



Is Footrot holding your flock back?

Lameness is one of the most important health issues on sheep farms, and 'footrot' is the most common cause of lameness in sheep. The effects on the affected sheep are widespread and can reduce fertility and inhibit feed intakes. Costs of the disease can easily rack up to £6.50 per ewe. An outbreak of footrot in finishing lambs can reduce daily liveweight gains by 50g, and sheep with footrot are more susceptible to fly strike.

What Causes Footrot ?

Footrot occurs when the sheep comes into contact with two separate bacteria: *Fusobacterium necrophorum* infects first, and this then allows *Dichelobacter nodosus* (*D.nodosus*) to invade and cause the major infection and damage.



www.vetschool.bris.ac.uk



Footrot is seen at any time, but most likely the spring and autumn when wet and warm conditions prevail. Temperatures above 10°C allow *D.nodosus* to survive on pasture and straw, but only for a maximum of 10 days off the sheep.

Breaking The Cycle...

Produce a control program: the first step is to confirm that footrot is the cause of the lameness, whilst footrot is the most common cause of lameness, other causes such as scald can look similar.

Start the program when sheep are dry, just after weaning is often a good time. Examine the feet of every ewe in the flock and segregate into infected and uninfected sheep. If unsure whether the ewe is infected then assign to the infected group. Recent work has shown that a treatment and prevention plan that involves selection, culling and vaccination/treatment does really work to get control of Footrot.

Treatment and Prevention Plan

If 5-10% of flock is infected – cull this infected group

If >10% of flock infected – implement treatment plan in conjunction with vet to treat with footbaths, trimming and vaccinate.

Footvax®

Part of the plan should include the use of Footvax, is the **only footrot vaccine available**. Vaccination can help in treatment of affected sheep, and help provide long-term protection. Sheep don't produce a natural antibody response to *D.nodosus*, which means they will never develop a natural immunity, so **to prevent new infections, use of a vaccine is important.**



In This Issue...

- **Footrot** – Is vaccination the answer?
- **Farmacy.co.uk** – What's it all about?
- **Sheep Scab** – Ditch That Itch!
- **Ram Preparation** – Is He in 'Tip Tup' shape?
- **NEW - Alpaca day for WVG**
- **Bull Testing** – Has He done his job?
- **Update on Drug Disposal** – bins on farm

Bumper Sheep Issue!

Westpoint Veterinary Group

Dawes Farm, Bognor Road, Warnham,
West Sussex, RH12 3SH
Tel: (01306) 628086 Fax: (01306) 628080

Eastpoint Veterinary Services

Barrow Hill House, Maidstone Road,
Ashford, Kent, TN24 8TY
Tel: (01306) 628208 Fax: (01233) 646382

Northpoint Veterinary Services

1 Leaden Hall Chase, Stortford Road,
Leaden Roding, Dunmow, Essex
Tel: (01306) 628489 Fax: (01279) 877911



Reducing Our Administration Costs Can Save You Money!

Farmacy.co.uk, the responsible face of farm pharmacy which was launched at the 2006 Dairy Event, has over 400 businesses already registered; - mostly farms but some veterinary practices keen to make use of farmacy's buying power and, thus, **competitive pricing**.

Matt Dobbs from Westpoint Veterinary Group and farmacy.co.uk says "farmacy has a unique offering to farmers as not only can it supply a vast range of prescription and non-prescription products at published and competitive prices, it also offers veterinary back-up and advice, should that be important to a farmer."

It is simple and **free to become a member of farmacy.co.uk**. All it takes is a visit to the website and completion of the form to register. At Eastpoint, our vets will receive a copy of your drug orders so they can discuss the best possible disease solutions with you.

Working harder to save you money!

We are keen to get as many farms using the website to order drugs as possible, as you will imagine there is a great deal of time taken up in office hours taking orders by phone.

The practice then has to invoice for the product we have already bought giving 28 days credit. Buying through farmacy.co.uk you help to reduce practice administration costs and as a reward we offer most products at 10% less than standard practice prices!

As an Eastpoint client, you have access to high quality prescription and non-prescription medicines from farmacy.co.uk without the need for prescriptions, simply enter Eastpoint in the buying group section as you register and take advantage of the additional cost saving!



'Ditch That Itch' – Sheep Scab Control

- **Sheep scab** is an allergic skin disease due to the mites *Psoroptes ovis* and *Psoroptes cuniculi*.
- Scab seriously affects **welfare** and can have significant **financial impact** through reduced **lamb growth rates and ewe fertility**.
- Scab mites feed on the skin surface causing **irritation** resulting in **rubbing** and **scratching**.
- The mites are spread primarily from direct contact from **sheep to sheep**.
- Mites can survive on pieces of wool in the environment and thus infect fencing, buildings etc.
- Scabs may be <6mm and thus hard to detect - look closely at the **ears & base of the horns**.



Sheep Scab Control Measures

Reduce Environmental Cross Infection - leave pastures vacant for 2 weeks+ to ensure the death of residual mites before turning treated animals out.

Quarantine & Biosecurity – When new animals are introduced they should be treated before entering the unit or mixing with other sheep.

Dipping – sheep need to be immersed in the dip to ensure complete coverage.

Injection – discuss the use of avermectin products with your vet

Call the practice to discuss any sheep health issues

Preparation of Rams for the Breeding Season...

Is your ram in 'Tip Top' condition?

A complete physical assessment of ram health, nutrition and fertility must be made at least two months prior to tugging as semen takes 60 days to produce.

Getting rams prepared for the tugging season is vital to maximize flock fertility!

- **Complete ALL stressful treatments** – e.g. dipping, dosing and foot trimming at least eight weeks prior to mating.
- **Good bodily condition** – this is vital, aim for score 3.5.
- **Check teeth** – incisors should meet the pad and don't forget the cheek teeth!
- **Worm control** – particularly for rams in poor condition or if faecal egg counts are over 300 eggs per gram (epg.)
- **Mobility** – sound legs and feet are essential for serving ewes.
- **Control footrot** – by trimming, footbathing, vaccinating and treating with antibiotics as required.
- **Fleece** – inspect for external parasites and treat accordingly.
- **Skin wounds** – careful introduction of new rams will reduce fighting.
- Do not forget to include your rams in routine health treatments such as **clostridial** and **pasteurella** protection.



General Reproductive Management –

- Do not overwork the rams, one mature ram per **30-40 ewes**, with **15-20 ewes** per ram lamb.
- The use of one **vasectomised teaser** ram/100 ewes introduced 17 days before the fertile ram can help to stimulate the ewes into oestrus and increase ovulation rates.
- Raddling rams is a useful procedure for forecasting lambing dates and identifying infertile rams.
- After tugging care - although the ram is only used for 6 weeks of the year - **do not neglect him afterwards.**
- Prepuce, penis, urethral process, scrotum and testicles should be examined for signs of injury or abnormalities. Testes should feel smooth and firm and move freely within the scrotum.
- To extrude the penis grasp the sigmoid flexure (firm bend at base of penis) pushing up towards the prepuce simultaneously pushing prepuce downward. A further push from the sigmoid flexure area will completely extrude the penis.



Any ram that is suspected of having an abnormality please do not hesitate in contacting the practice to determine the likely cause of the problem.

Alpaca Day...

(with our nationally recognised Alpaca expert **Peter Aitken**)

This is run on the last Wednesday of every month based at Westpoint doing routine alpaca work such as **vaccinations, teeth trimming, castrations, ear tagging** and **microchipping**

If clients would like to take advantage of this and can bring the animals to the clinic at Westpoint they will automatically benefit by avoiding a visit fee. This is an immediate **saving of £30!**

Peter can also arrange to visit you on this day – given plenty of notice – at a reduced fee of £22 if multiple animals need checking. Why not call Peter direct for a chat on 07766 562581?





So...did he do his job properly? Bull fertility – a cost or a gain?

That time of year is approaching: when the bull is taken out and the success, or not, of your herd fertility is identified at the herd pregnancy diagnosis sessions!

“A normal, fertile bull should get 90% of 50 normal cycling, disease free females pregnant within 9 weeks and 60% of these should become pregnant in the first three weeks of joining”. Australian Association Cattle Vets – “Bull Fertility Advice”

So what can we do when faced with appalling pregnancy rates ...**cull the bull, cull some of the cows or both??**

The answer is that there is **no place for fertility inefficiency in future beef production** and action must be taken. Many farms may rotate bulls during the breeding season and ultimately the disease status of the herd may be unknown thus making it very difficult to decide exactly who you are really pointing the finger at!

There are simple ways to identify the culprit, for example conducting a **Bull Breeding Soundness Examination** can allow recognition of a sub-fertile bull. When abnormalities are found we can establish a basis for a clear diagnosis in addition to recognising the potential cause. Bull testing can provide us with stronger foundations when advising clients on prognosis, treatment and management of such an animal. In the last year of the bulls tested by WVG vets nearly 30% were found to have reduced fertility with 10% actually infertile.

The most important issue is that these situations can often be resolved simply and can avoid the culling of a potentially expensive satisfactory breeding animal.

“I find that not only has testing the bulls given me piece of mind but has also prevented financial disasters by identifying bulls that look great on the outside but have not been quite up to scratch in other areas.”

Charles Furnival. Brookland

If you have any queries or concerns associated with bull fertility please do not hesitate in contacting the practice



Update - Disposing of Pharmaceutical Waste on farm

In order to conform to regulations implemented by the Environment Agency it has been necessary to remind farmers of the current approach to disposing of ‘Animal Health Waste’. Veterinary practices will no longer be able to handle any on farm pharmaceutical or clinical waste due to the new legislation.

“Don’t Panic” – the new procedure is very simple and depends on the type of waste requiring disposal. In most instances a DOOPs Bin (Destruction Of Old Pharmaceuticals Bin, pictured below right) is typically required for old drug bottles. A Sharps Bin (left) can also be utilised for needles or any other similar sharp implement.

PHS Waste Management is a licensed organisation from which these bins can be ordered. All you need to do is contact them on the telephone numbers below and register as a client. A PHS representative will then arrange both delivery and collection of the bins for you.

PHS Waste Management www.phs.co.uk
Tel - (01204) 704633 Fax – (01204) 704641



Westpoint Veterinary Group

Dawes Farm, Bognor Road, Warnham,
West Sussex, RH12 3SH
Tel: (01306) 628086 Fax: (01306) 628080

Eastpoint Veterinary Services

Barrow Hill House, Maidstone Road,
Ashford, Kent, TN24 8TY
Tel: (01306) 628208 Fax: (01233) 646382

Northpoint Veterinary Services

1 Leaden Hall Chase, Stortford Road,
Leaden Roding, Dunmow, Essex
Tel: (01306) 628489 Fax: (01279) 877911