

# Diagnosing and managing flock health issues - on farm experiences

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# John O'Connell

## Abortion Issues

# Background - farm details

- 160 ewe flock in Co. Leitrim
  - Ewe lambs also mated
- Lambing from March 10<sup>th</sup>
- Lambing indoors
- Flock expanding in the previous years
- Bought in replacements from a number of sources
  - 2012 & 2013 a lot of females purchased



# Abortion Issues

- 2013, 2014 – low levels of abortion in the flock
  - Increased gradually each year
  - Didn't act on issues – lower lambing rate than desired
- Increase number of home bred ewe lambs mated in 2014
- 'Storm' occurred in 2015 – Toxo and Enzo
- Only 86% of the mature ewes and 62% of the ewe lambs mated that year lambed

# Actions taken

- RVL diagnosis identified Enzootic abortion
  - Toxoplasmosis also on the farm
- Vaccination programme put in place for both Toxo and Enzo
- Some residual abortion issues for 2-3 years following (low levels)
  - Treated this issue with antibiotics following veterinary advice
  - Was 2019 again settled flock with health issues addressed
- Greater care taken with ewe purchases

# Mature ewes 2015 vs 2019

Year	2014	2015	2019
No of ewes joined	162	151	180
Ewes Lambed (%)	91	86	98
Litter size	1.8	2.1	2.1
Lambs reared per ewe joined	1.5	1.6	1.9

# Yearling ewes 2015 vs 2019

Year	2015	2019
No of ewes joined	58	34
Ewes Lambed (%)	62	85
Litter size	1.45	1.52
Lambs reared per ewe joined	0.70	1.08

# Conclusion

- Buying in pregnant ewes carries a risk
- All abortions should be investigated regardless of flock status
  - Samples submitted to RVL's
  - Levels greater than 2% indicate a potential issue
- Vaccination, where necessary, will not always be a instant fix

# Patrick Dunne

## Ovine Pulmonary Adenocarcinoma (OPA)

# Background - farm details

- 400 ewe hill flock in County Wicklow
- Grazed a combination of upland mountainous grazing and enclosed green ground
- Housed hill ewes during the winter to try maintain performance
- High levels of suspected pneumonia
- Significant issues with ewe mortality, low fertility and difficulties maintaining ewe BCS



# OPA diagnosis

- Ewe performance issues led to a suspected diagnosis of OPA - clinical signs of the disease
- Selection of deceased ewes sent for post-mortem which confirmed OPA suspicion - RVL
- Initial strategy was to separate and cull all ewes (and their lambs) when OPA was suspected
  - Clear clinical signs
  - Poor BCS ewes
  - Unexplained health issues





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# % breakdown of OPA scanning results from ewe flock

Scan Date	June 2018
Clear	
Slight suspicious	
Highly suspicious	4
Condemned	9

13% of the flock culled  
in a single day

# % breakdown of OPA scanning results from ewe flock

Scan Date	June 2018	February 2019	July 2022
<b>Clear</b>	83	91	94
<b>Slight suspicion</b>	4	5	4
<b>Highly suspicious</b>	4	1	1
<b>Condemned</b>	9	2	2

# Ewe pregnancy scan pre- & post- first OPA scan

Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Litter Size	1.27	1.20	1.25
Ewes Lambed (%)	80.5	88.4	90.6
Scanning Rate	1.02	1.06	1.13

**OPA Scanning**

# Conclusion

- RVL diagnosis essential first step to corrective action taken
- Improved ewe performance – more lambs, better lambs
- Less ewe mortality + improved cull ewe value
- Cost of the scanning offset over time by these improvements in flock output:
  - Cull ewe €/ewe
  - More/better lambs to sell

# Brian Keane

## Internal Parasites

# Video

# Background to farm

- Poor thrive in lambs
  - Combined with drench resistance issues (3-ML) identified through faecal egg reduction tests
- Struggling to get BCS on ewes
  - Ewes were presenting with fluke like symptoms on a very dry farm with no history of fluke issues
- Problem was deteriorating quickly prior to diagnosis

# Actions taken

- Samples submitted to RVL
- Increased emphasis on regular faecal egg counts
- Internal parasite control plan developed for ewes and lambs on the farm
- Increased emphasis on managing ewe BCS