# RUMINANT SUMMER 2024 NEWSLETTER

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## GROWING LAMBS AT GRASS

Spring lambing flocks should be aiming for high growth rates on grass using a combination of good grass utilisation, managing nutrition, and controlling disease. This is the most economical method of putting weight on lambs.

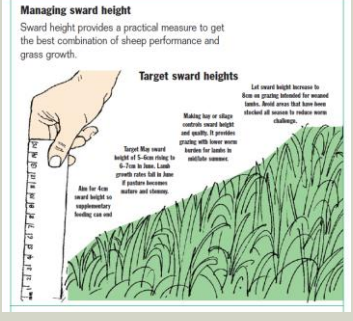
### Utilising Grass Effectively

Give careful attention to grass condition (particularly the sward height) both before and after weaning. Ewes grazing grass under 4cm will require supplementary feeding (forage or concentrate). This is particularly important to maintain milk yield and so prevent mastitis in the ewes – most often caused by hungry lambs damaging the udder.

Aim for an optimal sward height of 4 to 8cm in the early summer for maximum energy intake from the quantity of grass eaten. Fertilise grass as required and monitor pH as acidic soil will reduce grass growth.

Weaning can occur from 12 to 14 weeks old. After weaning, lambs do best with a sward height of 8cm. If this is available, they can gain 1kg a week at grass with no supplementary feeding.

Avoid poaching of fields and control weeds. Both these will reduce the available grass growing area and have an impact on grazing quality later in the season.




### Managing Nutrition

Be aware of when supplementary feeding is required. Notably when sward heights are below 4cm or when ewes require extra energy. This includes those feeding triplets, or shearlings who are still growing.

Creep feeding lambs can increase growth rates and/or counteract low grass quality or availability. Creep feed is fed from turnout to weaning can increase 14-week weights by approximately 1kg.

Weaning is a crucial opportunity for maximising production – both for a smooth transition for lambs and for allowing ewes to regain condition before tupping time. Lambs should be gaining at least 250g/day for the first eight weeks of life and at least 200g/day after. If lamb growth rates reduce below this or if ewe body condition is too low, then weaning is indicated.

**Factors to consider when deciding on a weaning date:**

| Factors To Consider | Wean | Don't Wean |
|---|---|---|
| Ewe BCS | 2 | 3+ |
| Grass Availability | Poor | Good |
| Lamb Growth | <200 g/day | >200 d/day |
| Lamb Age | >12 Weeks | <10 Weeks |

Do not change diets suddenly - always gradually change diets over two weeks. This is particularly important during and after weaning. Lambs should be weaned onto a pasture that they are familiar with, but out of sight and sound of the ewes.

Minerals and trace elements should be supplemented where required – for example, ewes may need magnesium supplementation to reduce cases of staggers, and lambs will always need drenching with cobalt at weaning.

By Ellie Button

# WORMING CATTLE AND SHEEP

The main types of parasites on pasture is roundworms (including Lungworm and Nematodirus) alongside liver fluke.
High burdens cause weight loss, scour, and low immunity- this makes stock more susceptible to other diseases and results in serious welfare and economic implications. The most susceptible animals are first time grazers, due to having no previous exposure and immunity. However, adults can also suffer parasite burdens if they are immunocompromised.

**Lungworm (*Dictyocaulus viviparous*)**
The best way to prevent lungworm burdens in first-time grazers is to use the lungworm vaccine (Huskvac). Huskvac should be used 6-week pre turn out with a second dose 4 weeks later. Ideally, first-time grazers should then be turned out onto pasture with a low burden of lungworm. This will help to establish immunity for future seasons.

**Nematodirus battus**
*Nematodirus* typically affects young lambs between 4 and 12 weeks old. It lies dormant over winter on pasture from last year's lambs and recrudesces when temperatures rise over 10$^{o}$c after a cold period.
Faecal egg counts (FECs) are not always useful for detecting *Nematodirus* as gut damage occurs before eggs are shed in faeces. For this reason, we recommend monitoring the SCOPS forecast to see when *Nematodirus* is on the rise www.scops.org.uk/forecasts/nematodirus-forecast/). When this occurs, we will usually suggest a white wormer in lambs around the age of 6 weeks. This is especially important when using fields that housed last year's lambs.

**Other Roundworms**
This includes those worms that cause parasitic gastroenteritis (PGE). This is usually seen in young lambs and calves over the Spring and Summer months. Checking FECs and monitoring weight loss in flocks/herds is a good way of tracking parasite burdens. If worming is indicated, try to use yellow and clear wormers as they tend to be the most appropriate for controlling burdens at pasture.
If you have any concerns or suspect resistance to your wormers, please do not hesitate to contact the practice.

By Lydia Cotton

# SUMMER DISEASES

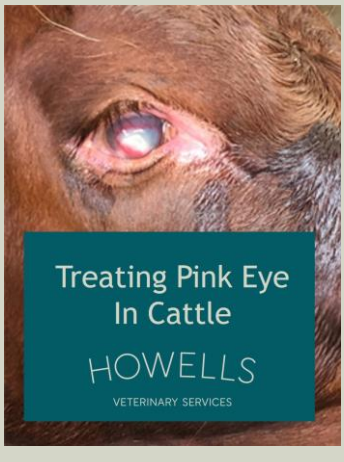
Once the adrenaline of Spring calms and we start to approach Summer, certain diseases become more prevalent. Here are a few to consider:

**Pink Eye or Infectious Bovine Keratoconjunctivitis (IBK)**

Pink Eye is caused by a bacteria that is spread by flies. It is most prevalent in beef cattle and youngstock seem to be more susceptible. It is highly contagious and causes inflammation of the cornea and conjunctiva of the eye.

Clinical signs may vary between animals.

- One eye or both may be affected.
- Initial signs include conjunctivitis, teary/watery eye, twitching or spasming of the eyelid.
- Cattle seen scared of the light (photophobia)
- Later, a white spot in the centre of the eye will become visible. This can develop to cover the whole surface of the eye and turn a white colour.




Treatment

Animals should be isolated and fly control applied to the whole group.

Antibiotics such as Alamycin LA and Draxxin are excellent for treatment.

Anti-inflammatory medication such as Meloxidyl can aid recovery.

Topical treatments such as Opticlox can be applied directly into the eye and repeated after 48-72 hours if necessary.

Injections into the eyelid can be performed by a vet but longer withdrawal times do apply.

Please contact the surgery for more information about this.

By Sinead Buckenham

**Flystrike**

Flystrike is a potentially fatal condition and occurs when flies lay their eggs on sheep wool or skin where the maggots will hatch. These then feed on the sheep flesh causing injury and potentially death if not caught in time.

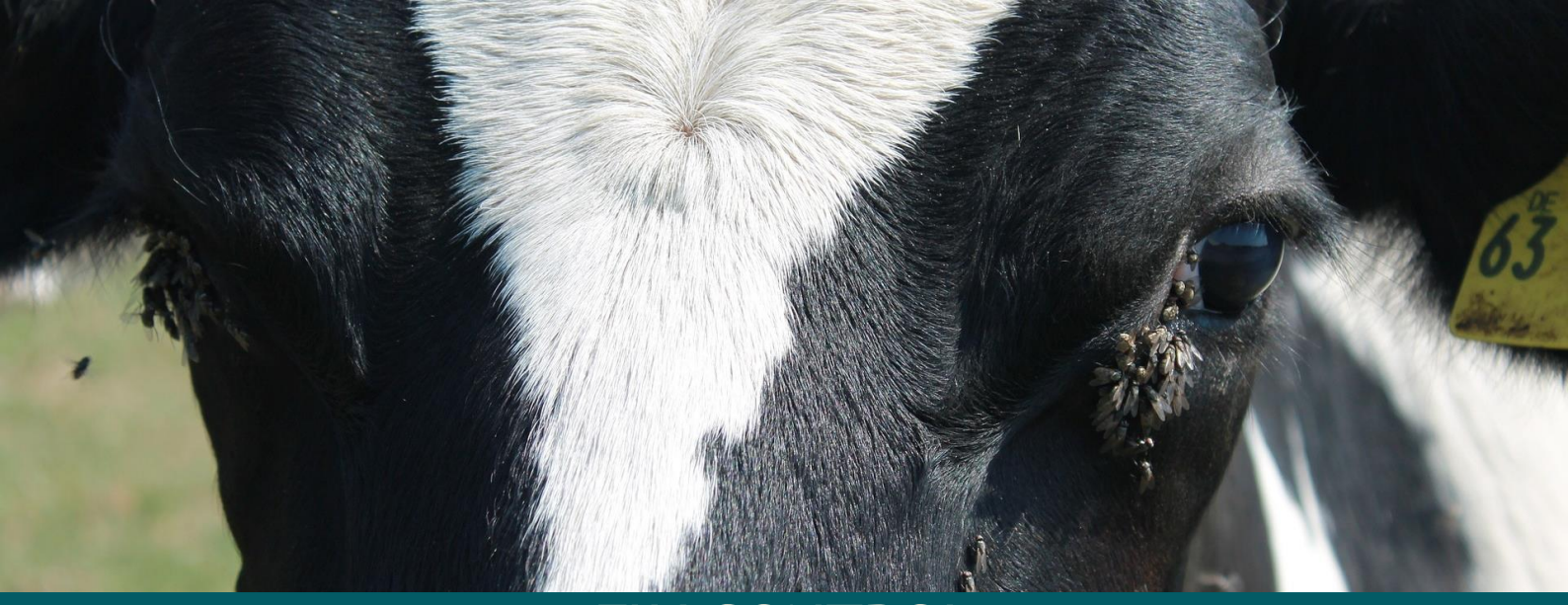
Factors contributing to flystrike include:

- Warm and humid weather conditions
- Poor hygiene- scour or dirty wool
- Longer denser wool
- Injuries including cuts and wounds
- Lameness (especially legions caused by foot rot and CODD)

Prevention includes shearing in times of warmer weather, routine fleece inspection, fly control, lameness control, hygiene and wound management.

Treatment

Isolate affected animals and clip the affected areas. Clean these areas thoroughly with water and treat any wounds. Anti-inflammatory treatment is recommended. In some cases, antibiotics will be necessary. Fly treatment should be applied to healthy tissue to stop remaining larvae from hatching.



# FLY CONTROL

**Do you have a plan in place for fly control this coming season?**
Flies cause a serious nuisance to both livestock & humans. They cost the livestock industry thousands in both control measures and loss of production.

A female fly can lay up to a thousand eggs in a little as ten days during peak season. Due to this rapid life cycle, infestation can occur quickly making it crucial to act early in the season before problems arise. Even if you're only seeing a small number of adult flies now, be aware that a much larger number of larvae and eggs are already developing on the farm.

**Here is where we can help using Parasitic Fly control!**
The Biowasp is a parasitic mini wasp which controls flies in and around livestock units without the use of insecticides and chemicals.
Biowasps naturally control flies by targeting fly pupae in and around farm buildings, concentrating on breeding grounds such as straw bedding or dry manure. They target the housefly; the lesser house fly and the stable fly. These three species represent about 95% of the nuisance flies present on the farm

They work by drilling a small hole inside the pupae of a nuisance fly. This is where they lay their eggs. These eggs will develop into a parasitic mini wasp larvae, which will feed on the contents of the fly pupa. A new mini wasp will grow inside the fly pupa about three weeks after parasitisation.
Once a fly pupa has been parasitised, only mini wasps can hatch from it. This breaks the life cycle of the fly whilst increasing the population of the beneficial biowasps.

We have been using this method for the last couple of years and have received both great feedback and results!

Scan the QR to see them in action!

**Please contact the practice for any further enquiries.**
**Prevent flies from overtaking your farm and start introducing beneficials early**

By Amelia Newby


Download Opti-Lix High Energy offers a full complement of essential minerals, vitamins and trace elements to balance any deficiencies found in grazing and forages all year round. Our team of advisors would be happy to offer further information and help on products to help keep stock fit and healthy, call us on 01374 823678 (option 2)

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