. This allows you to then feed according to the ewes requirements. Energy can be increased by increasing the amount of concentrate feed, adding high energy supplements such as molasses and providing alternative energy sources such as increased protein.

Measuring Protein Levels- Urea Nitrogen and Albumin

Protein is a vital part of a pregnant ewe's diet as it is required for growth of the lambs in the uterus, producing high quality colostrum and milk, as well as maintaining the ewe's immune system. The effectiveness of the diet in providing ewes with sufficient protein is measured with two tests; Urea Nitrogen (UreaN) and Albumin. UreaN is a product of protein use and gives a snapshot of what the animal's protein status is now, albumin on the other hand, which is produced by the liver can give a more long term view of what the protein status has been over the preceding weeks/months. Both of these can be affected by factors other than diet but, used alongside a detailed history, they can be useful markers for nutrition.

Measuring minerals and trace elements- Magnesium and copper

Magnesium is measured to check both the level of magnesium itself, but also calcium. Low magnesium can cause "staggers" but magnesium is also closely linked to calcium and so can also give an insight into the calcium status of the animal. Sheep cannot store magnesium and so they must have a constant supply from their feed. Sheep are very sensitive to copper toxicity but at the same time, low copper can lead to problems in the lambs (swayback). It is therefore a bit of a tricky trace element to manage. Blood tests give an indication of copper levels and only if these come back low should ewes be supplemented with copper.

It is worth bearing in mind that poor results on metabolic blood tests do not automatically mean that ration itself is to blame. All aspects related to feeding must be checked. It is no good having a perfect ration if the sheep cannot all get to it! Feed faces should be large enough for all animals in the pen to feed at the same time. If not, ewes lower down the pecking order or feeling a bit under the weather will be pushed out and not receive their quota. If feed face/trough space is not long enough then feeding them from the floor can be a fair alternative until pens can be re-organised. It is also important to make sure that there is plenty of fresh, good quality forage available to ewes ad-lib and a clean and plentiful supply of fresh water. Feed spaces should be kept clean and dry and if feed is left uneaten this should be cleared away before fresh feed is put down.

What do we need to sample?

If scanning for numbers has been done, at least 5 blood samples should be taken from each group (singles, twins and triples), however ideally more bloods are taken to improve the accuracy of the test (10% of each group). Scanning the flock for numbers is very useful as it allows different groups to be fed according to their requirements –singles are not fed too much to avoid oversized lambs, whilst twins and triples are given more to accommodate the extra lambs' growth. If your flock is not scanned, blood testing is still very helpful for directing nutrition and in these cases 20 blood samples are taken from across the flock. Sampling should be done 2-3 weeks before lambing is due to start. This gives enough time to change to nutrition if need be, but is close enough to lambing to give an accurate portrayal of their nutritional status in this high risk period. At blood testing, ewes should also be body condition scored to give an idea of long term nutrition. We often send pre-lambing samples to Edinburgh for testing and costs roughly £120 for the tests plus a visit fee and the time it takes for us to blood sample your animals.

Blood tests pre-tupping are also commonly carried out to ensure that ewes and rams are in optimum health for breeding and to check trace elements which could have knock on effects on the lambs they are about to carry

