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Spring 2025 Newsletter

Spring has arrived...

As the days grow longer and the weather warms up, we're excited to welcome Spring at The Livestock Clinic. Spring is our busiest time of the year, bringing new life and a lot more sleep deprivation! It's also a great time to check in on the health and well-being of your animals. Read on for some important tips for seasonal care, as well as updates on what's happening here at the practice.

Best wishes,

[The Livestock Clinic](#)

New Additions to the Team:

Molly has recently joined the team as our farm technician and office help. After graduating from university in 2023, she has spent the last year travelling and is now keen to start working in farm animal practice. Molly grew up on a mixed farm in West Sussex and enjoys working with all livestock.

Please ring or email (07912281994, info@thelivestockclinic.co.uk) to book her for:

- Help with Husbandry jobs
- Dagging and crutching
- Fly strike prevention
- Drenching/bolusing



Colostrum – Liquid Gold

Colostrum is the key factor to ensure the best chances of survival in the critical first days and weeks of life for all neonates of ruminant species. The colostrum is a vital energy source and provides **all the antibodies** neonatal ruminants require to establish their immune system and without it, they cannot defend themselves from disease. There is also evidence in cattle suggesting calves that failed to receive sufficient colostrum with have a poorer productive performance in later life.

Nearly half of all lamb losses occur within the first 48 hours of life associated with septicaemia following inadequate colostrum intake, starvation and hypothermia.

A recent study into suckler calves found 1 in 7 calves sampled had FPT (Failure of passive transfer, meaning calves had not received any colostral antibodies).

Colostrum Quality:

Not all colostrum is made equal. The quality of the colostrum including fat, protein and antibody content all have a huge impact on survival rates. Ensuring breeding females are in the correct body condition is vital – monitoring of this doesn't start in the weeks before lambing or calving but back before mating occurs. Animals which are well under the optimum condition should not be selected for breeding.

Ewe nutrition is thought to have the largest impact on colostrum quality; concentrate feed space, silage crude protein and the supplementation of concentrates having the largest impact.

Measuring Quality:

Assessing of colostrum quality using a Brix refractometer is a very common practice on cattle dairy farms, however it is more rarely used with beef cattle and sheep.

Colostrum quality can be tested and should be 26.5% IgG for lambs and 22% in cattle.

AHDB website has more information on how to carry this out: <https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/using-a-brix-refractometer>



Source: Using a brix refractometer. AHDB. <https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/using-a-brix-refractometer>

Colostrum Quantities and Timing: (General rules)

Ability to absorb the antibodies decreases rapidly after birth and by 24 hours almost no antibodies will be absorbed.



Lambs:

- 200 ml/kg of colostrum in the first 24 hours. Aka 4 kg lamb = 800ml
- 100 ml/kg within the first 6 hours. 4kg lamb = 400 ml
- 50 ml/kg at their first feed. 4kg lamb = 200 ml

Calves:

- 10% of bodyweight within 6 hours of birth (across split feeds). Aka 40kg calf – 4L.
- Half of this within the first 2 hours – abomasal capacity only 2-3L.



Colostrum Substitutes:

Lambs:

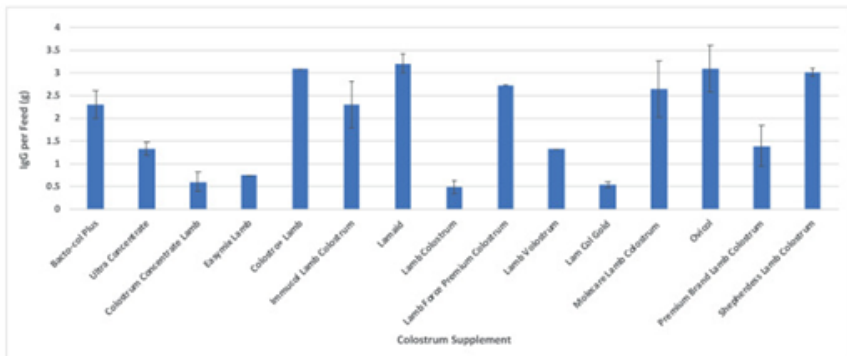
- Colostrum from another ewe in the flock – fresh or frozen.
- Pooled cows' colostrum – some cows' colostrum has been found to contain antibodies which cause a breakdown of red blood cells in sheep so pooling reduces risk.
- Artificial colostrum - last resort

Calves:

- Fresh colostrum should be fed to calves within one hour of collection or stored in the fridge or freezer. Colostrum will keep in the fridge (4°C) for up to seven days.
- Frozen colostrum (-18 to -20°C) should be used within six months.
- Artificial colostrum - last resort.
- Hygiene is also essential during both feeding and collection/preparation of the colostrum, contamination with harmful bacteria preventing absorption of antibodies through the gut lining. Harvest with clean hands or gloves and use clean sealable containers – store in batches as it cannot be refrozen.
- Defrost and heat in a warm water bath and don't heat above 40c – using a microwave or boiling water will damage the antibodies making it ineffective.
- Know the disease status of your cows. Do not collect colostrum from cows that are positive for Johne's disease.

Colostrum Replacer / Supplements:

Many products are sold for use as colostrum alternatives – colostrum replacers are a substitute for maternal colostrum whilst supplements are to be used as an addition to maternal colostrum not as a replacement. A study in 2020 of lamb colostrum supplements demonstrated a large variability in IgG (antibody) levels between commercially available



Source: Bond, C. (2020) 'Evaluation of lamb colostrum supplements', *Veterinary Record*, 187(11). doi:10.1136/vr.105763.

colostrum supplements. See table below:

Other products can also be easily mistaken for colostrum substitutes such as energy boosting oral drenches for lambs, probiotics and pastes. These will not offer the same crucial antibodies, fats and proteins that a good quality ewes' colostrum provides so should not be used as a substitute to replace colostrum intake.

Plasma Collection and Transfusion for Failure of Passive Transfer in Cria.

Are you prepared for a sick Cria?

Unpacking is nearly upon us, and it is important to plan thoroughly for the new arrivals.

Cria need sufficient maternal colostrum to give them the antibodies they need to fight off infection.

Not getting enough quantity or quality of colostrum (and therefore antibodies) is known as failure of passive transfer (FPT).

Cria need to drink 5% of bodyweight in the first 6 hours of life (10-15% within the first 24 hours). The first 8-12 hours are critical, after which the gut wall closes to absorption of IgG. Ensuring that cria are up and suckling quickly is vital. Cria should be suckling within 2-4 hours of birth but usually this is much sooner. Colostrum substitutes can be given via bottle or stomach tube, whole goats colostrum is the next best but cow colostrum can be used. Ensuring that any colostrum comes from farms that are free of the main diseases e.g. BVD and Johnes. Generic powdered colostrum is not a suitable alternative and should not be relied upon for passive transfer of antibodies.

Talk to us for recommendations of colostrum replacers.

Weigh cria at birth and then daily for the first 14 days of life. Often the only early signs of disease are a slowing or plateauing of weight gain. This can occur a few days before other overt clinical signs become apparent and severe illness can be averted if they are seen at this early stage. Normal daily weight gain ranges from 250-500g.

Measuring antibodies at 24-48 hours old (optimum 36 hours) is the only way of confirming that the cria has adequate immunity for the first few weeks of life. This is done via blood test and should be considered for any cria where there is a question mark over colostrum intake.

A plasma transfusion is required for any cria with FPT. Transfusing cria as early as possible after FPT

has been identified gives the cria the best chance of survival. If it is left until clinical signs of infection are present, then prognosis is much poorer.

Plasma transfusions require an intravenous catheter to be placed and a slow transfusion of a weight-based quantity of plasma.

Plasma transfusions can only happen if there is frozen plasma available on farm at the time. This takes time to process and requires blood donation from healthy adult alpacas.

The collection process involves taking 450ml blood from a donor alpaca, ideally a calm 2–10-year-old castrated male or non-pregnant female. They need to be in good body condition (6/10 and at least 75kg), up to date with vaccinations and have no other health concerns. A vaccine booster 3 weeks pre donation is advisable.

As plasma can only be used on the farm of origin it is worth having a couple of bags available in the freezer (in emergencies plasma can be sourced from the dam's farm of origin)

If you have not organised blood collection for plasma, please do ring the practice to discuss options.



Timeline of Procedures in Lambs/Kids:

The timeline of the following procedures is almost as important as the procedures themselves. Making sure you get them done and dusted within the guided time frames will prevent you from getting headaches later down the line.

Navel Dip: Immediately after birth, repeated 6 hours later.

An appropriate solution such as 10% iodine should be used to dip the navel and cord entirely. A spray can be used but dipping is preferred as it ensures no areas are missed. The dip cup should be cleaned and disinfected regularly.

Ear tagging: Indoor-reared lambs/kids need to be tagged within 6 months and outdoor-reared lambs/kids within 9 months or before they are moved off the holding. Ensure your kit is working correctly and both tagger and tag is disinfected before use. Tagging may be easier when the lamb is older as the ear grows. It is essential that the tag is placed in the correct area to avoid veins/arteries and cartilage. Going through one of these, especially cartilage, increases chance of infection and complications. The tag should also be placed about halfway up the ear (see figure. 1)

How to find Positioning tags

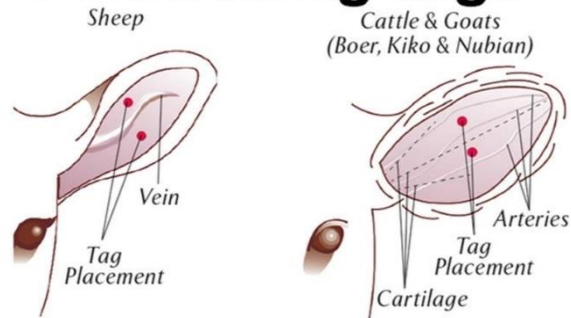


Figure 1 Where to correctly place ear tags (Premiere1Supplies)

Castration: By UK law, castration by rubber band can only be performed under 7 days old. Surgical castration should only be performed by a vet and so the timeframe is more flexible. Only a vet can perform a castration after 3 months of age (2 months in calves). Burdizzo castration can be performed up to 3 months in lambs/kids and up to 2 months in calves. Depending on the purpose of the animal, age of castration can widely vary. New studies suggest pet lambs and kids could benefit from waiting until 6 months for castration as it could decrease the chance of the male getting 'blocked' with urinary stones later down the line.

Tail Docking: Tail docking by rubber band can only be performed on kids/lambs under 7 days old. It is advised not to perform this in the first 24 hours of life to not interfere with mother-lamb/kid bond and colostrum intake.

Disbudding: 3-7 days is ideal depending on the breed but less than 2 weeks is acceptable. However the sooner the better, as the sinus hole starts to grow into the bud making chances of scurs and complications higher. Disbudding can be done as soon as horn 'buds' are present. Dairy goat breeds tend to show these earlier while other breeds such as pygmy goats will only show them a little later.

Points to consider:

Ensure your ewes are up to date with vaccinations prior to lambing as this ensures the lamb/kid obtains maternal antibodies against diseases that are more likely to occur with open wounds such as tetanus. Closer monitoring is required in warmer periods as there is a higher likelihood of flystrike.

Administration of Meloxicam (eg Metacam, animeloxan) at least an hour before the painful procedure is highly recommended and has been shown to reduce the growth check associated with castration.

If you are planning on booking in your goat kid/s to be disbudded, multiple procedures can be performed at the same time for example castration and ear tagging as the kid will be heavily sedated.

LABORATORY INFORMATION / NEWS.

We are beginning to enter another challenging year for potential parasitic issues. As the weather improves, we turn to considering the value of trying to reduce any unnecessary worm resistance and to plan our farm specific flock / herd management situations, therefore following best practice, and responsible use of medicines.



We are soon entering a risk period for Nematodirus spp, and as this often coincides with young lambs consuming greater quantities of grass which in turn, following a cold spell and then when the temperature rises to over 10degrees, this then triggers a mass hatch!

To assist in counteracting a potential problem one can;

- Discuss with your Vet to ascertain specific situations on your holding /farm.
- Reduce general stress levels, poor milk uptake /triplets/ foster/ cade lambs.
- Try not to graze lambs on pasture that had lambs last year.
- Check the SCOPS /COWS website- <https://www.scops.org.uk/forecasts/nematodirus-forecast/>

WHATSAPP

*****IMPORTANT*****

Please do not use whatsapp for urgent requests or enquiries

Please avoid ringing using whatsapp as these calls cannot be answered by the office

To book a visit please ring (the old fashioned way i.e. not via Whatsapp) the office (07912281994) to ensure your request is dealt with promptly.

Please continue to use Whatsapp to keep your vet updated on cases and ask non-urgent questions.

Whatsapp is not monitored 24/7

If you have not had a response please ring the office in the old fashioned way