

Sheep Newsletter

November 2020

Sheep lameness can cause severe problems in many flocks and understandably remains an area of concern for many shepherds and smallholders. The wet summer and mild autumn means the risk of lameness is greatly increased.

Causes of lameness and treatment

The most common causes of lameness are **footrot** and **scald**. These are both infectious diseases caused by *Dichelobacter nodosus* which means that just trimming lame sheep will not only fail to treat the problem but will also spread the bacteria between sheep.



Scald is the milder of the two diseases as it simply affects the skin in the interdigital space - causing redness, swelling and some white exudate. It can often resolve on its own especially if dry underfoot conditions are provided. Treatment involves oxytetracycline spray or footbathing.

Scald can progress to **footrot** if the horn becomes under-run, classically this occurs at the base of the interdigital cleft but if left to develop then it can spread up the wall and around the hoof. It causes severe lameness and weight loss as it is extremely painful. Footrot is associated with a foul-smelling odour and swelling. Treatment involves injectable antibiotics. Under no circumstances should the hoof be trimmed as it is highly contagious.

Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis (CODD) can be difficult to differentiate from footrot so please consult us if you are unsure. Typically it affects the coronary band and the skin just above it but not the interdigital space.

CODD is most commonly brought onto farm by purchased sheep so strict quarantine protocols (described below) should be observed.

Control and prevention.

Sheep lameness is not only a welfare problem but can also have a severe economic impact which is estimated at around £5/lamb or £7/ewe. It is therefore prudent to follow our helpful tips to try and reduce the level of lameness in your flock:

- Examine lame sheep as soon as you see they are lame
- Identify the disease - if in doubt call us!
- Treat all footrot and CODD cases with tetracycline spray and tetracycline injection.
- Separate the affected sheep from the main flock and ideally re-examine in seven days.



SUMMERLEAZE-VETS.CO.UK

01297 304007

- Avoid trimming if possible
- Ideally ear tag recovered sheep to identify repeat lameness and assist your culling policy

Consider footrot vaccination (**Footvax**) if this disease is a particular problem:

Footbathing regularly helps to control the build up of scald, reducing the development of Footrot

- Footbathing is only effective for 36 hours so you must ensure sheep are turned out onto uncontaminated pasture. *D. nodosus* can survive for up to 10 days on the ground/handling facilities so the protection from the footbathing will run out long before the bacteria die!

Quarantine all replacements for three weeks. During this time ensure you:

- inspect all feet and treat all cases
- footbath before mixing with your own flock



Our flock health club is going really well and if you are a member you now get 50% discount on all telephone consultations and advice.

Don't forget to send in a pooled faecal sample from your flock before you reach for a wormer as a lot of our recent worm egg counts have shown that worming treatments have not been necessary saving a lot of money and time.

Covid 19

Please be aware all our vets are travelling between lots of farms and we need to make sure we keep you safe! Please try to keep some distance between you and the vets when out on farm so we minimise the risk.

We would like you to pre-order drugs before collecting them from Summerleaze so that your order will be ready for collection. This will reduce the time you have to wait at Summerleaze and allow our reception team to have less contact with everyone.

Vets are working from Home to Farm so if you would like advice it can take a little longer as the vets won't be in the office between calls for reception to grab! We will happily ring and give advice over the phone.

If you are showing signs or are waiting for a test result, please let us know.

Thank you—let's hope we all stay healthy and levels down here remain low.

Summerleaze Vets, Axminster, EX13 7RA
01297304007 summerleaze@summerleaze-vets.co.uk