Emergency 01455 710935

# MARCH 2024 NEWSLETTER

CROSS COUNTIES FARM VETS

# Welcome

## DYNESCAN – ANALYSIS OF SEMEN STRAWS

In October 2023, we hired a piece of cutting-edge technology. Dyneval provides an easy-to-use, automated and portable instrument for semen analysis. It offers the most reproducible motility measurements (errors <5%) and works for any concentration of semen above 1million/ml (lower than sex-sorted semen concentrations).

The Dyneval is the only piece of technology, to our knowledge, that can analyse semen samples to assess progressive motility over time, analysing semen straw samples over a two-hour period. Sustained motility is critical for achieving conception, as the spermatozoa have a significant distance to travel until they reach the egg.

In advance of the breeding period for Autumn calving, last year, we analysed 27 straws supplied by numerous semen companies at our Welford practice. The results were surprising!

Average Concentration

- Sexed straws 21.53million/ml
- Beef straws 55.39million/ml

Average Progressive Motility

- Sexed straws 13.68% (Dyneval all samples average 15.2%)
- Beef straws 46.02%

After completing analysis, we ended up advising that straws from one bull in particular were rejected completely, and straws from 5 other bulls were only used with caution on highly fertile recipients (heifers). The feedback that we received after performing this analysis, was that the exercise was extremely valuable and that it positively influenced breeding decisions that would otherwise have been made unknowingly.

We would really like to hire this kit again, however there is a minimum number of samples that need to be run. Therefore**, please get in touch with your vet or the office to express your interest in analysing straws pre-spring service.**

### Schmallenberg

**A reminder to sheep and cattle farmers to contact us with any suspicion of Schmallenberg in lambs or calves. We can arrange for subsidised testing through government schemes.**

**Signs include abortion, stillbirth and deformities.**

### Nematodirus

The first case has been seen already this year, in North Devon. The infection was confirmed in seven-week-old lambs.

Faecal egg counting is unfortunately unreliable as the disease affects lambs before the worms produce eggs. Treatment should be started at first sign of disease.

Remember to check the SCOPS Nematodirus Forecast to keep up to date with cases in your area or speak to your vet.

**There have been some recent price increases for medicines from our suppliers. Most notably, Huskvac has gone up by 30% and Cepravin by 20%.**

# Maximising Lamb Potential

Maximizing lamb growth within the crucial, most efficient first 10 weeks of life involves strategic care in various aspects. Monitoring their progress from early on can help ensure they reach their full potential.

**Colostrum Management:**

Lambs, born without antibodies, depend on colostrum for passive antibody transfer. Providing the right quantity of quality colostrum within the optimal timeframe is crucial for disease prevention. Lambs should receive 200ml within 2 hours of birth and 200ml/kg within the first 24 hours. Colostrum quality, assessed with a Brix refractometer (target 26.5%), ensures effective antibody absorption. Diseases such as watery mouth, dysentery and cryptosporidiosis can be prevented with good colostrum management.

**8-week Targets:**

Aiming for a daily liveweight gain (DLWG) exceeding 250g/day is key. This results in an 8-week weight of at least 18kg for a 4kg birthweight lamb, reaching over 26kg at 90 days. Regularly weighing lambs at 8 weeks aids in assessing progress, identifying dietary inadequacies, and planning a weaning date.

For example: If a lamb's growth is <200g/day, the ewe is in poorer BCS and the grass availability is poor then consider weaning the lambs, as ewes will outcompete the lambs for grass and their DLWGs will decrease. This will also give the ewe more time to increase her BCS before tupping.

**Parasite Burden:**

Parasitic gastroenteritis remains a common cause of lamb losses. Monitoring through faecal egg counts (FEC) and daily live weight gains (DLWGs) helps assess parasite burden. High FECs and unmet DLWG targets indicate the need for targeted anthelmintic treatment.

**Netmatodirus battus:**

Special attention is required for Nematodirosis, a threat as temperatures rise, usually in late spring/early summer. It causes profuse scour, stunted growth, and high mortality rates in young lambs, demanding swift action.
If possible, avoid grazing lambs in the fields that have previously had young lambs, as the eggs can last on pasture for more than 2 years. If grazing lambs on the same field, consider:

- Are the lambs eating significant amounts of grass?
- Has there been a sudden cold spell followed by warmer weather over 10°C?
- Have you got lambs that are under other stresses e.g. triplets, fostered, on young or older ewes, high cocci burden.
- The history of the field – have there been previous problems?
- The SCOPS parasite forecast – predicts high risk periods in your area.
- Field to field variations – south facing fields will hatch larvae earlier.
- Use a white drench – weigh the lambs for an accurate dose.
- Follow up 10-14 days later with a FEC.

**Trace Elements:**

Addressing common trace element deficiencies (Cobalt, Copper, Selenium) is vital. Low cobalt is made worse by a chronic parasite burden and causes poor wool quality, pale mucous membranes, and conjunctivitis. Low copper (or delayed swayback) can occur in lambs 4-12 weeks old, causing progressive weakness in the hindlimbs. Low selenium can cause immunodeficiency, making lambs more susceptible to other pathogens, and stiffness, making it harder for them to rise.

In conclusion, a holistic approach involving colostrum management, growth targets, weaning decisions, parasite monitoring, grazing strategies, and trace element corrections is essential for maximizing lamb potential. Consistent monitoring, timely interventions, and thoughtful management practices ensure optimal growth and health outcomes.

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