

Smallholders' News

Castle Veterinary
Group



Smallholders' Club

Upcoming Events

'Lambing Live' A lambing course with the aim to give beginners a confidence boost as the lambing season approaches. We have already had two successful evenings this year already and are running a third near Tavistock on the 30th March. *Please ring to book a space there is limited availability*

Twin Lamb disease

Twin Lamb Disease is also known as Pregnancy Toxaemia. It is a metabolic disease characterized by a decrease in appetite, depression and listlessness. This progresses (generally over 2–4 days) to blindness, incoordination, and finally recumbency, coma, and death. It is caused by insufficient energy from food, particularly concentrates, although poor quality forage also contributes to the condition. Therefore the ewe must utilise her own body resources. Diagnosis is usually based on clinical signs.

This generally occurs in sheep carrying twins or triplets in the last month of pregnancy. It affects thin ewes (condition score 2 or less), or overfat ewes (condition score 4 or more). *Please look at the top techniques column to assess your sheep for their body condition.*

Treating early is the key! Treatment includes oral administration of 100 ml of ketosaid for 3 days – this is a drench that can provide a source of energy for the ewe. It is vital to get the ewes appetite back so often offering good hay and a little high energy palatable concentrate (e.g. flaked maize). Even encouraging the ewe to eat by hand feeding may be beneficial. If housed, turning out for a few hours on to good grass, may help to improve the ewe's appetite. It is also advisable to treat the sheep with calcium as often this is low due to the lambs bone development towards the end of pregnancy.

Following this if the ewe is still not improving, and if less than 1 week before term, then it is possible induce the lambs, or to perform an elective caesarean section. However as often the lambs are not viable due to them being slightly premature these options are a last resort.

Prevent the disease by condition scoring the sheep 6-8 weeks before lambing and splitting groups based on condition, and if scanned, on how many lambs they are expecting. Thinner ewes need more concentrate feed as do ewes expecting more than one lamb. If grouping by scanning results in singles vs doubles vs triplets move the thinnest ewes of each group into the subsequent pen up and feed accordingly. But be careful not to increase concentrates too quickly as this may lead to acidosis, which can cause dietary diarrhoea. Please call for advice if you are unsure or suspect twin lamb disease.

Castle Veterinary Group Ltd

Pennygillam Industrial Estate, Pennygillam Way, Launceston, Cornwall, PL15 7ED.Farm; 01566 772371 and Pets; 01566 772211

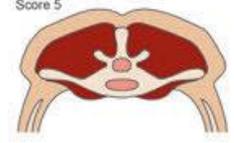
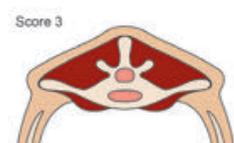
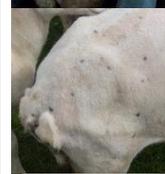
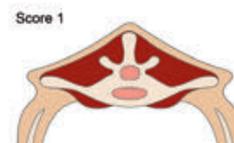
Email us at smallholders@castleveterinarygroup.co.uk

Top Techniques Column

Body Condition Score.

Body condition scoring is a useful way to assess and manage the fitness of your flock. It can be handy at this time of year to check whether lambs are fit for slaughter or if ewes are ready for breeding.

To score a sheep it is essential to use your hands rather than doing it by eye. Sheep are scored from 1 – the thinnest to 5 – the fattest. The cross-sections show the bone of the spinal canal with different coverings of muscle and fat. It is important to assess the spine just in front of the hips (the first picture) and over the tail base.



At tupping (breeding) time you should aim for a body condition score of 3.5 – this should be the fattest time of year for your ewes. Nutrition is particularly important in determining the number of embryos and therefore the number of lambs your ewes will have – they shouldn't be too fat or they will have too many lambs which they may struggle to produce and raise.