FriarsMoor Livestock Health

Newsletter
July 2023

NEW BUILD UPDATE

As a lot of you will know, we are soon to start work on a new site for FMLH.

The site has been purchased, we now own a 1.5 acre site, situated in West Stour on the A30, adjacent to Ambassador Pools and eight miles from our current site at Sturminster. We have been granted planning permission and are now working with Marshway contracts to get the site out of the ground. Very soon, you should start to see some activity there and we anticipate a completion date of Spring/Summer 2024.

Once the new build is completed, in addition, a pharmacy, manned by a member of our farm admin team, will remain at Sturminster Newton, ensuring that drug collections and sample submissions are not affected for those in the south of the practice area.

The new site will provide ample space for parking and meetings. It will also allow for increased storage of medicines, allowing us to mitigate against some of the effects of drug outages. Very importantly, it will also allow our team to be housed in a facility that allows them to work efficiently and enjoyably together!

Come and visit our stand at Gillingham and Shaftesbury show where we will have some 3D visuals of the new development and plans that we would be pleased to talk to you about. This is a very positive step for the business and with a pharmacy remaining at Sturminster, should ensure continuity and an improved service for your farming business. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

OVINE INFECTIOUS KERATOCONJUNCTIVITIS

By Martha Twist BVSc MRCVS

Pinkeye, snow blindness, wind blindness, cloudy eye, silage eye. Many names for one well-known condition, seen by sheep farmers and vets throughout the UK. In 2018 a study showed 87% of UK sheep farmers have experienced OIKC within their flock, and there is a myriad of different treatments being used and outcomes seen. What is certain is that OIKC is a bacterial disease. It is responsible for varying symptoms from mild conjunctivitis to severe inflammation inside the eye (uveitis) and on the surface (keratitis), which can lead to ulceration and ultimately blindness.

OIKC can be caused by several different bacteria – commonly Mycoplasma, Chlamydia and Listeria but others have been isolated, and infection is usually mixed with several bacteria being present. It is most likely to be introduced to a flock following introduction of an infected animal (whether or not that individual is currently showing symptoms). It is then spread easily within the flock by animals in close contact – e.g. when gathered for flock treatments such as vaccination or fly treatment, or at its simplest – when trough feeding. It is much less likely to be spread by vectors (flies, midges) than the equivalent disease in cows.

The most frustrating thing about the condition for vets and farmers alike, is the difficulty in controlling an outbreak, particularly because of the recurrence of disease, despite treatment.

This recurrence of disease is largely thought to be because Mycoplasma (a common cause of the disease) can persist within the conjunctiva in the eye after antibiotic treatment, even when outwardly the animal looks as though it has been cured. This essentially means animals can become "carriers" of OIKC, so they can continue to spread the disease and even effectively re-infect themselves too. Therefore, treatment that results in a clinical cure with no more outward symptoms may not actually be getting rid of the bacteria entirely.

A potential cause for this "carrier" status is the lack of options we have available that are able to reach the necessary concentration for long enough in the eye to kill Mycoplasma.

There are two products licensed for OIKC:

- Cloxacillin eye ointment (opticlox, orbenin eye) which experimentally is not effective against Mycoplasma but is effective against most other bacterial causes, and being a local treatment it reaches higher concentrations in the eye than a systemic drug.
- Oxytetracycline (Alamycin) which is effective against Mycoplasma, but is only licensed as an intramuscular injection, which would struggle to reach high enough concentrations in the eye to have the required effect.
- Both treatments have anecdotally similar effects on clinical cure, but probably also similar probability of causing carriers in the flock.
- Both treatments given together do not seem to give a better outcome so this is probably unnecessary.
- Off license products are common – 43% of treatments in one study. The safety of these is unknown, and some (such as oxytetracycline spray directly in the eye) is very likely to be painful.

In the Netherlands, where OIKC is common and there have been more treatment trials into the disease, a very different approach to control of OIKC is taken. Often, the most common approach to treatment... is to not treat with antibiotics at all.

- The general consensus is that if there is no pus around the eyes, the animal is left untreated.
- If blind, they are brought inside where they cannot wander, hurt themselves or get lost.
- If more severely affected (redness in the whites of the eye (keratitis), or any pus formation) then these animals are treated with antibiotics.
- Commonly topical ointments are preferred, rather than injectables.

- They have found this approach leads to an overall more controlled and faster elimination of OIKC in a group, immunity for 3-4 years, and less problems in lambs.

There is also research going into vaccines for OIKC, and there have been some very promising early results. The vaccines would not be commercial, but instead manufactured on a made-to-order basis conjunctival swabs taken from individual outbreaks. We will be keeping an eye on laboratories in the UK that will offer this service in the future.

Some universal points of advice for this condition are:

- Management changes to reduce transmission – for example, feeding from the ground rather than in troughs and minimising gathering of animals to avoid crowding during an outbreak.
- Monitoring individuals – blind ewes being taken inside and those more badly affected to be more intensely treated.
- Pain relief – NSAIDs should be given to any painful condition.

That being said, each outbreak should be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account what is achievable on each farm. For example, how soon the lambing season is, how feasible isolation indoors would be, whether changing the feeding system is possible, how many different groups of ewes may be affected, and so on...

Please contact the practice on 01258472314 if you are handling an outbreak on farm, or would like any advice surrounding OIKC in sheep.

G&S BBQ

We have received lots of phone calls requesting BBQ tickets, please do not worry if you don't have enough tickets. It is not one ticket per person and you will still be able to get your burger or hot dog as long as you are a Livestock Health farm client.

FREE SELEKT PUMP CLINIC

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Date - Friday 14th July 2023
Time - 11am-1pm
Venue - Friars Moor, Manston Road, Sturminster Newton, DT10 1BH

Servicing - Drop off your SELEKT pump prior to the clinic or come along on the day. The SELEKT Territory Manager will be on hand to service your pump, offer advice on cleaning and maintaining it and answer any questions you may have about using the SELEKT System.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

19 JULY

PRACTICAL CALVING COURSE

Hands on learning for how to recognise different presentations and where appropriate how to correct. Learn how to safely use a calving jack for operator, cow and calf. Wednesday 19th July 10.30am - 3pm. Longmoor Farm, Gillingham, SP85QW Cost is £100 including VAT with 25% discount for dairy youngstock group members

TBC

CALF REARING LEVEL 2

To register your interest for our Level 2 Calf rearing course please contact the farm office and we will add you to our list! Winter, date and time to be confirmed. This course is for those with experience of rearing calves who are looking to advance their knowledge to improve their rearing success.

TBC

INTEREST LISTS:

To register your interest for our next Foot trimming, AI, Worm egg count, Milksure or Mastering medicines course please contact the farm office and we will add you to our list! Dates to be confirmed.

STAFF NEWS:

We are excited to announce that Daisy will be taking over as Practice Manager as we transition over to our new build. Liz has moved into the role of Business Development Manager. Alongside Daisy, Liz will be instrumental in the coming months in helping us with the new build and all the projects that this throws up. Bridget will be joining the FMLH team as Premises Coordinator! She currently works on our small animal team.

CLIENT NEWS:

The Dean's at Melcombe Park farm have had triplets, which only happens one time in 100,000! Mum (an 8 year old Simmental-cross cow) gave birth to one heifer and when they came back to check she'd had two more! See the full post from Farmers Weekly @farmersweekly