



Newsletter September 2024



Welcome

For what it's worth, that's the end of summer and at the time of writing we're experiencing autumnal storms—Great! Each year has its own challenges and for us this year, the appearance in our area of a sheep worm called Haemonchus (Barbers Pole Worm) will stick in my mind. Although we haven't seen any fluke cases yet, the risk this autumn of disease will be high. Look out for our reports on social media as and when we find cases. The finale of the local shows looms and as usual, we will be at the Westmorland Show both days in our regular spot. Please pop in to see us, have a brew, cake and an ice cream whilst hopefully sheltering from the sun!

Mark Stott

Enzootic Abortion Vaccine Stock Out



Many of you will have heard by now, and no doubt be frustrated by, the batch failure of Cevac Chlamydia. This means that we are unable to get any more stock until early next year.

For those of you that have been vaccinating for a while and operate a closed flock, the hope is that there will be enough flock immunity for you to hopefully emerge unscathed. For those of you that do buy in, **keeping these purchased, risky sheep separate** from your unvaccinated sheep at lambing time, should help to mitigate the risk.

As **EAE is spread sheep to sheep** via birth fluids, isolating any aborted sheep until their discharge has dried up, and cleaning and disinfecting the pen, will help to prevent spread to the others. The mothering on process will spread the bacteria to any fostered lambs so don't keep these as replacements.

EAE causes abortions by the bacteria damaging the placenta, so effects will depend at what point in their pregnancy they catch it. Early on, you'll get abortions 2-3 weeks before their due date; later on the birth of weak, barely-alive lambs that die within hours; and if they're at the point of lambing, won't cause any issues this year but will harbour the bacteria and abort next time round. There is the possibility of an alternative to Cevac but as it stands we're not sure how many doses will be available. This is a dead vaccine, so would require two doses 3 weeks apart but can be used during pregnancy. EAE can cause up to 30% lambing losses the year after it appears in an unvaccinated flock, so if you had a few more cases of abortions last year and EAE was diagnosed but you haven't had chance to start vaccinating yet, definitely give us a ring and we can see what we can do. Please contact us as soon as you have any abortions to **diagnose the problem** as there are other causes and we can then treat the ewes if we diagnose EAE.

Rebekah Carling

Included this month

- **Enzootic Abortion Vaccine**—Rebekah Carling
- **Prompt Treatment for Lameness** — Beth Griffiths
- **Mobility Scoring a practical view**- Gill Lumb
- **The Vampire Worm**— Jim McKinstry
- **Kexxtone Boluses**— Jim McKinstry
- **News and Diary Dates**



Time to plan winter housing and pneumonia vaccines.

The gift of rain that we keep getting in the Northwest is so far is making it look like we won't be having an extended grazing period, so please speak to us about preventing pneumonia this season.



Why is Prompt Treatment so Important for Lameness

Prompt effective treatment within 24 hours of lameness detection will lead to the best possible outcome. But why is within 24 hours important?

In most lame animals' inflammation is present. Whilst this inflammation leads to pain and altered behaviour (for example eating less and lying down more), it can also drive physical changes within the foot or limb creating further damage. Therefore, treating early (within 24 hours) prevents this further damage from occurring and limits the side effects of lameness.

For example, when a cow has a sole ulcer inflammation creates bony spurs on the underside of the foot bone (also known as the pedal bone). These spurs pinch the sensitive tissues between the outside world and the pedal bone when the cow stands and walks (like always having a stone in your shoe). This creates further bone and tissue damage. A vicious cycle then develops whereby lame cows are much more likely to become lame in the future. Treating early (within 24 hours) with **an anti-inflammatory, as well as trimming and blocking the unaffected claw helps to reduce these physical changes**, such that they are more likely to be cured and are less likely to get lame in the future.

Routine mobility scoring using RoMS accredited scorers is an excellent tool to identify subtle and very early cases of lameness before inflammation sets in. Once an animal is spotted, lifting the leg up to detect the cause will allow treatment to be targeted and therefore much more likely to be successful.

We have a dedicated team of lameness enthusiasts who are specially trained to help tackle lameness on farms, please feel free to give the practice a ring to discuss how we can help your business.

Furthermore, AHDB have some useful resources specifically designed to be used by farmers on farm to help identify lameness causing lesions:

<https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/hoof-care-field-guide>

<https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/reducing-lameness-in-sheep>



Beth Griffiths

Mobility Scoring—a practical view

Mobility Scoring has become a widely used system for identifying which animals require treatment and for recording the overall herd lameness levels. We are aware that farmers observe cows everyday as they come into the parlour etc. but doing this as a separate job, either using ourselves or farm staff to come up with a treatment list, is where we have seen most benefits on farm. When regular scoring is in place, early detection of lameness combined with prompt treatment can reduce the severity of the problem to stop the development of chronic changes in the foot, that Beth talks about above.

Our vet techs are all ROMs approved mobility scorers. We use the industry standard AHDB scoring scale of 0-3, 0 being good mobility and 3 being seriously impaired mobility.

To get the most from your mobility scoring the herd is ideally scored on a clean, level, non-slip concrete area where cows can be observed for a minimum of 6 steps. Cattle with a score of 2 or 3 are recorded, along with the affected limb, and an action list is created for the foot trimmer, farmer or vet. Cattle with a score of 0 or 1 are not considered lame and are tallied so calculations can be made of herd percentage lameness. We can then monitor improvements and compare your farm with national data.

It's of no surprise that lameness can be a significant limiting factor in the profitability of your business. Please chat to one of our team to see if Mobility Scoring could help your herd.



Gill Lumb

The Vampire Worm

We are seeing a lot more of a blood sucking worm in sheep than in previous years. The barbers pole worm or *Haemonchus contortus* to give it its full name is having a great time out there this year. Unlike other gut worms this worm **does not cause scouring**. It sits in the fourth stomach of the sheep and sucks blood. A sheep with an infection of 5000 worms can lose 250ml of blood a day! In lighter infections we will see decreased milk production and decreased weight gains. If a sheep loses enough blood it will get weak and die. Chronic infections can cause a swelling under the jaw just like chronic fluke. How you know a sheep is affected is by looking at the mucus membranes around the eye. It should be a nice salmon pink. If it is pale or white, you know it is losing blood.

The signs of *Haemonchus* can easily be mistaken with fluke infection. This is why a post mortem of dead sheep is vital. I have opened a few sheep up that farmers were convinced were fluked and I found a pale carcass and *Haemonchus* worms in the abomasum. *Haemonchus* is an exceptional egg layer and a small infection can soon become a big problem. A female worm can lay between 5000 and 15000 eggs per day. They can start showing signs from about 10 days after infection, you can have big problems very quickly with this worm.

Sheep do not have a great deal of immunity against it as it only occurs sporadically a bit like lungworm in cattle and it can hit so hard that any immunity the sheep has is soon overwhelmed. This means that adult sheep are cycling the worms as well as the lambs.

Control of this worm is difficult. Most of the time it is at low levels in sheep mixed in with the other gut worms. *Haemonchus* develops resistance to wormers very quickly and I have seen cases where it has been resistant to white and clear wormers. The most important way to control this worm is not to let it onto your farm. **QUARANTINE DOSING WITH ZOLVIX** for all bought in sheep and rams is essential.

Investigating poor growth rates and sudden deaths is also important. This is where our sheep club package really comes into its own for Post mortems and FECs.

If you have a predominantly *Haemonchus* infection you can use closantel as it will kill *Haemonchus*. This is why some people think they have a fluke problem as using closantel cures the sheep. I am sure a lot of these sheep at this time of year have had a *Haemonchus* infection.

Haemonchus has been described as the 'nematode nemesis of small ruminant production system' (Emery 2016) as it has plenty of ways to hit sheep and lambs hard. Working with us and diagnosing it early should limit its impact.

Jim McKinstry



Pale membranes due to blood loss.
Picture credit SRUC

Kexxtone Boluses

These very useful boluses have been taken off the market as they have had a problem with the plastic casing that has been causing more to be coughed up. These boluses are used in S.O.F.T cows. These are Sick, Old, Fat and cows carrying Twins. They are also used in cows that give a lot of milk as they make the rumen work more efficiently to maximise energy production from the diet. There is no direct replacement for Kexxtones. We need to really be on dry cow management to make sure cows are ready for their lactation. This includes

- Keeping cows at the ideal BCS of 3
- Having a far-off dry cow group with high fibre and low energy diet
- Having a close-up dry group which are 2-3 weeks off calving getting a higher energy and protein diet. This is usually the same diet as the far offs, but with 2kg of a dry cow roll added in
- Dry twins off 2 weeks early.
- Give cows a post calving sachet with energy and calcium along with 20 litres of water to get them going after calving
- Dose at risk cows with BADLADE for up to 5 days post calving



Jim McKinstry

A Warm Welcome to Beth G



New vet Beth joined us at our J36 branch in June 2024. She trained to be a vet at the University of Liverpool with Kathrine and having finished a PhD in lameness in dairy cattle, wanted to move into clinical practice. She has recently moved up from Devon to sunny Cumbria and is enjoying meeting the farmgate vet clients. She apologises in advance if she inevitably talks about lameness!

1) What was your first Job? Working at a poultry farm who had a diverse business plan. They sold quail to high end restaurants, chickens to the public and rare breeds of geese, pheasants and ducks to enthusiasts and large estates. Not to mention the obligatory geese and turkeys for Christmas!

2) What do you enjoy about working at FGV? The team and the clients. Everyone has been so welcoming, and great craic.

3) Favourite holiday destination? New Zealand. It's a stunning place with plenty of outdoor pursuits.

4) Who would you most like dinner with (famous or fictional person)? Jason Kelce. One of the best Centres in American football. I have recently got into watching American football and would love to pick his brain about what is going on!

5) How do you relax after a hard days work? Walking my Labrador Sable and exploring the lakes and dales. I also enjoy CrossFit (mainly throwing heavy barbells and dumbbells around).

Congratulations to Charlotte and Michael,

who celebrated their marriage last month with a big party at home on the farm. We all wish them all the very best for the future.



Cartmel Show

The team had a good day at Cartmel Show last month, the education tent as ever, was busy with visitors learning about farming, lambing Dolly the sheep, milking the cow, colouring and naming parts on the cow expertly painted by Hannah.



Hornby Sheep Show

It was a pleasure to sponsor this local show in August, a great turnout of sheep, good cake, friendly faces and only a few refreshing showers. Well done to the committee for all the hard work that goes into making these events so successful.



Westmorland County Show - Wednesday 11th and Thursday 12th of September 2024.

Please join us on our stand for brews, ice cream, cake and a warm welcome.



Sheep Meeting, All Welcome— The Rising cases of Barbers Pole Worm (Haemonchus) and Tackling Sheep Lameness. 7pm Tuesday 8th October 2024 at Kirkby Lonsdale Rugby Club. Pie and chips included and kindly supported by MSD. Please book by phoning the office or e mail linda@farmgatevets.com

Lancaster Office

Tel: 01524 60006

Open 8:30am-5pm

Monday-Friday

9am—12noon Saturdays

CLOSED Sundays

J36 Kendal Office

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Monday-Friday

9am—12noon Saturdays

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