

October 2026 Newsletter



Staggers

With the rain returning in the last month causing fast grass growth rates, we have seen a few cases of Staggers in the practice. Hypomagnesaemia, more commonly known as grass staggers or grass tetany, occurs when there is a low level of magnesium in the blood. It is most commonly seen when cattle and sheep are grazing lush fast growing spring/autumn grass with a low magnesium content. When dietary magnesium intake does not meet the demands of body a deficiency occurs causing Staggers. Magnesium contributes to nerve inhibition and muscle control resulting in some distinct clinical signs.

Clinical signs:

- "Staggering"- unsteady in walk, incoordination, muscle tremors/twitching
- Hyperexcitable/nervous behaviour
- Frothing at the mouth, teeth grinding, increased salivation
- Recumbent
- Sudden death – with evidence of thrashing in the area around them.

Cases must be treated promptly and further investigation maybe required. Diagnosis can be based on clinical signs alone, alongside blood magnesium levels. Treatment includes administering magnesium alongside calcium, but prevention as always is better than cure and discussing measures to reduce or prevent further cases is important.

Ways to reduce the risk:

- Supplementary feed/roughage during high risk periods.
- Magnesium supplements in feed, water or boluses.
- Ensure soil testing is used prior to application of fertilisers, high levels of potassium or nitrogen fertilisers can reduce the uptake of magnesium by grass.

We have also seen several cases with similar clinical signs recently that we believe to be due to Vitamin B1 deficiency (Cerebrocortical Necrosis or CCN)

If you are at all concerned about the risk of Staggers in your animals or have any suspicious cases please call the office on 01455 710935.



Save the date!

Our annual charity Christmas Quiz will be held on Friday 4TH of December



Our next Smallholders Club meeting will be held on Wednesday 4th November at our Welford office, 6:30pm arrival for a 7pm start

Topic - Enriching the environment for farm animals on smallholdings



What do you get when you cross a cow with a duck?

.....Milk and Quackers



Teaser Tups

Ram-Tastic Teasing: A Guide to Using Vasectomised Rams Correctly

On 22nd September, Flock Club's meeting on "Ovine Fertility" shone a light on the importance of correct timing in the use of Teaser Rams pre-tupping.

What is a teaser?

Teasers are vasectomised rams. They can't fertilise ewes, because the sperm duct has been surgically interrupted. Androgen dependent pheromones are still excreted and it is these that cause the 'ram effect' or hormonal responses in the ewes.

How to use a vasectomised ram or "Teaser"

1. 6+ weeks before the teaser is introduced: Ewes must be SEPARATED by 1 mile from ANY rams or teasers.

- Check your neighbours!

- This ensures that the ewes will enter deep anoestrus (not cycling).

2. Day 0: Introduce the Teaser! 1:50 recommended

- When the teasers are introduced, ewes will enter their first (poor quality) ovulation on day 3.

- All ewes re-start their cycle on the same day which tightens up the breeding period.

3. Day 14-16: Teasers are removed/ Rams are introduced. 1:20 recommended (although papers claim that even 1:150 has effect!).

By following this protocol, all ewes can be served between day 16-22 during their 2nd ovulation, which is proven to be the HIGHEST QUALITY. This can result in better lambing percentages in a tighter window.

Benefits of synchronising for a shorter lambing period:

- More even batches of lambs for easier management during the grazing season – efficient castrating/ tail docking, reduced vaccine wastage, easier monitoring of DLWG and accuracy of wormer dosing.

- Better care of ewes pre-lambing – heptavac timing, nutrition more easily tailored for metabolic demands.

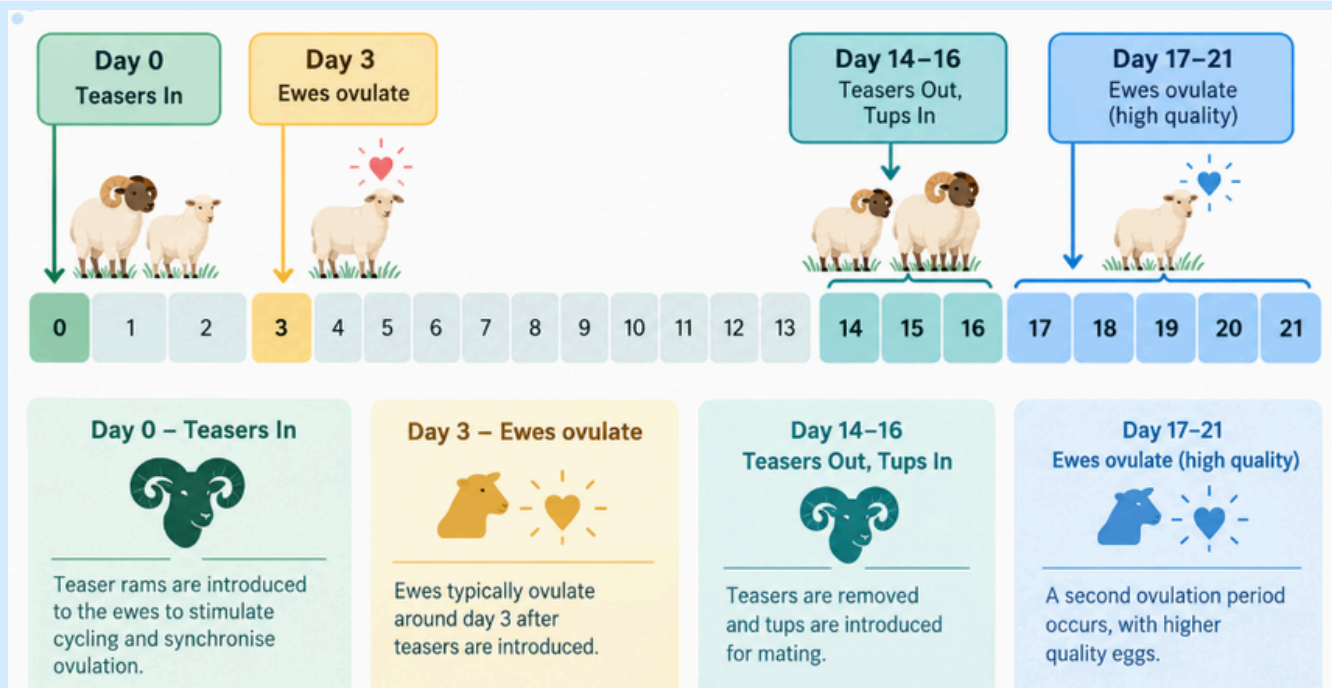
- Reduced labour costs – a huge, fixed cost in a sheep enterprise.

Which rams make the best Teasers?

- Teaser pheromone secretion is androgen dependent. Therefore, older Rams tend to work better, although vasectomising a shearling allows it to work for longer and provide a better cost-per-ewe.

- Certain breeds are better e.g. in New Zealand, the Merino is recognised as a much better teaser than the Romney.

- Bottom line: Choose fit rams with high libido and no history of disease or lameness.



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