

AUGUST SHEEP NEWS – 2018

We hope that you are enjoying the summer – this year's weather has certainly not made things easy for a sheep farmer! This newsletter focuses on getting ewes ready for tupping and a look at fly strike as flies have been a big problem this year.

Now is the ideal time to assess your figures and update your flock health plan. Please call the surgery to book in or for any further advice on the information below.

Weaning to Tupping – Get your ewes ready for the season ahead

This is the critical window to get your ewes sorted for next year's season and so here are some top tips to consider:

- **Body condition score (BCS) all of your ewes**

They could be categorised according to thin (BCS <2.5); fair (BCS 2.5-3.5) or fat (BCS >3.5). Thin ewes will need the most attention and may require a faecal/fluke egg count; mineral blood testing etc. to investigate why they are thin. Prioritise your best grazing for these ewes to ensure that they are BCS 3 at tupping. Run the thin ewes through the race again after 4 weeks to assess how they are doing – it will take at least 4 weeks of good grass for a ewe to improve 1 BCS.

Score 1



Body condition scoring is based on assessment of the muscle and fat cover over the spine of the lower back.

Score 1: The vertical and horizontal processes are prominent and sharp. The fingers can be pushed easily below the transverse process.

Score 2



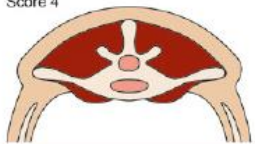
Score 2: The vertical processes are prominent but smooth, individual processes are felt as corrugations. The horizontal processes are smooth and rounded but it is still possible to press fingers under.

Score 3



Score 3: The vertical processes are smooth and rounded. The bone is only felt with pressure. The horizontal processes are smooth and well covered; hard pressure is required with the fingers to find the ends.

Score 4



Score 4: The vertical processes are only detectable as a line. The ends of the horizontal processes cannot be felt.

Score 5



Score 5: The vertical and transverse processes cannot be detected even with pressure. There is a dimple in the fat layers where the processes should be.

- **Sell any cull ewes that are ready to go now**

Removing extra ewes from your fields early on will ensure that limited grass is saved for more profitable sheep over the autumn and winter months. Ensure that you keep a healthy flock by culling ewes that are old; failed to rear lambs or don't gain condition despite good nutrition.



SUMMERLEAZE-VETS.CO.UK



Nicky Robinson joined the practice in July. She has just completed a post-graduate certificate in sheep and is keen to get involved with the sheep services that the practice has on offer.

- Consider vaccinations

Talk to one of the vets about vaccinating your flock and have a word with Fo about the availability of vaccines – order them well in advance. Don't be tempted to skimp on vaccines this year – they will pay dividends later in the season.

- Don't forget the tups..

A pre-breeding examination by a vet is crucial to ensure that your tups are firing on all cylinders. Last year's performance gives no bearing on how he will do this year. Heat stress alone can reduce the reproductive performance of your ram.

Fly strike (a.k.a. blowfly strike)

Fly strike is caused by adult female nuisance flies laying their eggs on dead animals or soiled fleece. The eggs hatch as larvae; develop into maggots and then into adult flies. The larval stage causes much damage to the infected animal as they feed on the living tissue of the host sheep. During the warm summer months the entire lifecycle may take 10 days and so large numbers of larvae may be produced very quickly.



- Lesions caused by fly strike range in size from small areas of 1cm to extensive lesions covering a large portion of the sheep. Lesions may first appear as small wet-looking area on the fleece.
- Infected sheep will show certain behavioural changes such as nibbling the affected area. Severely infected sheep may be depressed and separated from the rest of the flock and sheep may die.

Flies may be attracted to foot rot lesions and so be sure to treat lame sheep promptly

The fleece around the affected area should be trimmed and any soiled fleece removed. Remove any maggots and clean the area with warm water and hibiscrub. Large numbers of larvae will be under the skin and so affected animals should be treated with a pour-on product. Severe cases may need to be treated with antibiotics and anti-inflammatories.

Products Suitable to Flystrike Prevention and Treatment:

Product Name	Length of Activity*	Used For	Withdrawal Period	Benefits
CLIK	16 weeks	PREVENTION of blowfly	40 days	One treatment is likely to cover most of the risk period
CLIKZIN	8 weeks	PREVENTION of blowfly	7 days	Shorter meat withdrawal – may be more appropriate for lambs
CROVECT	6-8 weeks	PREVENTION AND TREATMENT of blowfly, lice and ticks	8 days	Range of uses; Short withdrawal period
SPOT ON	4-6 weeks - lice and ticks	PREVENTION of lice, keds, ticks TREATMENT of blowfly	35 days	Organic approved; Easy application

*The length of activity may be shorter if the fly burden is high.

Was last year's lambing spread out?

Although there may be several reasons for this, one reason may be due to how well the ewes were cycling at the start of tupping. Placing the ewes with teaser rams for 14-17 days before tupping will help to get them cycling by the time the tups are introduced. Teaser tups may also be used to advance the breeding season by 2-3 weeks. If you already have teaser tups, ensuring the correct ratio of tups to ewes is crucial – 1 teaser for 100 ewes. Once the teasers are removed, 1 tup should be used between 25-30 ewes. picking up slight changes in behaviour of infected sheep before lesions appear. Ensuring adequate protection during the high-risk period is also essential.