



# Sheep News

Lambing will be commencing or may have already finished for some of our early flocks, we hope it is a successful start to the season for everyone. With the growing uncertainties of Brexit and global warming “anti-red meat” campaigns, it can make the hard-work and long hours of lambing sheep feel even more of a struggle at times. The one resounding message that must ring through all of the hype is that we need to be resilient and efficient going forward. Lamb mortality is a huge area for potential profit-loss in our systems, and on that theme we will be holding

our annual lamb loss meetings next month and hope to see as many of you there as possible.

Many congratulations are due to our very own Emily Gascoigne who passed her final exams in October and now holds a European Diploma in Small Ruminant Health Management, our very own in-house sheep specialist! To top that she has also won a Food & Farming Industry award, for Best Animal Health Advisor of the Year. Incredible achievement I’m sure you will agree!

## December 2018

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- Sheep C-Sections
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We have a number of courses running in the New Year which are detailed on the back page of this newsletter, please book your places early as spaces can fill up quickly.



*Charlotte Moulard*

### Upcoming Lamb Loss Meetings

This month we will be hosting our annual lamb loss meetings for the fifth consecutive year! After running three successful regional meetings last year we are using the same venues again and hope to see as many familiar and new faces as possible.

On the agenda, as well as our annual lamb loss benchmarking exercise, we have some exciting news about an AHDB project Synergy has been chosen to help develop. AHDB are looking to launch an industry tool to enable vets and farmers to investigate neonatal

beef and lamb mortality in more detail, and there will opportunities for some of our flocks to get more involved in this.

We will also have some updates on our whole “Synergy flock” antibiotic use in 2018, information on our flock health packages and seasonal reminders.

If you haven’t yet returned your lamb loss survey please do ASAP, if you require a new form please contact Emily or Charlotte on 01935 83682. Of course, the challenging weather will be taken into account when looking at this

year’s results and remember we are all in the same boat!

### The meetings will be as follows:

<b>Drax Arms, Bere Regis</b>	<b>6th December 7.30pm</b>
<b>The Ridgeway, Small-ridge, nr Axminster</b>	<b>12th December 7.30pm</b>
<b>Rose and Crown, East Lambrook</b>	<b>17th December 7.30pm</b>

Please let the office know if you can attend so we can finalise numbers for food, which is kindly sponsored by CEVA.



### Forage Analysis

Ewe nutrition around the time of lambing is absolutely critical to avoid twin-lamb disease, ensure excellent colostrum quality and prevent lambing issues with big lambs. Getting your forage analysed is the very first step in



assessing what your ewes are getting and planning a diet. Whether your feeding hay, silage, haylage or grazed grass working out the Dry Matter, Metabolisable Energy and Crude Protein of your feedstuff is a great starting point.

Doing this in plenty of time will allow us to make informed feeding decisions in the countdown weeks to lambing. We have some limited free forage analysis

available so have a chat with your vet to utilise this. Remember condition scoring and pregnancy scanning are also important components in planning ewe nutrition. Getting nutrition right for lambing not only impacts this year’s lambing and lamb growth rates, it will also have a rolling effect on next year’s ewe fertility and production.



*Charlotte Moulard*

## Sheep C-Sections—Some Useful Information

With the lambing season fast approaching, it is time to start thinking ahead and preparing for the arrival of the next lamb crop. While in most cases a ewe will lamb down with little need for assistance, it is important to know when assistance is needed and when to call the vet. Close monitoring of ewes around their due date is vital to optimise outcome (for both ewe and lamb). If no progress is being made after 2 hours after the first appearance of water bag, or if straining is unproductive after 30 minutes then assistance is necessary. Intervention is usually required as a result of foetal oversize, an awkward presentation (e.g. legs/head back) or a combination of both.

Always used clean, gloved hands and plenty of lubrication when assisting with lambing – gentle handling is also highly important for animal welfare. It is critical that you make a decision quickly (5-10 minutes max) regarding whether or not to call for veterinary assistance, i.e. if you feel that you are unable to assist or that

the lamb is too big to be delivered naturally. In some cases, we will be unable to deliver the lamb (s) per vaginum, and so a Caesarean section is required. In preparation for this procedure, it is useful if you have the following equipment ready when we arrive:

- 2 buckets of clean, preferably warm water
- A suitable sheltered well lit, clean place (e.g. a shed)
- An elevated surface such as a bench or small bale on which to position the ewe during surgery
- Some rope to help with restraint if necessary

The ewe may be sedated and placed on the table/bench before the left flank is clipped and a local anaesthetic is applied to the site. The skin and muscle layers are incised, then we bring the uterus to the surface and remove the lambs before suturing up the uterus,



muscle layers and skin. The skin sutures are usually non-absorbable and will require a revisit 10-14 days later for removal. A course of antibiotics may be prescribed and an anti-inflammatory such as Metacam will be given to improve comfort levels. Ewes should be monitored in the 5 days after surgery for signs of ill-health or wound infection. In most cases, however, the prognosis for recovery and future reproductive performance is quite good provided that intervention is undertaken early, and in a clean environment.



*Bryan Deane*

## Organic Meeting at Home Farm

In November we visited Alan Derryman's flock near Sidmouth looking at his 850 Romney ewe flock with replacements. Despite the weather, we had good attendance for a meeting with a focus on lessons learnt, moving forward from 2018 and what flocks have done to build resilience for their flocks over winter. We reviewed benefits of different strategies and what buffers flocks do or don't have. Key take home messages were that (a) body condition score is king (b) dry weather can be hugely healthy for lamb growth will all flocks reporting

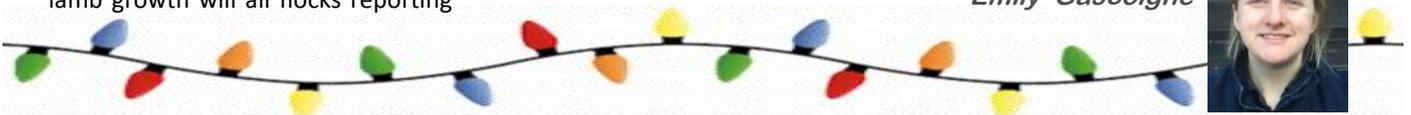
very modest egg counts in lambs for the bulk of the grazing season (c) avoid passengers- culling this year will be an investment for many, take as many premium animals into the winter where forage reserves are limited.

Of particular interest was Alan's use of EID technology on farm and his vast recording in an outdoor lambing system. We also took an opportunity to have a look at his Stabiliser cattle and the benefits mixed grazing can have, huge thank you to Alan and

Gwenan for hosting us and the Soil Association for covering the cakes.

This discussion group is held twice yearly and we are looking for ongoing suggestions. There has been interest into genetic resistance in sheep breeds and this will likely be the basis of the February meeting, but we are open to suggestions!

*Emily Gascoigne*



## A round-up from SHAWG

This year's large flock road trip saw us headed to the Sheep Health and Welfare Group conference in Tamworth, Staffordshire. The SHAWG conference is run every other year and hosts representatives from all aspects of the British sheep industry. It is a great opportunity to hear about lots the latest research and initiatives and get heads together and brainstorm ideas.

The theme for this year's conference was "Becoming the best sheep industry for health and welfare" and topics included: an update on antimicrobial use, the sheep scab picture, breeding

resilient sheep, how do we demonstrate our high welfare standards to the rest of the world and how can technology help us improve health and welfare?

Charlotte hosted an interactive session with another vet, Davinia Hinde from Yorkshire looking at how we can ensure we are buying-in good health status sheep. This generated good discussion and questions from the floor.

We'd like to say a big thank you to Elanco, who sponsored the



tickets for our large-flock shepherds to attend the day and I think the overwhelming take home message was that as we approach uncertain waters, we need ways to prove to the rest of the world that our sheep industry has the highest welfare standards and by getting more of a grip on production-limiting diseases we can hopefully safeguard and build on our UK flock efficiency!

## Challenge Sheep

We have had a busy few months with Challenge Sheep with our autumn meetings. Gareth Beynon's meeting was held in October and looking at liver fluke surveillance on farm. Key take home messages were (a) surveillance is hugely important on sheep flocks. Abattoir feedback is free and very useful for monitoring ongoing situation. Speak to your vet about other options and the most appropriate for your flock (b) Triclabendazole resistance has been confirmed in the South West and quarantine procedure for purchased animals are important and lastly (c) post-treatment testing is important to assess if treatments have worked. This could either include post-treatment copro-antigen testing or a fluke egg count but you need to speak to your vet about the most appropriate option.

Into November we met at Rob and Anna Hawke's flock near Salisbury and ran a joint meeting with Peter Bone (Trace Element Consultant) looking at supplementation in sheep. A bumper turnout of over 50 flocks meant there was lots of

discussion. The risks of over-supplementation were discussed with particular concerns regarding Copper, Selenium and even the impact of Iodine over-supplementation. We know forage analysis can be useful for assessing "likely daily intake of animals" but take care when looking at analysis- the size of the bar is not necessarily reflective of risk of animal deficiency. The merits of liver analysis were discussed and if anyone would like to discuss this further, please speak to one of the Synergy Sheep Team. Remember there are lots of sources of trace elements on farm including hard feed, drenches, some fertilisers and top dressing.

Lastly we visited Phil Pearse's flock near Axminster looking at lameness. The message can sometimes feel mixed with regards to lameness when as an industry we are asked to reduce our antibiotic usage but also being told of the importance of antibiotic treatment for infectious lameness. We know that lameness is a huge consumer of antibiotics on sheep



flocks but that when used as part of the five point plan, we can use it to reduce overall long-term level of lameness. The bottom line is lame sheep need prompt treatment. Take home messages were that lameness is a huge cost to sheep flocks (in terms of cost and welfare impact) and that a farm level plan can be hugely beneficial.

The next meetings are coming up in the New Year following scanning. Anyone can still join the discussion groups so keep an eye out for dates in the New Year.

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)

## Safe use of Veterinary Medicines for commercial sheep flocks

18th December 10.30—2.30 at Evershot (£66 + VAT)

“How do we realise full potential from our investments in medicines?” and “How to use them effectively and safely”.

It is now a Red Tractor Recommendation that one person from each farm has attended a course on the handling and administration of veterinary medicines.

Our course satisfies this recommendation and is aimed at commercial shepherds and members of the team administering or handling medicines. Lunch included.

Certificate for Flock Plan at end of course

## Practical lambing for commercial flocks

4th February or 28th February  
9.30am -3pm at Evershot (£66 + VAT)

We will discuss the importance in preparation for lambing, including the pros and cons of housing, nutrition, body condition scoring and what equipment is necessary. Using our lambing simulator we will learn how to approach some of the most common lambing difficulties, knowing when to intervene and when to call a vet

## Lamb Post Mortems for commercial flocks

30th January or 13th February  
9.30am -3 pm at Evershot (£100+ VAT)

How to approach neonatal lamb post mortems, to help you make real-time observations and decisions at lambing time. Covering the common causes of lamb mortalities around the time of lambing, how to spot these causes at post-mortem and how to try to avoid them.

## Welfare of Sheep and Humane Slaughter Course for Commercial Flocks

Please let us know if you have an interest in attending a Welfare of Sheep and Humane Slaughter Course for commercial flocks. We ran a course last year with the Humane Slaughter Association, which included captive bolt use and maintenance, including a wet-lab practical session. If there is suitable demand we will arrange another course for next year.

## Faecal Egg Counting workshop

\*\*\*We have a waiting list for our Worm Egg Counting Courses for 2019 – Please Register your interest ASAP if you would like to attend a course next year!\*\*\*

### Flock Health Packages

Our **Large Flock Consultancy Package** and **Flock Health Advisory Package** for medium-sized flocks are growing in popularity. These are pay-monthly schemes to spread the cost of your veterinary investment.

To see how this could work for your flock, please contact Emily or Charlotte for more information on 01935 83682.



### Barren Ewe Checks

Is your barren ewe rate higher than expected at scanning? Could infectious diseases or trace elements be impacting on your flock fertility? Blood sampling barren ewes after scanning can identify flock-level issues. Speak to your vet for more information.

## Dispensary News....

With lambing fast approaching, now is a good time to use Heptavac P Plus. This vaccine is used to aid in the control of clostridial diseases such as lamb dysentery, pulpy kidney, struck, tetanus, braxy, blackleg, black disease, clostridial metritis and pasteurellosis.

All breeding sheep, not previously vaccinated with Heptavac P Plus must receive 2 injections, separated by a **4-6 week** interval. Thereafter they receive booster injections every 12 months. The booster injections must be given during the **4-6 weeks pre lambing** as an aid in control of disease in their lambs.

The lambs can also be vaccinated from **3 weeks of age** and again need to receive 2 injections, separated by a **4-6 week** interval. Heptavac P Plus is the recommended vaccine for breeding stock as it provides optimal aid in control of the predominant clostridial diseases.



### The vaccine comes in pack sizes of:

25 dose (50ml)	£21
50 dose (100ml)	£39
125 dose (250ml)	£89
250 dose (500ml)	£165

Further discounts for our large flocks on the Synergy Flock Health scheme

If you have any further questions related to Heptavac P Plus then please contact your routine vet or one of our SQP's within the dispensary.

## Next issue in March