



# Highgate Veterinary Clinic

## Farmers Newsletter - March 2005

### Watery Mouth and Rattle Belly



Throughout the UK, watery mouth disease accounts for 25% of all lamb deaths in indoor intensive lambing systems. The disease develops quickly and affects lambs 6-72 hr old that have had inadequate or delayed access to colostrum and, if untreated, most die.

Twins, triplets, weak lambs and those born to young or thin

mothers are most at risk as they are likely to receive inadequate colostrum.

Lambs ingest bacteria, particularly E. Coli, from contaminated fleece or bedding. Without colostrum to stop them, these bacteria rapidly multiply in the guts and release toxins.

Affected lambs are dull, stop feeding and have a wet muzzle. Lambs become cold and the stomach may become distended and "rattle" when shaken.

There is no specific treatment but the aim is to prevent starva-

tion and hypothermia. Affected lambs may be saved by providing injectable Spectam daily and a minimum of 50 ml of a calf electrolyte and 10% glucose solution with Spectam Scour Halt fed by stomach tube three times each day.

If the lamb is not sucking, the volume of each feeding should be increased to 100-200 ml. Giving an enema of 20ml of soapy water may help.

Prevention includes ensuring each lamb receives 150-250 ml of colostrum, by stomach tube if necessary, within the first 2 hours of life.

Keep bacteria contamination down by disinfecting and rebedding between ewes, clipping out dirty ewes and keeping yards clean.

Giving oral antibiotics such as Spectam scour halt or Tribissen tablets to each lamb at birth helps keep the bacteria suppressed in the gut.

Watery mouth isn't a new disease and many of you control it well but if a problem develops this year, give us a ring for advice.

### Ewe Abortion



Abortion is a major cause of financial loss in the sheep industry. Up to 2% of ewes abort from non infectious causes. More losses than this probably means an infection is causing abortion.

#### Always presume that every abortion is infectious and reduce the spread of infection by:

Collecting and disposing of the foetus and placenta.

Isolating the ewe from other sheep for at least one month.

Cleaning and disinfecting the area where abortion occurred.

If mothering on, avoid using lambs, which are potentially replacement stock.

#### To diagnose what is causing the problem, getting quality samples is important

Collect FRESH abortions.

Collect both foetus and placenta.

Avoid excess amount of straw/soil contamination.

Place into a CLEAN bag.

Ideally transport quickly to VLA Penrith - If not, into the surgery for sample collection.

### Vaccinating Against Lungworm – Why Bother?



That still seems to be the attitude of most farmers. The incidence of reported outbreaks of husk since the early 1990's has quadrupled and each year we see more in adult cattle.

Year on year farmers getting coughing dairy cows in Autumn seem to happily pay out £4.50 per head for Eprinex and treat the whole herd.

The odd new calved heifer just never really recovers. So in a one hundred cow herd, they pay out £450 to the merchant but forget that they shot a poor doer that cost £700 to rear and the herd's milk production suffered.

Vaccinating youngstock with Huskvac will prevent this! It will cost you over £7 per calf,

but you shouldn't need to give any boosters. If you spread this over the cows life of up to three lactations, it's less than £2 per year.

It makes financial sense to use Huskvac in replacement stock. Plan ahead, contact us this month to discuss vaccination timing.