



HIGHGATE VETERINARY CLINIC—Farm Newsletter

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Clinic opening times

Monday-Friday
8.30 am—7.30 pm
Saturday
9.00 am—12.30 pm
Sunday
Emergencies only



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Coccidiosis in Lambs

It's at this time of year when we regularly see scouring lambs and often, after faeces testing, we diagnose coccidiosis. This microscopic parasite attacks the gut lining of the lamb so that it loses fluids and struggles to absorb food. Lambs can be obviously ill and scouring or have a subclinical infection which affects growth rates.

As cocci go through their life cycle in the gut lining they release their eggs (oocysts) into the faeces. Ewes can act as a reservoir of infection and shed low numbers of oocysts, particularly around lambing time. *Coccidia* (*Eimeria*) are host specific and therefore infection can only occur from contact with other sheep. Although there are eleven species of *Eimeria* that infect sheep only two species actually do any harm.

It is the combination of a heavy oocyst challenge in young susceptible lambs which usually leads to outbreaks of clinical disease but an adequate intake of colostrum will assist the lamb in coping with infection.

Coccidiosis is more frequently associated with intensive husbandry systems and high stocking densities. Prevention of infection is dependent on good hygiene and husbandry so keep pens and feeding troughs clean and avoid overcrowding and stress. With sequential lambing you should avoid grazing young and older lambs on the same pasture and in particular on the fields which carried ewes and lambs within the previous 2-3 weeks. These older lambs can heavily contaminate the environment causing severe disease in the younger lambs.

Drugs are available for the prevention and control of coccidial infection. Decoquin (Decoquinat) inhibits the cocci in

the early stages therefore should not be used on lambs that are already infected. It has to be given over a period of a month to give protection and therefore it's easiest given in feed. Diclazuril (Vecoxan) and toltrazuril (Baycox) kill cocci at all stages in the gut wall so they're good at treating cases. They can be used to prevent disease by treating the lambs after they're infected but before clinical signs occur. This is a bit of a guessing game which you can't always get right. Dose too early and there's no cocci to treat (these drugs are not vaccines), too late and the damage is already done. The manufacturers of Baycox claim that their product lasts four days in the lamb whereas Vecoxan only lasts one day and so repeat treatments are unnecessary. (Baycox is twice the price of Vecoxan).

As all lambs are infected but not necessarily showing signs, coccidiosis should be treated as a flock problem rather than on an individual basis.

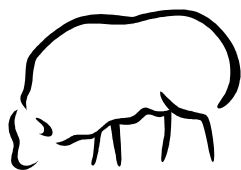
Remember, concurrent *Nematoridus* infection can exacerbate the severity of coccidiosis and it's often worth faeces testing to ensure you're giving the right treatment.



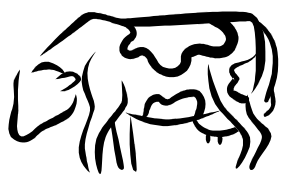


This Month:

- ◇ Ensure that young stock are fully vaccinated with Huskvac before turnout.
- ◇ Vaccinate lambs against orf before problems occur.



- ◇ BVD and leptospirosis boosters are due before turnout.



- ◇ The next DIY AI course begins 10th May 2010. For more information or to book a course place please contact Kay Campbell at Semex on 01292 671525 or e-mail: campbk@semex.co.uk

Coccidiosis in Cattle

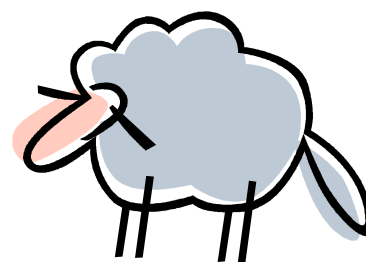
Cocci don't only attack sheep. Calves are also vulnerable but remember cocci are species specific i.e. sheep cocci affect sheep and cattle cocci affect cattle. There are two main species that usually affect calves inside causing scour and affecting weight gain. But there is a third species called *Eimeria alabamensis* which affects youngstock after turnout. We've seen it on a couple of farms over the years and it seems to survive from one year to the next on the pasture. It's tricky to diagnose as oocyst shedding has often not begun by the time scour appears so faeces testing appears negative. It can cause deaths and poor doers. Treatment and prevention is very similar to that in lambs. If you get a mystery scour in youngstock within 2-3 weeks of turnout, consider coccidiosis. Free faeces testing and species identification is available thanks to Bayer.

Staggers

Just a quick reminder that spring is just around the corner and wet weather will bring on the lush wet green grass that causes staggers. Try to ensure cattle receive a daily supplement of magnesium (e.g. 60g calcined magnesite) and the diet is supplemented with additional fibre to reduce scours. As potassium "locks up" magnesium avoid grazing pastures that have been on heavily mucked or given potash fertilizer. For further advice, don't hesitate to contact us.

Sheep Tail Docking - a Call to Keep it Legal

DEFRA officials are reporting an increase in illegally docked tails at shows and sales. Why illegal? The tails are too short. By law tails must be long enough to cover the anus in a male and vulva in a female. Farmers breaking this law can be fined up to 100% of their annual single payment. DEFRA have asked us to remind you to keep tails long enough.



Launch of New Sheep Wormer

Zolvix is a new generation sheep wormer which is the first new drench class for over 25 years. It claims to have zero resistance killing even resistant worms. It is considered so special that it is classed as a POM-V medicine i.e. can only be prescribed by your vet. It is recommended that, in order to maintain its effectiveness, it should only be used once in lambs in July/August (it has a 7 day meat withdrawal) and as a quarantine dose for newly purchased sheep.

<http://www.zolvix.com/>