

# Smallholders' News

Castle Veterinary  
Group



Smallholders'  
Club

## Vets' Welcome

Like many of you we have been in full swing with lambing at the surgery in the last few weeks – quite literally swinging newborn lambs around the garage! Calving seems to be well underway too with several early caesareans this season; the good weather seems to have translated into large calves. Looking to the month ahead we urge those with lambs to keep their eyes peeled for signs of scour – worms and coccidiosis often cause trouble as lambs start to consume more grass. This issue of Smallholders' News re-introduces Sami, many of you will know her from reception but did you know she is also a whizz with the microscope behind the scenes!

## Limping Lambs?

We have had several phone calls recently about lame lambs from both commercial farmers and smallholders. Joint ill is a condition where one or more joints are infected with bacteria, causing an infectious arthritis. The bacteria spread to the joint through the bloodstream from the gut, respiratory tract or, most commonly, up untreated umbilical cords. Prevalence of joint ill increases as hygiene conditions deteriorate through the lambing period. The infection is picked up in the first few days of life but signs are not visible until at least five days of age, sometimes not before two weeks of age. The affected joint or joints are hot, swollen and painful so the lamb appears lame on the affected limbs. It is diagnosed based on clinical signs.

The most common bacteria that causes joint ill are *Streptococcus dysgalactiae* and *E rhusiopathiae*. These bacteria should respond to a penicillin based antibiotic however the joint capsule is a difficult place for the drug to penetrate. Often a longer course (at least 5 days) and an anti-inflammatory injection is needed. Occasionally due to inflammatory changes in the joint a degree of lameness can persist.

To prevent joint ill;

- Ensure adequate colostrum intake; 5% of the lamb's body weight in the first 6 hours and a further 5% within 24 hours of birth.
- Dip or spray the entire navel/umbilical cord with strong iodine in the first 15 minutes of life and again about 4 hours later. Achieve this using a bottle of iodine, ensure the neck of the bottle is flush with the skin and tip it up against the lamb. Or spray carefully to ensure coverage right up against the body wall on all sides.
- Maintain good hygiene in the lambing pens throughout the whole lambing period by cleaning out regularly and bedding up well.

## Caprine Arthritis Encephalitis

CAE is a viral infection in goats which causes arthritis in sexually mature animals, its onset may be sudden or progressive. The level of lameness varies but joints are obviously enlarged. Thankfully an encephalitis - neurological disease – seen in kids in other parts of the world has not yet been reported in the UK. Infected goats remain positive for life and pose a risk to others in the herd.

CAE is relatively rare in the UK. In the 1980s many goat owners took advantage of a voluntary test and cull programme which significantly reduced the level of disease. Blood sample screening still takes place and further information can be sought from the British Goat Society.

It is important for all goat owners to be aware of this disease and to remain vigilant. Many breeders are accredited as negative herds, it is worth considering CAE disease status when purchasing new goats, particularly if you intend to breed from them.

## Have you ever wondered why you can purchase some medicines and not others without a prescription?

Medicines are divided into categories.

POM-V can only be prescribed by a vet to animals under his or her care. This category includes antibiotics and anti-inflammatories so if you ask for these medications over the phone they must be OK'd by a vet before they are handed out.

POM-VPS can be prescribed by any Registered Qualified Person, this includes vets, pharmacists and SQPs. SQPs complete ongoing additional training so they can advise on the use of products such as wormers and vaccines. Sami and Jo are both SQPs. To prescribe POM-VPS medicines you must know about the intended animals and system.

NFA-VPS must be supplied by a Registered Qualified Person but no prescription is needed.

AVM-GSL are "over the counter" medicines. Responsibility for these medicines is limited to their supply (e.g. not selling excessive quantities to one individual).



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## Why drink milk?

Milk contains 9 nutrients your body needs to grow and stay healthy: **Niacin** (for a healthy metabolism), **Protein** (which builds and repairs muscle tissue and increases energy), **Calcium** (which builds strong bones and teeth), **Riboflavin** (which increases energy for exercising), **Vitamin A** (for healthy eyes and skin), **Vitamin D** (for strong bones), **Vitamin B12** (which builds red blood cells to strengthen lungs and muscles), **Phosphorus** (which increases energy and builds strong bones) and **Potassium** (for muscles and healthy blood pressure).

## Scouring Piglets

The most common reason we see young, pre-weaning, piglets for is diarrhoea, sometimes known as scour. Scour can vary from loose dung in otherwise bright and healthy piglets to severe cases where piglets are very dehydrated and collapsed, these cases can be fatal if left untreated. Scour is a clinical sign we see following a wide range of insults on the gastro-intestinal system, these may be infectious – viral or bacterial or may be related to diet, husbandry or parasites.

The gastrointestinal system also known as the digestive tract starts at the mouth. Food then moves through the oesophagus (gullet) to the stomach and on into the small and large intestines all the way until it comes out the other end! Some of the causes of scour can be due to what goes in - poor quality milk, some are a failure of the piglets absorption in the intestines as a result of the damage caused by infections, excess fluid inside the intestine due to toxins (bacteria) or a failure in re-absorption of fluid in the large intestine (damage to the gut, reduced blood supply). As a result we first need to identify the factors to be able to treat appropriately.

What can you do to minimise this problem? Ensure the piglet receives colostrum from the sow, this contains protective antibodies which can be absorbed by the piglet through its gut for the first 12 hours of life. Ensure the piglets are in a warm environment; the body has protective mechanisms when the body temperature drops to low and 'cuts' off blood supply to non-essential organs including the gut which halts the movement of food through the gut and allows the bacteria in the gut to overgrow. Finally hygiene; following the piglets birth it picks up microbes in the environment, most of them are harmless and essential gut bacteria. However poor environmental hygiene including contamination of the sow's udder may introduce a larger level of harmful bacteria compared to the harmless bacteria.

This is your club so get in touch with any ideas for courses you would like us to run. The more input we receive from you the more we can tailor this club and meetings to your needs.

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## We would like to introduce Sami



Many of you have probably met Sami in reception. Her main role is as one of our farm animal receptionists, however she is also our lab technician. She has been at Castle vets since 2008.

Sami regularly completes faecal worm egg counts (FEC). So why do we do worm egg counts? It helps us to assess your worm burden and determine if you need to worm your livestock. Hopefully with the aim to save you time and money! It also allows us to know which worms you have and select the appropriate wormer. By repeating (FEC) at scheduled times after worming we are able to test the efficacy of the wormer and help to establish if you have a resistance problem on your holding,

It costs £10.40 ex vat per sample. The best way to collect a sample is to collect a sample from several different fresh dung piles. Sami will then pool the samples (to make one sample). This is completed in house so we get the results and can advise on the same day. Remember we also split wormers down so we can provide the amount needed for your holding.

Both Sami and Jo on reception are trained Suitably Qualified Persons (SQP). This means they are animal medicines advisors; a legal category of professionally qualified people who are entitled to prescribe and/or supply certain veterinary medicines. As a result they can advise you on wormers at the counter so long as the products are licensed for that species – sheep wormers used for goats for example still have to be OK'd by a vet.