

March 09

What a difference a year makes! Last year you were all shouting for Bluetongue vaccine and wanting to be the first on the list when it became available and this year a number of clients are asking "Is it worth vaccinating? Does the disease exist?" The answer is a resounding "YES" it does exist and, in my opinion you must vaccinate. For once we are fortunate that we are a year behind France and Holland. Last year they were in the same situation as us; they were trying to get hold of the vaccine BUT they were also experiencing the disease. As a result there were over 26,000 cases in France. The mortality was up to 63% on some farms and where the mortality was lower the ongoing fertility in the cattle and sheep was dreadful.

I am aware there were many crazy rumours about abortions following vaccination last year. 12 cases were investigated in depth by the licensing authorities and the actual cause of abortion was found in 10 cases - much higher success rate than most abortion investigations. There is no evidence of any harm caused by the bluetongue vaccine over and above the affect of handling stock - one of our clients found the milk went up after he had vaccinated last year!

I would urge every client to vaccinate his stock. Don't forget that immunity only peaks 4 weeks after the first dose in sheep and the second in cattle so it will probably be too late to vaccinate when the disease is rampant here.

Just a few reminders:-

1. 1ml dose in cattle and sheep.
2. Cattle need two doses, sheep one only. Those cattle that were vaccinated last year will only require one booster this year
3. Inject under the skin in all animals.
4. Do everything over 1 month of age.
5. Once a bottle is open it must be used within 8 hours: at present we are having difficulties getting the 20 dose bottle.
6. The vaccine is quite sensitive so ideally bring a cold box with you and DO NOT leave it in the back of your truck while you go to market!

I believe a new Swish fly repellent will be launched soon. This is an affective deterrent to the midge and should be used monthly.

Finally I beg all clients not to be the clever guy and import cattle from Holland or France - there is no compensation if they come with Bluetongue and need to be slaughtered and you will have no neighbours who will talk to you.

And now a completely different topic. We still have the odd client who uses Excenel in cases of mastitis. The reason Excenel has a zero milk withhold time is that it cannot cross the barrier from the blood to the udder - it does not get into the udder and therefore cannot treat mastitis.

At last a new product for sheep farmers. Cydectin LA has been on the market for three years for cattle and a single injection will protect cattle for the whole season. It is now available for sheep but must be used a completely different way. There is phenomenon called “post parturient rise” where most ewes release vast quantities of worm eggs onto the pasture about 6 weeks after lambing. These worms then recycle and infest the susceptible lambs. The purpose of Cydectin LA is to treat the ewes soon after lambing and to prevent this contamination of the pasture so it is not necessary to worm the lambs. However there is one big warning. If your lambs traditionally get “black scours” caused by nematodirus this will not work as the life cycle of the worm is completely different. Nematodirus stays in the pasture and hatches en mass when the temperature is right so if you have sheep on the same pasture at the same time of each year (late spring/early summer) your worm problem is more likely to be this and using Cydectin LA in the ewes will not work.

If this regime interests you (it could save a lot of sheep handling in the summer) please give the surgery a ring so we can discuss it further.

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