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The Importance of Colostrum

The importance of giving newborns the best start is crucial and the foremost method is with efficient colostrum management. Calves and lambs receive no immunity from their mothers and are susceptible to numerous problems. Colostrum contains protective antibodies and it's essential it gets ingested soon after birth. Antibodies can only be absorbed within a few hours and as the calf/lamb gets older it becomes less able to absorb them, therefore it is less able to develop immunity. If dams are vaccinated, her antibody levels are boosted; but are only of use to the newborn if they can absorb them from the colostrum. Otherwise you are at risk of reducing the cost-effectiveness of the vaccine and your time taken to administer it.

There are some simple rules relating to colostrum; the 5 C's:

Colostrum – Containing calories and antibodies that are essential for the first few days of life, getting the right volume ingested within a few hours is vital. A good rule is **3litres in 3hours** for calves or for lambs 210ml/kg.

Calories – A newborn requires at least **10% of its bodyweight daily** and above this is beneficial. For newborns outside or when the temperature drops, the volume needed increases. To ingest 2litres, calves must suckle for 20minutes!

Cleanliness – The calving/lambing areas should be kept **clean and dry**; especially important in Johnes's positive herds. Calving/lambing boxes should be cleaned between use, including troughs. When working with various ages of calves, work from the youngest to oldest and clean off regularly.

Comfort – Youngstock need to be **warm** and comfortable. Shelter from drafts and rain and consider jackets for those particularly susceptible (twins/triplets or after a difficult birth). They can be washed, reused and kept a useful aid for susceptible individuals.

Consistency – Cow and calf groups should be observed at the same times of the day and ideally by the same person to **avoid stress**. For those giving milk replacer, don't mix and match between warm and cold feeds.

Monitor each newborn to ensure enough colostrum is ingested early on and if you are in any doubt, giving an extra feed could make a huge difference. Improving colostrum management impacts your productivity throughout your system and life of the animal by helping to reduce the risk of diseases such as pneumonia and scour.



Just a gentle reminder, one which we think your bullocks will appreciate; castration, **by any method**, can only be performed without anaesthetic if the calf is under 2 months of age. The use of rubber rings without anaesthetic is only allowed up to 7 days of age. Under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, castration of animals over 2 months of age should be performed by a qualified vet.

Scheme launched to recognise TB control on farms

Since November 2016 herds can seek accreditation for freedom from bovine TB. The programme is being offered by existing health scheme providers such as Biobest and the Scottish Agricultural College and aims to recognise freedom from TB in the annual TB test and also good biosecurity on farms that aims to reduce the risk of the disease entering.

Herds are awarded a score based on the last 10 years of TB testing, with the score indicating how many years since a TB breakdown was recorded in the herd. In addition to the required annual TB test there are requirements for some pre and post movement testing for animals bought onto the farm. It is also recommended that all added animals are placed in quarantine on arrival. If they then fail a post movement test this will not affect the herds TB Accreditation although APHA would still record a breakdown.

With the government intending to apply for Officially TB-free status for many northern and eastern counties this year this scheme would benefit anyone looking to sell animals and have their low-risk status recognised and anyone who is keen to minimise the risks of TB entering their herd.

For more information please visit the CHECs (Cattle Health Scheme Regulators) website www.checs.co.uk or TB hub www.tbhub.co.uk. If you are considering joining the scheme, please contact one of the farm animal team.



Free Laboratory Testing For Barren Ewes!



If you have had an unexpectedly high rate of barren ewes at scanning, help is at hand! Expertis Barren Ewe Check 2017 has been launched providing free blood testing for the most common cause, Toxoplasmosis. The only costs involved are the phone call to book it in, a visit fee and time for us to bleed the sheep. Toxoplasmosis is the main infectious cause of early embryo loss in sheep and a very common cause of barrenness, abortion and weak lambs born alive, there isn't much to lose by taking a look.

As for all of you whose scanning results have shown a plethora of quads this year – sorry, but too many lambs is a nice problem to have given the alternative...! Hopefully navel dipping or spraying is already a part of your neonatal lamb care routine, and if it isn't it really should be, but have you ever considered the same for tail docking, castration and ear tagging? Any area where the skin is broken is a good route for bacteria to enter the body and a spray or dip when performing these procedures will help reduce instances of joint ill or bacteraemia in lambs. We can't have a pre-lambing newsletter without mentioning colostrum – we will say no more at the risk of becoming boring but there is nothing cheaper or better at keeping lambs alive than good clean colostrum!



applied/caesarean), position (normal/backwards/breach/leg back), vigour at birth (alert/dull/dead), seen suckling at 2hours, vigour at 24-48hours (alert/dull/dead), weaning date, weaning weight, weight at sale, price at sale. Keeping records can help identify areas to improve in following years, such as appropriate colostrum management, identifying freemartin risks, maintaining a positive growth rate and can aid identification of those more at risk of developing pneumonia/scours. Please remember any late stage abortions should be reported to the APHA as they may require a vet visit to carry out a Brucellosis test which is paid for by the government.

Camelid Blood Drive To Help Sick Crias

Camelid owners and breeders are invited to attend our next **Camelid Blood Drive on Wednesday 22nd February 2017** at Towcester Veterinary Centre's Equine Clinic, Plum Park Farm. If you're wondering **what a Camelid Blood Drive is and why we do it**, please read on!

This event involves camelids (usually alpacas) coming into the clinic for blood donation. Although the blood donors don't get cups of tea or biscuits, they do contribute a life-saving resource, as the blood they donate is processed and spun down to harvest plasma. This plasma is vital in the successful treatment of **failure of passive transfer (FPT) of immunity in crias**. FPT happens when crias fail to drink enough of their mother's colostrum in the first hours of life. This colostrum is rich in antibodies, and when the crias drink it the antibodies are absorbed across the gut to provide the mainstay of the cria's immunity until their own immune system gets up to speed after a few months old. Sadly, this means that crias with FPT have a compromised immune system, and left untreated are very vulnerable to (potentially life-threatening) infections. Administering plasma (containing antibodies) to these crias is the only way of getting the all-important antibodies into the bloodstream to provide the protection they need.

The Camelid Blood Drives have been set up in response to the need to treat FPT crias with plasma and the difficulty many people have in sourcing it. So, if you are expecting crias in your herd this year and would like to have plasma on hand for any crias that need it, the Camelid Blood Drive is for you! If you would like more information or to book a place on this year's blood drive, please contact one of the farm animal team.



Medication Confusion

It is not uncommon this time of year to be fielding questions about the best antibiotics for a ewe after a difficult lambing – we all have our own favourites which tells you that none are really any better than any others. Please be aware that Pen& Strep requires daily injection for 3-5 days to be effective – a one off dose will be of little benefit for the ewe.

The other angle to help support a ewe after a difficult lambing is pain relief, the use of an anti-inflammatory will help reduce swelling, improve appetite and help the ewe feel better able to care for her lambs.

There are no licensed anti-inflammatories for sheep, but the commonly used products are listed below along with the dose rates. Anti-inflammatories are also useful for ewes with vaginal prolapses – if we replace the prolapse we will give an epidural anaesthetic and follow it up with injectable pain relief to reduce straining and improve appetite in the crucial run up to lambing.

Flunixin 2ml/45kg into muscle, lasts 18-24 hrs

Meloxidyl 2.5ml/100kg under skin, 48-56 hrs

Rimadyl Cattle 1ml/35kg under skin, 48-56 hrs



Management Records for Productivity

Calving and lambing is an excellent time to begin creating management records to check production levels on your farm. Records can be tailor made to your farm and as detailed or as simple as you like.

Consider some of the information to be recorded with each newborn as: date, time, yard/pen number, dam identification, sire identification, number born, gender, approximate weight, identifying markings, alive/dead, ease of delivery (none/simple assistance/moderate with jack

