

SHEEP NEWS



Autumn 2018

Ovine Pulmonary Adenocarcinoma- OPA

This summer we have diagnosed a case of Ovine pulmonary adenocarcinoma (OPA). OPA is caused by the virus Jaagsiekte and is highly contagious. It leads to the formation of tumours in the lungs of sheep and is considered a chronic wasting disease with progressive respiratory distress. However, early stages can predispose to secondary bacterial pneumonia causing sudden death despite antibiotic treatment. This disease is spread via respiratory secretions but can also be spread via colostrum and milk. The time between infection and clinical signs can vary from months to years, with disease most commonly observed in 3-4 year old sheep. Clinical signs can include:

- Loss of body condition
- Exercise intolerance during gathering
- Mouth breathing
- Increased respiratory rate and effort
- Lowered head carriage
- Nasal discharge
- Coughing

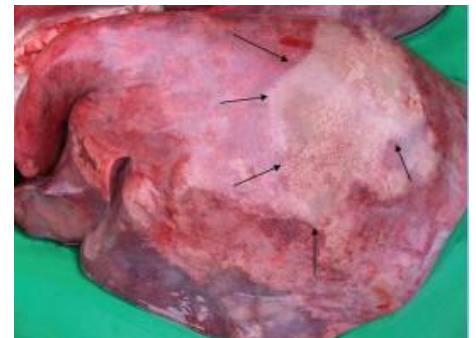
In advanced stages of the disease, a clear frothy fluid may flow freely from both nostrils when the head is lowered during feeding. The 'wheelbarrow test' may be used to identify affected animals, where the hindquarters of the animal are raised whilst the head is simultaneously lowered. A positive result is where fluid

appears out of the nostrils. This fluid is highly infectious and so thorough disinfection is required of any area it has come into contact with.



The absence of fluid during a 'wheelbarrow test' does not rule out OPA as this can be negative in around 40% of cases. The true prevalence of OPA in the UK flock is difficult to determine due to under reporting and the difficulty in diagnosing the disease. There is no diagnostic blood test available for detecting OPA as sheep do not mount an antibody response to the virus. Ultrasound scanning of the lungs can diagnose OPA in some cases. Although when the tumours are less than 2-3cm in size this can prove difficult. Confirmation at post mortem is required in all cases. Unfortunately there is no cure

for this disease so infected animals should be euthanased.



It is currently being assessed as to whether OPA can be eliminated from flocks by annual whole flock ultrasound scanning, with subsequent removal of all sheep with lung lesions. A more practical on farm approach is to regularly body condition score the flock throughout the year, and perform 'wheelbarrow tests' on any thin ewes where OPA is suspected.

If you have any concerns that your flock have shown any symptoms listed in this article, then please get in touch to discuss this further.



Ewe Nutrition

2018 has posed many challenges to livestock farmers across the UK. As a result, providing an adequate plane of nutrition has proven difficult and consequently ewe health and performance is likely to suffer unless we plan ahead and ensure good management.

The feeding period between mating and day 90 of pregnancy holds a number of objectives:

- Ewes to start at target body condition and maintain this level for 90 days
- Survival of fertilised eggs and successful implantation of pregnancy
- Development of the placenta to allow for optimal lamb birth weight and survival
- Avoid any long-term effects of under/ over nutrition
- Target of less than 2% empty ewes at scanning

It should be noted that any sudden changes in nutrition can affect embryo development and implantation. Although the nutrient requirements for pregnancy are very small at this initial stage, research has shown that a stable level and type of nutrition feeding for maintenance level is ideal for the first month after the rams are removed.

Recommended actions to achieve optimal nutrition during this period include:

- Calculate requirements and Dry matter available as a razina
- Avoid any sudden changes in a razina or feeding and avoid unnecessary handling until at least one month after ram removal
- Factor in any supplementation or changes in feed carefully throughout this period
- Carry out a BCS check of the ewes when rams are removed
- Ewe lambs and shearlings should be kept in separate groups from adult ewes. This means the young ewes can continue to be fed for growth
- Raddle rams with different colours. e.g. change them every seven to ten days to check on tubercle progress and help improve the accuracy of late pregnancy feeding.

NEXT SHEEP MEETING

When: Tuesday 30th October at 6.30pm

Where: The Cricklade Club

Topic: The discussion led by MSD animal Health will cover clostridial diseases, pasteurella and Orf.

For any non-sheep club members wishing to attend there is a £15 fee, to include refreshments and dinner. Please contact the farm office to confirm attendance.

Lowland Ewe 60-80kg

Target BCS 3-3.5

ME maintenance (MJ/day) 7.2-9.6

Hill Ewe 40-60kg

Target BCS 2.5

ME maintenance (MJ/day) 4.8-6

WATCH THIS SPACE

DFV will be launching a smallholders club in the New Year. More details to come.

Drove sheep club is also being re-launched offering a more proactive service to improve flock health and production. A meeting to discuss the new sheep club will be held on 27th November, with all sheep clients welcome. The farm office will contact all clients nearer the time. If you are interested, please contact Emily at ebaxter@drovefarmvets.co.uk

BLOW FLY ALERT

In most areas, the falling temperatures mean that the strike risk is now relatively low. However, blowflies are still active and any prolonged warm autumn weather could still result in late season strikes, particularly with the onset of further rain, so care is still required.

Further information, including how to look for early signs of strike, can be found at <http://alerts.nadis.org.uk/>

