



# Tysul Vets Newsletter

## February 2016

### Ewe abortions

by Helen Phillips, VetMB BA MRCVS)

#### What to do when a ewe aborts?

1. Remember pregnant women should not be around lambing ewes, both of the main causes of abortion can be spread to humans: Extra care and disinfection is required
2. Individually pen the ewe away from the rest of the flock and mark her clearly
3. Remove any bedding contaminated with fetal fluids-disinfect the area where she lambed
4. Is the ewe sick? Ring for advice if concerned, if the ewe is well keep separate from the other ewes until there is no vaginal discharge
5. Using gloves place the aborted material + placenta in separate sealed bags
6. If you want to investigate the cause of the abortion ring us and we can arrange for you to send the lamb and placenta to the lab for investigation

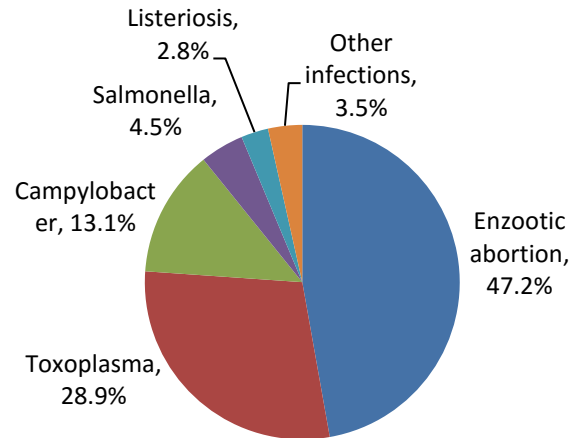
#### Why it is important to investigate abortion?

- Lamb losses : resorption and abortion can significantly lower lambing percentages and hence overall profits for the farm
- Knowing what the cause of abortion is can help you tackle the problem both at this lambing and help you control the problem next lambing
- Different causes need to be tackled differently: now and for next year, so knowing what's happening in the flock can help us to make the most appropriate plan for your farm



#### Causes of abortion

- There are many cause of abortion in ewes(infectious and non-infectious) but over 75% of abortions are found to be caused by toxoplasma and *Chlamidophila abortus* (enzootic abortion)



### Causes of abortion in ewes

(Lab submissions 1996-2003)

### Hands on Lambing Evening – Tuesday 23rd February 2016 at 7.00pm at Tysul Vets

#### Would you like some experience or practice at the hands on jobs needed during lambing?

As we were oversubscribed for our last event we are hoping to run another evening subject to numbers.

The event will include tuition and guidance as you have a go at correcting problem lambings, stomach tubing lambs, giving intra-peritoneal glucose injections and harnessing vaginal prolapses. Protective clothing advised!

There will also be a short talk on problems around lambing e.g. twin lamb disease, metritis, joint and naval ill, and neonatal diarrhoea. This is a great chance for you to chat to our vets about any problems which you may envision and for us to answer any questions which you may have. There will also be opportunity to stock up on any equipment or drugs which you may need.

Please phone us on **01559 363318** to book a place or email Shirley at [tysulvets@gmail.com](mailto:tysulvets@gmail.com).

	<b>Enzootic abortion (Chlamidophila)</b>	<b>Toxoplasma</b>
<b>Type of infection</b>	Bacteria	Coccidial type organism
<b>Source of infection</b>	Abortion material Discharge from aborted ewes Lambs born alive can be affected from birth	Oocyst passed in faeces of young cats. Contaminated pasture + feed
<b>What effects does it have?</b>	Ewes and lambs affected at lambing. Infection remains dormant (for up to 2 years) until 3 weeks before lambing, where it invades the placenta: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh abortions in last two weeks of pregnancy</li> <li>• Weak lambs</li> </ul>	Depending on when ewes are exposed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reabsorption (barren rates increased)</li> <li>• Abortion at any stage</li> <li>• Mummified lambs</li> <li>• Weak lambs</li> </ul>
<b>What will happen with the rest of the flock?</b>	Ewes exposed last year likely to abort. Ewes not previously exposed will become infected with the organism remaining dormant until their next pregnancy	Not infectious between ewes. If others exposed at the same time, more abortions will occur
<b>What will happen next year?</b>	If this is your first year of abortions due to enzootic abortion, an abortion storm may occur next year. If you have had previous abortions due to this disease may see a similar level next year	Ewes who have been exposed last year will be immune, replacement may not be immune so can be affected.
<b>What can I do now?</b>	Inject ewes left to lamb with long acting Oxytetracycline can reduce losses but will not prevent all losses Do not foster lambs ewe lambs onto aborted ewe	Little you can do in the face of an outbreak: Infeed coccidiostats may be of limited use?
<b>What do I need to do next year?</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cull ewes that aborted previously, risk that these ewes will shed at next lambing</li> <li>2. Vaccinate whole flock with Enzootic abortion vaccine in first year. (you may still see abortions in ewes the year after vaccination, these are ewes exposed to the disease the lambing before vaccination was started as these already have the disease dormant inside them, but vaccination reduces the number of ewes who are likely to abort)</li> <li>3. Vaccinate replacement ewes every year</li> </ol> Typically one vaccine is required for the lifetime of the ewe	Vaccination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can vaccinate whole flock and replacement next year</li> <li>• Older ewes are more likely to have been exposed so could just vaccinate younger half of the flock if high numbers/costs a worry</li> </ul> Coccidiostats (E.g Deccox) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In feed coccidiostats can be used to control development of toxoplasmosis</li> <li>• Can be a problem if it is unclear when most likely exposed to the disease as may have to feed coccidiostats for long periods: cost/benefit?</li> </ul>

**Watch out for a reminder about abortion vaccination this summer!**

**Vaccine needs to be given when ewes are not pregnant and at least 4 weeks before tupping.**

## Bloat in young calves

(By Annwen Richards, BVSc, MRCVS)

Bloat is an over distension of the rumen (1st stomach) or abomasum (4<sup>th</sup> stomach) of a calf.

### Causes of bloat:

Milk spilling into the rumen and fermenting/putrefying

Gorging on rapidly fermentable feed

Obstruction of the entrance - oesophagus (food pipe)

Obstruction of the exit – blockages in other stomachs, intestines and colon



Ears back, eyes wide open seen in calf with bloat  
Figure I from [www.veted.ac.uk](http://www.veted.ac.uk)

### The importance of the oesophageal groove

In newborn calves the abomasum is the stomach involved in acid digestion of milk. The rumen of a newborn calf is small and immature and the milk bypasses the rumen to the abomasum via the oesophageal groove. Sucking from a teat stimulates the oesophageal groove to close.

Around the time of weaning – anywhere between 5 weeks and 12 weeks - a lot of changes are happening in the stomachs of a calf. The rumen is growing whilst the abomasum is becoming relatively smaller. This is a very precarious time where sudden and large changes in feeding practice can upset the rumen-abomasum balance. Problems are more likely to be encountered when calves are fed milk in troughs and from buckets, fed milk infrequently and in large groups of calves with insufficient access to milk. They may drink large quantities of milk quickly resulting in failure of oesophageal groove to close and reflux of milk from the abomasum.

Obstructions can occur due to ingestion of feedstuffs not suitable for calves e.g. potatoes, fodder beat etc and accidental ingestion of plastics. Twists in the intestine and blockage of faeces (constipation) can present as bloat with signs of colic and straining.

### What to do?

Bloat in any age of cattle should be treated as an emergency. Bloat is painful and the longer an animal is bloated the more complications will occur e.g. compression from the bloat prevents blood returning to

the heart and can severely compromise breathing. The gases and bacteria building up inside the rumen will also make the calf acidotic and toxic.

The first step is to try to reduce the bloat by carefully placing a stomach tube but take care with larger calves as they can chew the tube. Once the tube is in the rumen you should be able to hear the gas escaping from the end of the tube. Apply gentle pressure to the left side of the abdomen. If you cannot pass a tube or passing a tube does not relieve the gas then contact the vet immediately.

## Wooden tongue

(By Annwen Richards, BVSc, MRCVS)

Caused by *Actinobacillus lignieresii*. This bacterium is part of the normal flora of the upper gastrointestinal tract. Following injury to the tongue, oral cavity and pharynx the bacteria invade into the deeper tissues of the mouth resulting in abscesses. The bacteria can also spread via the lymphatics to other tissues and spread along the gastrointestinal tract to the oesophagus and rumen.

### Clinical signs

- Swollen, hard and painful tongue that may protrude from mouth.
- Excess salivation.
- Inability to eat or swallow normally.



Figure II Image [www.nadis.org.uk](http://www.nadis.org.uk)

Cases are often sporadic but herd outbreaks are associated with consumption of coarse and stemmy feeds and damage from abrasive plants such as foxtail, thistles and thorns.

### Treatment

Antibiotics  
Antiinflammatories/pain relief  
Supportive care including pumping with oral fluids and offering softened feeds

### Prevention

Difficult as often sporadic  
Avoid abrasive feeds  
Avoid baling areas with thistles/foxtail  
Fence off thorn bushes if possible