



Spring News

Chelmsford

Hello from all at Westpoint Farm Vets in Chelmsford. We have had a busy winter so far and are looking forward to a challenging yet rewarding birthing season, which should take us through to August! We are very grateful to those who made it out for our annual Christmas quiz in December – the questions were a bit fiendish, but we hope the fantastic food offerings more than made up for it.

Free disease testing

We have been really pleased with the uptake of the free BVD testing; the **BVD Stamp It Out** project has proven useful in ascertaining the prevalence of BVD in some of our farms, which helps us to better tackle the disease. It is a two year project, which has been expertly handled by Mariska, and there is still time to get on board if you wish. Please contact the office for further details.

Our next project focuses on **IBR**. We are offering the opportunity to both beef and dairy herds to determine whether IBR may be lurking undetected on farm. If you meet our eligibility criteria, do not vaccinate for IBR and wish to enrol, all we need to do is fill in an IBR risk assessment form with you on farm, and take blood from 5 youngstock (9-18 months old) and 5 adults. For dairy herds, this is further simplified to 5 youngstock bloods and 1 bulk milk sample. We will then analyse the results and report back to you with a plan of action, if required. Read our article on the back page for more information on IBR.

Future plans

Our next big project will be getting our **Flock Club** off the ground. Flock club will provide opportunities for sheep clients to get together for exclusive quarterly meetings and will also convey discount pricing options for health plans and preventative services.

Upcoming meetings

Held on site at the Young Farmers Centre:

- 7th March at 9.30am: **Alpaca Birthing and Husbandry Workshop** (please book through the Eastern Alpaca Group)

Kings Lynn and Louth

Team news!

We are delighted to welcome our new administrator **Alison** to the team at Westpoint Louth. She will be manning the phones for both Kings Lynn and Louth on Monday afternoons, Tuesday afternoons and Fridays, she will also be at the market every Thursday so please make her feel most welcome and introduce yourselves when you can. **Renee** our Australian locum has been sharing her expertise with the King's Lynn team this winter and has become popular with the farmers and she has been very busy calving and lambing since she arrived. We wish **Jackie** a speedy recovery and a warm welcome back to the fore as she makes her way back into the office following a nasty break to her ankle – the team and clients cant wait to have her back!

New services

- Rosana has recently completed training to scan lungs of ruminants to help with diagnosis of **pneumonia** and also as a tool to identify the levels of subclinical disease on farms. For more info contact the practice.
- Dan has upcoming training on **embryo transfer** so keep in touch if this service will be of interest to you.

- Becca has been clocking up the miles **sheep scanning** this Spring – get in touch if you are yet to scan your flock.
- Peter and Dan are joining forces with Integra and Oakwood Vets to offer support in **commercial pig work**.
- **Smallholder club coming soon!** If any smallholders wish to put ideas or thoughts on how they would like this to work/what they would like out of this please get in touch with us.

Planning ahead

- Don't forget to get those **bulls fertility tested** 8-10 weeks before you want to use them
- Use **vaccines** properly with regards storage and timing – chat with your vet to tailor you farms vaccine plans

TB Meeting - Tackling TB in Lincolnshire

A big thank you to all 46 farmers that joined us at the Red Lion, Partney on 18th February. We also want to thank vet Sarah Tomlinson from the TB Advisory Service (TBAS) and the NFU for hosting the meeting and delivering a great presentation. The question and answer session provided the usual lively, thought provoking debate. If you were unable to attend the meeting and want to talk to a vet about TB then please call your practice or TBAS can provide info about TB in your area and what you can do to reduce your own risk of a TB breakdown – please call 01306 779410 or visit the TBAS website www.tbas.org.uk.

Upcoming meetings

- 12th March at 7pm, Red Lion, Partney: **Livestock Injection & Medicines Course**. Please call 01485 609031 to book. £25 +VAT which includes a hot supper.
- Look out for details of our post calving/lambing season social in May. Plus we are planning meetings on BVD, IBR, and Neospora...

Seasonal advice for alpaca and llama clients

We are in a position to import and prescribe injectable preparations of Vitamin D to ensure adequate levels in camelids over winter. Vitamin D is essential for growth plate mineralisation and bone health, and as it is absorbed from the sun, camelids (who have very few exposed areas to absorb it through the skin) may struggle to maintain

adequate levels in the winter. This is particularly important in late-born and growing cria. Any camelid owners wishing to discuss over-winter Vitamin D supplementation should speak to their local practice for advice.

It will also soon be time to think about unpacking preparations, and whether collection and processing of plasma is right for your herd. Westpoint offer a full plasma collection and processing service, ensuring

you are properly stocked and prepared in the unfortunate event of failure of passive transfer of immunity in cria.

Please feel free to get in touch for more details.



The 4 P's of Lambing: Preparation, Planning, Prevention, Performance.

by Kaisa Velstrom BVM&S MRCVS

Lambing season is one of the busiest times of year for any sheep farmer, but it can quickly become overwhelming and tiring. Good preparation and planning will help to manage it successfully.

Make sure you have all the necessary equipment and supplies and that your system is fit for handling the expected numbers. It is important to have good hygiene in the lambing environment for both indoor and outdoor systems with the appropriate stocking densities. Do your best to provide lie-back areas and lambing pens that are dry, draft-free and cleanly bedded with proper cleansing and disinfection between occupants.



When lambing assistance is required, clean gloves should be used for all ewes and hands regularly washed. Navels should be fully immersed in a 10% iodine solution as promptly as possible after birth. Follow maximum hygiene during all husbandry procedures, and suitably clean and disinfect the equipment between individual animals.

To reduce the use of prophylactic antibiotics on lambs, it is important to provide adequate nutrition to your ewes in the last six weeks of pregnancy. Group them according to scanning results and their body condition score. This will improve lamb survival rates, give better birth weights and maximise colostrum production. Also, it has been shown to improve the maternal bond with the lamb. Your vet can help to assess their energy and protein status 4-6 weeks pre-lambing by taking blood samples.

The volume, quality and timing of colostrum is essential. Lambs should receive 50ml/kg in the first 2 hours following birth and a total of 200-250 ml/kg birth weight within first 18 hours in mild weather. 50% more is needed in wet and windy conditions. In case of inadequate supply, quality or volume of colostrum, one can try to substitute with another ewe's colostrum. Pooled goat colostrum from an CAE accredited herd can also be used as a second choice. Pooled cow colostrum from a Johne's free herd can be used but 30% more is needed to make up the energy. Commercial substitutes are also available. When storing colostrum, it is best to use zip lock bags for easy defrosting. Defrosting should be done gently until reaching 39°C.



When the colostrum period is well managed the lambs will better be able to cope with a few bugs without the need for antibiotic treatments, this helps establish a healthy population in their gut. Colostrum-deprived lambs are usually not able to control the multiplication of E.coli. In some circumstances, where it is not possible to improve the management quickly enough, the use of oral antibiotics might become necessary. It is then important to aim to use less every year.

Try to step away from blanket treatment of all lambs at birth. Start with small changes first by trying to keep up to 10% or more without treatment at the beginning of your lambing season. Then, from there on, reassess and monitor. Antibiotics against watery mouth should be targeted towards high risk lambs. These would be triplet or low birth weight lambs that are born later in lambing season with more challenging environmental conditions, or into group with recent clinical cases or lambs born to thin and/ or poorly fed ewes.



Try to set targets for reducing lamb losses. Good records are essential to benchmark performance and to help you identify any potential problem areas. You should be aiming for less than 15% lamb losses, but top performing flocks are achieving closer to 10%. Good flock health planning together with your vet is essential.

If you need advice on lambing or are interested in joining one of our Flock Health Clubs then please contact your nearest Westpoint practice.

Getting the environment right – managing youngstock during the winter

by Tim Potter BVetMed PhD MRCVS, Senior Clinical Director



The winter period presents several challenges for calf rearing and most issues that we see as vets can be traced back to problems with the environment and management. Diseases such as pneumonia and scours are caused in part by a poor environment; and any control measures for these diseases start by ensuring sheds are clean, well ventilated and not overcrowded.

There are a number of different housing systems available for calves, but whichever you choose it is important to consider the important factors that will affect the environment around the calf; ventilation, temperature, humidity and bedding.

In the housed environment, a constant supply of fresh air is essential in preventing respiratory and other diseases together with improving production. Good ventilation removes stale, humid air, which helps ensure that viruses and bacteria cannot survive for long outside the animal. Even in cold weather a good supply of fresh air is essential; but always make sure the airflow is above the level of calves, as animals kept in draughts will not perform because energy will be diverted from growth into simply maintaining their body temperature. Watch out for gaps under doors and gates as they will permit draughts right at the level calves lie at. If calves are housed in an exposed or tall building, consider making lower covered areas where they can keep warm.



As the environmental temperature drops it is not unusual for producers to see reduced growth rates as calves will burn extra energy to keep warm. The body temperature can be affected by environmental factors such as air temperature, radiant temperature, air speed and relative humidity. The lower critical temperature (LCT) is the temperature below which an animal requires additional energy to keep warm. In the first three weeks of life the LCT is between 10 and 15°C, as the calf grows its ability to cope with



the cold improves and the LCT drops, calves over 3 weeks of age have a lower critical temperature of around 6°C. During the colder months it is possible to maintain growth rates by increasing the amount of feed the calves are receiving (either by increasing the volume they receive or for those animals on milk replacer increasing the concentration). There is obviously a cost associated with this, but it is recouped by the increased growth rates and also the reduced incidence of disease as well-fed animals have a better immune function.

For young calves, calf jackets are also a very useful tool for providing protection from the cold. Consider using jackets for calves under the age of 3 weeks when temperatures fall below 15°C. The calf must be dry before you put a jacket on to it and it is important to always wash jackets between calves to avoid transmission of diseases such as scour. The common question we get asked is when is best to take the jacket off? I always advise leaving the jacket on until the calf reaches weaning or has outgrown it. When it is time to take the jacket off always do this in the morning when the environmental temperature is going to be its highest, this allows the calf to adjust before the temperature begins to fall overnight.

High levels of humidity allow pathogens to persist in the environment and spread from calf to calf. Good ventilation is important to reducing humidity, but humidity can be further reduced by ensuring good drainage and minimising standing water in the environment. The preparation of milk feeds results in a large amount of liquid in the environment, so where possible preparation and cleaning should occur away from where the calves are housed. Remember adding water to the environment will also reduce the temperature as energy is used to drive evaporation.



It is important to provide enough clean bedding to reduce contact between the calf and soiled straw. Calves like to nest, and it is important they have sufficient straw to keep them warm and minimise stress. Always aim that there is enough fresh straw in the beds so that when a calf is lying down its legs are covered.

The winter period can often present a challenge for youngstock rearing with many farms experiencing increased problems with diseases such as pneumonia and scours. Taking steps to protect calves from the cold and ensuring that they are warm and dry will reduce the risk of disease and also help to maintain the growth rates which are vital for their long-term performance.

Do contact your local Westpoint practice if you would like advice on youngstock housing and management.

Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR)

by Charlotte Hockings BVetMed MRCVS

IBR is a disease that is often mentioned in passing but not often in much detail, here is a short piece to lift the lid on IBR.

Infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) is a viral infection that can affect cattle at any age. The virus that causes it is a bovine herpes virus (BHV-1) and, as with human herpes viruses, once an animal is infected, they will always have the virus. This is known as latency. Once the initial infection is over the virus retreats to the nerve cells in the face. When the animal goes through a period of stress, eg calving or weaning, the virus can start replicating and cause disease again. Around 40% of farms in the UK have IBR on farm.

IBR is highly contagious and is spread from cow to cow via contact with secretions, through the air and uncommonly by sexual transmission. The most common form of the disease is the respiratory form, but it also has a reproductive form.



Clinical signs vary and often occur 2-3 weeks after a stressful event. When the disease is mild, signs are non-specific and can be confused with other causes of pneumonia. More severe signs include fever, thick discoloured nasal discharge, ocular discharge, coughing, panting, foul breath (halitosis) from pus in the back of the throat and windpipe, decreased appetite, severe milk drop, abortion and, occasionally, death.

Outbreaks on naïve farms can have morbidity (loss of production) of up to 100% in the group but rarely cause mortality (around 2%).

As IBR is a virus, treatment is focused on supportive therapy with anti-inflammatories and nutritional support through periods of inappetence. Antibiotics are indicated if a secondary bacterial pneumonia has infected the lungs.

Diagnosis of IBR in acute cases detects the virus itself from swabs of the back of the nose or the eyes. To detect latently infected animals blood samples are taken for antibodies.

Management of IBR on farm is best done through vaccination. There are a number of vaccines available and it is best to vaccinate animals when the protection from the dam's antibodies wanes. This usually occurs from four to six months of age.

The vaccines are either intranasal or intramuscular and usually cover other infectious causes of pneumonia. Vaccination strategies are important as full protection is usually achieved up to 3 weeks after injection. Vaccines should therefore be given at least 3 weeks before a period of stress, eg weaning. In the face of an outbreak or widespread latent IBR on farm, an intra-nasal vaccine can be given from 2 weeks of age.

Marker vaccines are available which differentiate vaccinated animals from those infected naturally. Annual vaccination of all animals in the herd can be a useful part of IBR management, however on farms with little to no exposure, biosecurity and only buying in from accredited herds is advisable. Testing of all incoming animals will also help to prevent widespread outbreaks in naïve herds.

In summary, IBR is a disease that is often overlooked but can make a big impact on productivity. Westpoint Farm Vets can advise on vaccination, biosecurity and how to prevent infection entering your herd. We are looking to recruit 100 dairy or beef farms which are currently unvaccinated for IBR. We will carry out free blood and bulk milk samples then discuss the results with you and give recommendations. This project is kindly sponsored by MSD Animal Health.



| Product | Was | Now |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Closamectin Injection 4 x 250ml | £181.39 | £149.00 |
| Combinex Sheep 12.2L | £379.29 | £322.16 |
| Dectospot 2.5L | £175.50 | £117.56 |
| Deltanil 2.5L | £171.28 | £144.00 |
| Panacur Bolus Each | £11.70 | £9.55 |
| Spotinor 2.5L | £194.72 | £119.00 |
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