



### Spring News

#### Practice News

Thanks to all the clients and friends of Westpoint who attended our Christmas Quiz night, a great night was had by all. Good competition, great food (many thanks to Pit Stop for a fab spread!) and a really jolly, festive atmosphere! We hope 2020 brings good things to you all and look forward to seeing you at one of our events in the coming months!

The vets in the practice all work on a shared rota and take it in turns to be on-call. The vet on-call is your designated vet and they are sworn to attend farm animals in an emergency. Please be aware that we cover a large geographical area, much of which consists of small country roads and tracks, subject to frequent road closures and can be heavy with traffic during certain periods of the year. All these factors can mean that, from time to time, it can take a little longer to attend a call than you might have expected. We ask for your continued patience and understanding during these times, our on-call vet will do everything they can to attend your calls as quickly as safely possible and will update you should any hold-ups occur.

#### Upcoming events

We have had a couple of really successful meetings in recent months and have enjoyed seeing you all. To continue with the theme we have the following meetings coming up:

- **Wednesday 25th & 26th March – AI Course**

DIY AI can save you time and money by getting your cow inseminated at the right time without the cost or stress of waiting for the technician. This course is delivered over two days and is tailored to give you maximum hands-on tuition. Full course (both days) £566.50 +VAT, refresher course (second day only) £225.02 +VAT. Lunch will be provided. 10% Discount for Young Farmer members.

- **Wednesday 29th April – Safe Use of Medicines**

A Farm Assurance requirement, if you are due an inspection and haven't yet joined one of our courses, this will be your next opportunity to take part for compliance.

Please email [emma.roberts@westpointfarmvets.co.uk](mailto:emma.roberts@westpointfarmvets.co.uk) (using the course title as your email subject) or call 01637 889231 to register your interest in any of the above courses. If there's anything else you feel passionate about learning please get in touch, we welcome all feedback and would love to hear your thoughts.

#### 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 ends later this year but there is still time to get on board if you wish. Please contact the office for further details.

We have another project focusing 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.

#### Foot trimming

Thank you to everyone who attended our **Mobility Day** on 26th February. Vet Emily Craven discussed how to prevent lameness which was followed by a demonstration of the Dutch 5 step method of foot trimming by Phil Jones (see photo below). The focus of the day was on prevention, treatment and good welfare.

A combination of **regular foot trimming and frequent mobility scoring** has been found to considerably reduce the incidence of lameness in beef and dairy herds. Our highly trained team of mobile technicians work closely with farmers, farm staff and vets to put together the most cost-effective plan to recognise, treat and minimise lameness in their herds.

Our foot trimmers are trained to Category 1 NACFT standards and independently assessed on a regular basis. Equipped with the most up-to-date equipment, including specialised hydraulic foot crushes, their focus is always on quality trimming over speed or numbers per day. With a focus on preventative healthcare, the bulk of the work our technicians do is as part of on-going contracts, but they also carry out ad-hoc work including per head trimming.

If you require any routine foot trimming or want us to assess any lame cows or stock bulls then contact our cattle mobility team on 07921 214845.



# 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
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Spotinor 2.5L	£194.72	£119.00
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## Westpoint Farm Vets

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