



# Sheep News

If I look out of my window it is currently cold and frosty and is set fair for the time being. With plenty of grass left to graze and the tup's busy doing their work it is not a bad time to be a sheep farmer. This is always a good time of the year to reflect about the previous season and think about what could be done differently next year.

This newsletter shows how much is happening with sheep in the South West and with SFH. The Team have been busy providing opportunities for all sheep farmers to think about their productivity puzzles. As we shape up to

a world which will be different post Brexit we all need to think about how we can improve our productivity so that we can be in the best shape for the future. Whether it is learning how everyone else managed 2017 lambing at the Lameness meeting (maybe they should be lamb survival meetings now?) or looking at thinking about how large flocks are solving productivity puzzles at the challenge sheep day. There is even meetings for those who want to do things better with lambing course and Safe use of Medicines courses.

## Challenge Sheep

You may have heard in the farming press about Challenge Sheep, an AHDB project following 12 commercial flocks across the county looking at ewe and ewe lamb management. Key questions about age of first breeding, how we manage these ewes up to first mating and into their first lactation amongst many more will be considered. The project will follow 9000 replacements for over seven years.

Producers who take part in Challenge Sheep will be required to collect data via EID – weights, body condition score, lambing data and lamb performance. They will also be involved in several events over the years where findings will be communicated to other producers.

There are three local farms who are involved in the project:

- Rob and Anna Hawke in Salisbury and their 1000 Romney flock.
- Phil Pearce at Park Farm Axminster with 1000 Lleyn ewes.
- The Rampisham Flock c/o Gareth Beynon with 1500 ewes

**Over the** last quarter these flocks have hosted open meetings allowing shepherds to meet their sheep and understand the systems. The next point of contact is a series of discussion group meetings focusing on bitesize pieces of data from each of the flocks.

The flocks have already begun recording and the discussion groups now confirmed. Spaces are very limited and will operate on a first come first served basis.

## December 2017

- Challenge Sheep
- Liver Fluke
- Organic discussion group
- Large flock road trip
- SWHAP#2017
- Meetings & Training
- Antibiotic Policy

We hope that 2017 has been a good year and that 2018 brings sun and rain in appropriate quantities so that you can deliver on the plans you make at this time of year.



*Andy Adler*

- Rob and Anna's discussion group:** 4<sup>th</sup> January, The White Horse, Quidhampton, SP2 9AS 7pm start
- Phil's discussion group:** 17<sup>th</sup> January, **VENUE TBC** 7pm start
- Gareth's group:** 30<sup>th</sup> January, The Acorn, Evershot, DT2 0JW 7pm start

We really encourage our commercial flocks to size up to one of these meetings as soon as possible. I will be facilitating some of the meetings and there will be something for everyone.

To sign up to one of these meetings, please contact...

Places will be strictly limited and it will **not** be possible to turn up on the night so book your place as soon as possible



*Emily Gascoigne*

# Liver Fluke

Liver fluke can present in several ways depending on the level of challenge and time of the year. Typically at this time of the year sheep may present with rapid weight loss, weakness, anaemia (pale membranes), swollen jaws/faces and sometimes sudden deaths. The more severe clinical signs are associated with heavily infected pasture allowing the ingestion of a large number of metacercaria (infective stage of Liver Fluke) in a short period of time. Often Liver Fluke can go unnoticed and has been shown to cost approximately £9 per ewe as a consequence of lower productivity, reduced food conversion rates, reduced lambing percentages and poor milk yields.

### RISK FACTORS

- ◆ Does your flock graze on poorly drained pastures?
- ◆ Is there a stream, ditch or pond located within or near the pasture?
- ◆ Are there clumps of rushes on the pasture?
- ◆ Have you had a history of Liver Fluke on the farm?
- ◆ If you answered yes to any of these, your flock may be at risk.

Liver Fluke are dependent on the mud snail, *Galba truncatula*, to complete their life cycle. A high summer rainfall will increase the number of potential habitats for the mud snail, which like to live in

acidic soil and slow moving water - ditches, streams and poorly drained pastures. In addition to the preferential climates, the growing resistance of Liver Fluke to Triclabendazole is also contributing to the higher challenges that our flocks are having to face. Unlike other products, Triclabendazole is the only effective treatment against immature fluke (as young as 2 days) - these are responsible for causing the more acute form of disease in sheep grazing highly infected pastures.

### MONITORING

- ◆ Request abattoir feedback on livers
- ◆ Post mortem on any sudden deaths
- ◆ Blood sampling a group of growing lambs in first grazing season
- ◆ Faecal coproantigen test - useful from late autumn/winter onwards. Useful for testing product efficacy.
- ◆ Faecal fluke egg count – detects the presence of adult fluke only. More reliable later in the year – Dec onwards

In order to sustainably control Liver Fluke, higher risk flocks should consider monitoring and adopting management strategies to reduce the dependency of their flocks on Triclabendazole in the Autumn/winter months, whilst lower risk flocks should consider using other products,

such as Closantel or Nitroxynil later in the year. Similarly to worms, ensure treatment is administered correctly, including using the correct product, calibrating drench guns before use and dosing animals to their correct weights.

### MANAGEMENT

#### Short Term Solutions:

- ◆ **Move sheep to lower risk pastures from August onwards** – fields with no snail habitats, not grazed by sheep earlier in the year, stubble fields or alternative forages (brassicac)
- ◆ If no low risk pasture - **reduce stocking density** in Autumn by finishing/selling lambs
- ◆ **Fence off wet areas** – potential snail habitats

#### Long term solution:

- ◆ **Improve drainage** of pasture to reduce number of potential snail habitats
- ◆ **Contact your Veterinary Surgeon for the best advice to suit your flock**

Ideally, all treatment for Liver Fluke should be administered based on a known history and/or evidence of exposure. If you are concerned your flock may be at risk please contact your veterinary surgeon for the best advice on monitoring, management and treatment tailored to your flock.

*Abi Charlesworth*



Season's  
tweetings  
bleatings

 **Fiona Lovatt**  
@FlockHealth Follow

Wow! @Em\_the\_SheepVet @SynergyFarmVets just talking #sheep #tupping with @simonmayo @BBCRadio2 #everylambcounts #sheep365 #lovelamb

9:31 am - 2 Oct 2017

8 Retweets 16 Likes 

  8  16

 **Emily Gascoigne**  
@Em\_the\_SheepVet Follow

Whilst most flocks busy with tupping, spare a thought for those busy lambing. Loving the texts everyone, keep in touch, remember the magic potions (iodine and colostrum) and #everylambcounts @dorsetsheepsoc

3:05 pm - 25 Oct 2017 From Zaragoza, España

3 Retweets 20 Likes 

 2  3  20

## Organic Discussion group at Trill Farm

The autumn Organic Discussion group meeting was held courtesy of Jake Hancock at Trill Farm. We had a tour of their Easy Care shedding ewes and discussed how an integrated approach and the use of EID has helped improve their parasite control management as part of both the conventional and organic sector of the farm. The role of genetic improvement and breeding has been central to what Jake continues to achieve and this was discussed in the context of all the flocks present.

Two key points for those who couldn't attend the meeting, a reminder that all drench families are eligible for use under organic recommendations and that flocks of all types are reminded of the importance of establishing what works on your own farm and the huge importance of quarantine. Speak to your routine vet to review your parasite management plan. Worm control ends with drenching-there are a number of strategies which can be used prior to the need for drenching such as avoiding infection.



The next meeting will be in February looking at feeding the ewe and the importance for neonatal health and production i.e. how to get more, better lambs from your lambing and doing it will forage!

Many thanks to Jake!

## Large Flock Road Trip Summary

September was a busy month for the sheep team, also seeing the return of the annual large flock discussion group road trip!



This year the group headed to West Sussex to meet Matt Blythe of Didling Farms and the trip was kindly sponsored by MSD. Matt manages the flock of 1300 Lleys on the South Downs and has a wealth of flock

The farm uses EID monitoring for flock health planning, grassland management, ewe lamb monitoring and parasite control in combination with their FECPAK. The group got the opportunity to see the farm's auto-drafter in action and walk around the farm to look at grassland management. The group finished the day off with a meal at the Acorn Inn in Evershot to discuss the trip and share opinions.

Take home messages from the day were to not be frightened of flock data monitoring but to initially begin by recording a few parameters and build up a picture over time to make the most out of the data.

recording data, from 10 years of EID monitoring. Matt is also actively involved in SCOPS and other industry initiatives.

Thank you to MSD for subsidising the trip. The large flock group will hopefully merge with the Challenge Sheep Project but there will be a large flock specific meeting in the summer. Anyone can attend the large flock meetings but anyone above 800 ewes is encouraged to attend. We will be holding a

meeting in 2018 on EID monitoring and how to get the most out of software packages, so watch this space!

A reminder to the large flocks (but also other commercial flocks), the Leader deadlines are drawing near so if you are considering investing in EID or improved handling, please either contact Leader or ask to speak to Emily or Charlotte who can point you in the right direction.

**Reminder for Large Flocks: For anyone over 1000 ewes interested in a flock health planning package to include four visits a year, a PM training day, medicines discounts please contact either Emily or Andrew at the practice**

**If any smaller flocks would like their own bespoke packages, please do not hesitate to let us know.**

*Charlotte Moulard*



## SHWAP#2017

Andrew Head from Rempstone Farm Corfe Castle and Emily are just back from the Sheep health, wealth, and performance conference at the University of Surrey. They were presenting on the role of the vet for the sheep flock but also about key projects running at Synergy such as lamb

benchmarking, lamb post-mortem training, antibiotic benchmarking and flock health planning. Congratulations to Andrew for his second conference presentation in 12 months. An excellent job! Thank you to Bob Blanden for inviting us.



*Emily Gascoigne*



# Meetings and Training

We are committed to our training services for sheep farmers at Synergy and the next quarter is action packed. If interested in any of the below please contact our office to book onto a course (01935 83682)

## Lamb Loss Meetings

It's that time of year again for our annual lamb loss meetings. We have added another date and new venues this year to hopefully encourage a few new faces from our west clients! Dinner will be kindly sponsored by As well as our annual benchmarking of lamb mortalities we will be discussing antibiotic use in the lambing shed.

Please RSVP your places ASAP on 01935 83682

**Tuesday 12th December 7.30pm**

The Royal Oak, Bere Regis

**Wednesday 13th December 7.30pm**

Ridgeway Hotel, Axminster

**Thursday 14th December 7.30pm**

The Rose and Crown, East Lambrook

## Lamb Post Mortems for commercial flocks

13th February and 13th March

## Safe use of Veterinary Medicines for commercial flocks

20th March 2018

Trainees will learn about the safe, responsible storage and administration of medicines in the sheep flock. This will include learning the basic differences between antibiotic classes, anthelmintic groups and the actions of NSAIDs and when they should be used, and the importance of veterinary and SQP guidance on medicine use where appropriate.

## Practical lambing for commercial flocks

6th February and 27th February 2018

Trainees will learn about the importance of preparation for lambing time, including discussion of pros and cons of housing for lambing, nutrition, body condition scoring and what equipment is necessary. Knowing when to intervene and when to a vet.

## Parasite Management and Worm egg count course for commercial flocks

12th June 2018 and 17th July 2018

## Antibiotic Policy

To tackle antibiotic resistance, industry targets have been set to reduce overall antibiotic use and critical antibiotic use in UK sheep flocks. Critical antibiotics are those that are deemed important in human medicine. The industry has been set targets to reduce overall antibiotic use by 10% and halve the use of critical antibiotics by 2020. The key to reducing antibiotic use without having detrimental effects to flock health will be careful flock planning and vaccination use. Your next flock health plan will include information about your farm's antibiotic use and the sheep team will be keen to review antibiotic use in the lambing shed, particularly looking at preventative antibiotic use for watery mouth i.e. Spectinomycin (Spectam). Antibiotic use in the lambing shed will be discussed at the lamb loss meetings!

## Reminders....

**Time to get booked in for pre-lambing flock plans.**

Things to consider: scanning results analysis, ewe nutrition planning, parasite control planning for next year, pre-lambing vaccines and medicines use in the lambing shed.

**Flock Plans**

## Dispensary News....

**Ewe - Go is back!**  
an energy and calcium drench

1L (10 doses)  
£13.30 + VAT

**Next issue in Mar**