

Maintaining a Disease Free Flock with Bought-in Sheep

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The introduction of new sheep on to the farm is the greatest disease threat to an existing flock. Any movement of stock on to the farm such as sheep been brought back from a sale or show can pose a threat for the disease status of the flock. All sheep brought on to the farm are potential disease carriers, even a single well groomed pedigree ram direct from farm or a pedigree sale. Every sheep farm is different in terms of management, disease status and the immune status of the flock and an action plan needs to be in place for the treatment and management of bought-in sheep to minimize the risk of introducing new diseases into the existing flock. Furthermore, it is also possible to introduce drug-resistant parasites with the transfer of new sheep into a flock. The objective of this article is to set out “best practice” in relation to the maintenance of a high health status sheep flock and to minimise the risk of introducing diseases with the importation of animals.



There is increased risk of bringing in disease with bought in stock.

Recommendations

- All bought in or returning sheep should be isolated from the rest of the flock and kept in quarantine for at least 3 weeks to allow for preventative treatments to be administered and regular inspections for signs of disease.
- Vaccination and other preventative treatments should be administered to bought-in animals for diseases that cannot be completely eradicated e.g. clostridia diseases or diseases that are currently a problem in the existing flock.
- Replacements, ideally, should be purchased from the one source each year.
- Sheep should be purchased from known sources and information sought from the flock owner on treatments given such as vaccination programmes etc.
- Animals that pose the least disease risk should be purchased; young replacement female stock and rams are generally less of a disease risk than older sheep.



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Treatments for Newly-Purchased Sheep

Footrot

Examine sheep before purchase and avoid bringing in lame animals.

Footbath sheep immediately on arrival in a solution containing 3% formalin or 10% zinc sulphate or copper sulphate. During the 3 week quarantine period inspect sheep weekly for signs of lameness and examine the feet for other lame causing diseases such as Contagious Ovine Digital Dermatitis (CODD).

If sheep are still lame after the 3 week quarantine period, these sheep should be kept separate from the main flock and animals not responding to treatment culled.

Scab and Lice

Scab is a highly contagious disease and is often brought onto the farm with sheep coming from marts or sales. Dipping should be carried out soon after sheep arrive on the farm and while sheep are in the quarantine area.

Plunge dipping is the most effective treatment for the eradication of both lice and scab. For effective treatment ensure the dip solution is mixed at the recommended rate and the solution

replenished as recommended. Sheep should be kept in the bath for 1 minute and the head completely immersed in the solution twice.

A number of injectable products are also effective in the control of sheep scab. Some of these products require a second treatment 7 days after the first treatment – always follow the instructions.

Lice can be controlled with pour-on products that are licensed for use on sheep for the control of sucking and biting lice, containing such as Vector, Spoton etc.

Anthelmintic – Resistant Worms

The following protocol should be followed to prevent the risk of introducing anthelmintic resistant parasites on to the farm with bought-in replacements.

- Dose with Avermectin (Group 3, ‘clear’ drenches) and Levamisole (Group1 ‘yellow’ drenches) based products on arrival to the farm. Moxidectin is the preferred choice in the avermectin group given that there are reported cases of resistance to ivermectin products in the UK. The two doses should be given as separate doses but can be given immediately after each other in the one operation.
- Zolvix (Monepantel) is a new anthelmintic recently launched on to the market. It is in a new drug class and is recommended for use only as a quarantine drug for bought-in sheep.
- Sheep should be held off pasture for at least 24 and preferably 48 hours until any worm eggs present in the gut have passed out in the faeces. After 24 hours, about 90% of eggs will have passed out and 99% will have passed out by 48hrs.
- Turn out to ‘dirty’ pasture, ground previously grazed by sheep.

Liver Fluke

If no information on the previous history of the grazing conditions and fluke treatments is available, then bought in sheep should be sequentially dosed with flukicide products containing triclabendazole and closantel.

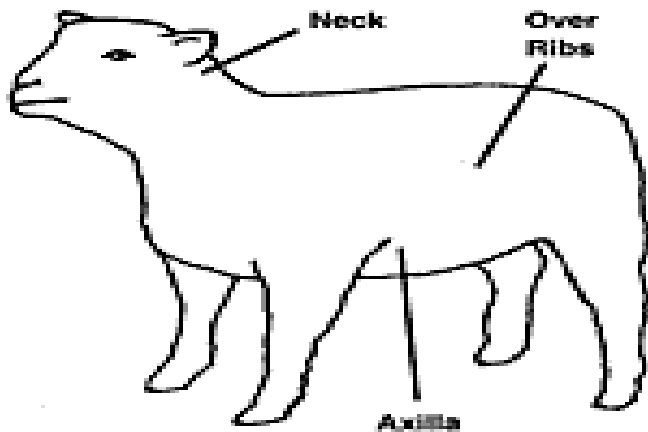
Enzootic Abortion

Where sheep are coming from an unknown or a number of sources, vaccinating with the vaccine Enzovac will help to reduce the risk of introducing enzootic abortion into the flock. The vaccine should be given at least 4 weeks before mating. Where animals are not vaccinated, bought-in sheep in their first lambing season should be lambed separately from the main flock.

Toxoplasmosis

Toxoplasmosis is not directly transmitted between sheep. However, there is a risk that bought-in female replacements may not have developed immunity to the disease and this could result in high

levels of barrenness or abortion in the first lambing season. The Toxovac vaccine is effective in protecting susceptible animals from an outbreak of the disease and should be considered for treating young bought in female replacements. The vaccine should be given at least 4 weeks before mating.



For subcutaneous injections, use a sharp $\frac{1}{2}$ - to $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch length and 16- or 18-gauge diameter needle. One good site for subcutaneous vaccinations is over the ribs. Another is the axilla, behind the armpit. A third is high up on the neck, a site that is easy to reach and is unlikely to result in lameness and muscle (carcass) damage. Needles should be switched after every 20 - 30 sheep to minimize infection and the risk of disease transfer

Clostridial Diseases

Where the vaccination programme on the previous farm cannot be confirmed, bought-in sheep should be treated as if they haven't been on a clostridial when 2-4 weeks before mating. (the vaccine doesn't need to be given before mating) .