



## April 2024

### Rain, rain, go away – A review of spring at Castle Vets so far

The financial times recently reported MET office data, showing that the last twelve months have been the wettest on record<sup>1</sup>.



#### **Crypto and Coccidiosis**

Southern England has experienced the most rainfall this month out of the English regions, with the net result that very few of our farms have been in a fit state to turn out cattle. Any cases of scouring in cattle should be treated promptly – but ideally check a scour sample first! Our in-house testing can differentiate between Crypto, coccidiosis, E. coli, and the two most common scour viruses, rota- and coronavirus.

The treatments for Crypto and Coccidiosis can damage the gut lining themselves, so unnecessary use or blanket use without a diagnosis should be avoided. Scour can be painful for young animals, and alongside the crucial rehydration fluids, consider using a pain relief product such as Loxicom, to encourage them to suck and seek out feed as quickly as possible.

#### **Watery Mouth**

The weather has also put pressure on lambing ewes. Damp conditions inside lambing sheds inevitably lead to a higher risk of diseases such as watery mouth and joint ill, as bedding becomes more expensive and harder to keep clean and dry.

- Good pre-lambing ewe nutrition has benefitted farmers this year especially – ewes producing good quality colostrum minimises the chance of E. coli toxemia (watery mouth).
- You can test your own ewe's colostrum at home, with an inexpensive BRIX refractometer. The reading should be **26% or more** when colostrum is dropped onto the glass screen
  - o This reading shows adequate proteins are in the colostrum and therefore immune protection is being provided for the lamb
- If your colostrum is of adequate quality and the housing sufficiently clean, then the next question is whether the lambs are actually ingesting enough of their mother's colostrum

- Blood samples of 1-7day old lambs can tell us how well the lamb has gained proteins from its mother's colostrum. These are run quickly and inexpensively at our in-house laboratory

### Schmallenberg

Schmallenberg cases seem to have reduced significantly towards the end of March, having seen a peak in cases in January and February this year. Remember that the virus (carried by ewe-and cow-biting midges) infects mothers during pregnancy, leading to changes in the foetus. The virus can affect ruminants and camelids.

- Depending on when infection occurs, pregnancies can be lost, or malformations can occur - including the classic 'bent backward' leg joints.
- Lambs or Calves can also be born 'dumb', though other causes of this include hard births, iodine deficiency, Border disease virus infection, BVD and C. abortus infection (Enzootic abortion)



### Iodine deficiency

The Southwest is prone to iodine deficiency due to a combination of heavy rainfall and offshore coastal winds preventing oceanic replenishment of the soil. The wetter the year, therefore, the more likely it is that your stock may be low in iodine. Adult animals tend to be able to compensate and may show no signs of low iodine, however, ewes and cow require sufficient iodine throughout pregnancy to support the growing lamb/calf too.

- Low iodine leads to still births or 'dopey'/'dummy' calves and lambs
- A very quick and reliable way to check for iodine deficiency in stillborn cases, is to weigh the thyroid gland (found in the lamb's/calf's neck)
- Prompt supplementation of the remaining dams can reduce losses and increase the chance of thriving offspring being born
- Iodine levels can be checked via blood sampling ewes at any time of year, but it is most relevant at tugging and during pregnancy (as blood results only reflect recent intake)

### Sheep + Cattle caesareans

Calving and lambings coming in thick and fast is a common occurrence this time of year. We are able to deliver many with no surgical intervention! However, 17 Cattle caesareans were carried out in March, following on from 12 in February. Vets Lucy and Charlotte have been using data from the past six years of Castle Vets' procedures to carry out research on cow and calf survival rates, alongside risk factors going into the procedure. We will be able to share this information with you soon – subject to the scientific paper being reviewed and approved!



Fourteen ewe caesareans were performed in February, and 36 in March. These were mainly due to one of three causes:

- **Ring womb**
  - Ring womb is sometimes spontaneous, but can be due to lambs not correctly positioning + engaging with the cervix to aid dilation.
  
- **Vaginal Prolapse**
  - It is important not to retain ewes that have prolapsed, as they are more likely to do so again in future.
  - There is some evidence that prolapsing may be heritable (i.e. the tendency can be genetically passed on), so ideally any ewe lambs born should also not be retained for breeding.
  
- **Foetal-maternal size mismatch** (i.e. the lamb was too big or the ewe's pelvis too small!)
  - Sometimes this seems unavoidable!
  - Tup selection is key, alongside ewe nutrition
  - Keeping ewes in appropriate body condition throughout pregnancy, but especially the final 6 weeks has the most impact on lamb size
  - Pelvis measurement and scoring is currently available in cattle, but not currently used in sheep

<sup>1</sup> - [England drenched after the wettest 18 months since records began in 1836](#) (*Financial Times*)

## Recorded Lambing Webinars

In 2022, Castle Vets held a series of short webinars on lambing – covering both ewe and lamb management in several 10 minute sections. Recordings of these webinars are still available on our YouTube playlist + can still act as a great refresher:

<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLrrS7lcuxoRIpep1ynZSBjP6s2pXuDyRN>

## New Liskeard Branch – fully up and running!

As most of you will now be aware, our medicines collection box and farm office in Liskeard has moved to our new Liskeard branch at:

- Unit 6B, Heathlands Industrial Estate, Liskeard
- Next to 'In Bloom' flower shop + in front of Ugalde & Sons Funeral Directors

Our small animal surgery is fully open, meaning we can offer our farmers extended reception hours of 0845-1800 (excluding 1330-1430 daily). This increases flexibility of when fridge meds can be picked up, as well as giving more time during which you will be able to speak face-to-face with a receptionist. As ever, our medication collection box available 24hours. The access code has not changed – please give us a ring if you need a reminder of it!

Our medicine labels will need to be checked and invoiced by the team at Launceston, so if possible please call to order your medication in advance, to avoid a wait! All refrigerated products (vaccines etc) and some less common medications will still need to be ordered at least 24hours in advance of collection.

Thank you for your continued support of our independent veterinary practice and we look forward to seeing you soon.

