

November NEWS - 2019

at Summerleaze Vets

Reducing Antibiotic Use at Lambing

As I'm sure you are all aware with the growing burden of antibiotic resistance in human medicine we are under a huge amount of pressure as an industry to reduce our use of antibiotics on farm.

Currently the sheep sector is one of the lowest users of antibiotics in farming.... give yourselves a pat on the back! However, as we all know, often this changes a great deal at lambing time when we are just trying to get from one busy day to the next with lambs arriving all the time!

The current Sheep Antibiotic Guardian Group guidelines for reducing antibiotic use suggest 'SMARTER use' as a way of remembering how to use antibiotics correctly:

Store antibiotics correctly

Measure weight of animals correctly

Amount of antibiotic correct for the animal's weight

Route of administration correct

Treatment (drug) correct

Effectiveness – consider change of treatment following culture and sensitivity results

Review flock health management with your veterinary surgeon to refine future use

In addition to this they go on to define 'Incorrect use' of antibiotics. They say:

'Do NOT give antibiotics to whole flocks or whole groups of sheep for PREVENTION of disease. This includes entire lamb crops for prevention of neonatal lamb disease (e.g. watery mouth or joint ill), entire flocks of ewes for prevention of abortion or lameness and entire groups of weaned lambs (stores or breeding) for prevention of pneumonia or lameness.'

We are proud to say that our clients have been embracing this message and our sale of preventative drugs such as Spectam Scourhalt has decreased over the last couple of years. We would love to get to a point where use of drugs such as this, and other procedures such as dosing all lambs preventatively with injectable antibiotics / oxytetracycline tablets, is eliminated apart from in exceptional circumstances.

In the absence of masking problems by using preventative measures we need to be experts in reducing the disease risk to newborn lambs and equip our lambs with the best immunity with which to fight infections.

Obviously, the fewer the number of bugs in the lambing pens the better! We all know we get fewer problems at the beginning of the season than at the end. A farmer's Weekly article a few months back described a farmer having success using lime and shavings in lambing pens instead of straw. Whichever way it is achieved, keeping pens as clean and dry as possible are crucial.

Email; - summerleaze@summerleaze-vets.co.uk

Telephone; - 01297 304007

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Dipping navels as soon as possible after birth will decrease uptake of bacteria; we recommend 10% iodine as this also dries out the navel quickly.

Good quality colostrum is essential if lambs are going to thrive. Producing good quality colostrum is all about making sure ewes receive excellent nutrition in the weeks leading up to lambing. Good quality dietary protein is required to make sufficient quality colostrum. If lambs do not receive the immunoglobulins they need in the first few hours of life they will have trouble fighting off disease despite good management in all other areas. The real stuff is always far superior to any shop bought substitute. Most substitutes do not contain any immunoglobulins. We now have in stock a product aimed at calves which is better than most other products on the market (including those aimed at sheep) but is not as good as mother's!

Have you thought about how good the ventilation is in your shed? And the drainage? Having a think about the design of your lambing shed may be able to help keep beds dryer and prevent respiratory problems.

Other measures taken up by farms who have successfully managed to reduce their overall antibiotic use include adopting a strict culling policy, for example with cases of prolapse and repeat lameness cases; vaccinating e.g. footvax/abortion vaccines; and adopting the 5 point plan for lameness.

Have EWE Heard?

A new face will be joining the Summerlease Farm team - **Sam Bowker** graduated from Cambridge in 2015 and spent 4 years working in Cheshire in a farm animal practice. Sam is keen on all aspects of farm veterinary work with particular interest in dairy young stock, lameness and sheep health. We are also very excited to welcome back Candice who was with us earlier in the year and become a very valued member of the team so quickly it felt like she had been with us for ever. She will be joining us for a minimum of 6 months from the beginning of January.

What's on at Summerlease Vets?

Best Practice Medicines Course

As many of you know, Red Tractor changed several of their guidelines in June, especially targeting the use and storage of medicines and vaccines on farm. They recommended that at least one member of farm staff should be trained in the safe and appropriate use of medicines by attending the relevant course.

We will be running a course to meet these requirements on **Wednesday 27th November 2019**; at **Kilmington Cricket Pavilion from 12pm**. Lunch and refreshments will be provided. The course is £45 to attend, and places are limited so call the office to book in. Attendees will receive a certificate of competence. Please contact the office to reserve a place.



