



Highgate Veterinary Clinic

Farmers Newsletter - February 2009

Blue Tongue Vaccination

We can all agree that the weather last summer was, on the whole miserable. Stock didn't thrive, crops of silage were poor and we all started to grow webs between our toes. The only good thing was that midges don't like that sort of weather either. This along with the English Channel and the high vaccination uptake in the south east meant that the blue tongue epidemic did not reach us.

We all hope for a better summer this year but if this does happen and imports from Europe continue, we will have a blue tongue outbreak this year. There is no government compensation for dead or sick animals, so your only insurance is vaccination.

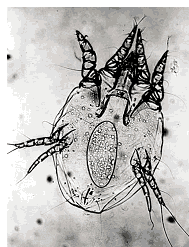
If you have not already done so, please vaccinate your stock before spring. Remember, cattle need two shots three weeks apart and sheep only one. At the moment there isn't a problem with vaccine supply but as turnout day approaches and demand increases, this may change.

Please order vaccine early to avoid disappointment.



Culicoides imicola
Midge responsible for bluetongue
Inset at actual size.

Sheep Scab



Despite having good treatments for sheep scab, outbreaks are yet again very common this year. After treatment, residual protection from these medicines is limited. As mange mites can live off the sheep for up to 17 days reinfection from contaminated pens, fields and fences is common. Due to the lack of co-ordination between farms eradication from one unit can very quickly be reversed if a neighbour's sheep are infected and have not been treated at the same time.

When scab was a notifiable disease and dipping compulsory, scab was rare. If we are to return to those scab free days farmers need to start to work together to co-ordinate treatments of their sheep. If you would like to help to establish a co-ordinated treatment regime in your area we would be very happy to participate.

Fluke Resistance

We have identified our first case of possible liver fluke resistance to triclabendazole which is the drug found in Fasinex and other copy brands. Despite repeated treatment with triclabendazole on this farm, the flock failed to thrive and post mortem examinations showed livers devastated by fluke.

This resistance is a great blow as triclabendazole is the only flukicide that kills all the stages for fluke in sheep. Without this drug, treating and preventing acute fluke will be very difficult.

Resistance occurs after the repeated use over several years of the same medicine. Once resistance has developed on a farm, it may never be lost. Movement of sheep onto other units or the movement of snails downstream from such a farm can spread this resistance.

Triclabendazole is not the only flukicide available and it is not necessary to use it all the time to control fluke.

We can advise you on what flukicides are appropriate for you to use and so help to reduce the chance of triclabendazole resistance occurring on your farm.

This Month: February



Calf scour is common at the moment.

Ensure that all calves receive at least 6 pints of colostrum in the first 6 hours of life.



Look out for calf pneumonia as the mild weather returns



When treating lame sheep look out for contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD).

It doesn't respond to normal foot rot treatments.