

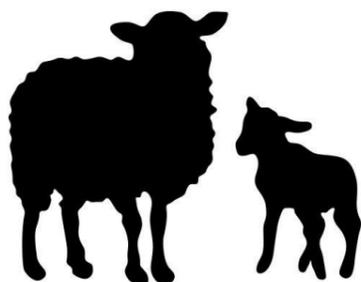
Antibiotics at Lambing Time - Trying to Reduce Usage

Introduction

There is **enormous** pressure to reduce the amount of Antibiotics we are using on farm, and actually as a whole, the beef and lamb industry are cutting their usage quite substantially year on year. But there is **still room for improvement**.

The use of prophylactic or **preventative** antibiotic usage comes under most scrutiny because this is an area which is not only mostly unjustified but also lacking evidence of it's beneficial effect!

We as a practice are trying to encourage farmers to avoid the **blanket use** of antibiotics and be much more selective as to which animals to give them to.



The Facts:

- Watery mouth and Joint ill can be significant issues around lambing time. Both issues are dependant on a number of factors but ewe health, lamb health and the environment all play a huge role in the development of disease. Antibiotics should not be used just because these factors cannot be improved/addressed.
- Many farms are using oral Spectam (Spectinomycin) in every lamb born. It has been proven that between **30 - 60%** of E.coli (the bacteria which cause watery mouth) on farms are actually **RESISTANT** to Spectam. This means that you are:
 1. **Wasting money** and
 2. Contributing to **Antibiotic Resistance**.
- **Joint ill** is often encountered after turnout in lambs and as a 'preventative' lambs are given an antibiotic injection such as Bimoxyl LA or Terramycin / Tetroxy...
 1. Both of these drugs only last **2 days** so their use in newborn lambs to prevent joint ill post-turnout is **pointless**
 2. The main bacteria which causes joint ill Strep. dysgalactiae has shown nearly **90% resistance** to Tetroxy, so not effective in the majority of cases.

How can we prevent these issues?

- **Colostrum is gold** - we all know that lambs need good quality colostrum. This means that the ewes have to be in good condition and produce good colostrum. Lambs need **50ml/kg** in the first **6 hours** of life to ensure good immunity and protection. Artificial powdered colostrum actually has **half** the level of antibodies that a ewes colostrum has - it is better than nothing but ensuring that a lamb gets a good amount of ewe colostrum is the most important.
- **Hygiene** is crucial. Strong 10% iodine solution applied either as a dip preferably or spray **twice** in the first few hours of life to minimise contamination and route of bacterial entry. Bottles, teats, lamb feeding tubes should all be **disinfected** regularly. Individual pens ideally would be fully cleared out after each ewe but we appreciate that this is not always possible in a busy lambing period! But applying **lime** or antibiotic / drying sprays or powders are a very effective solution.
- Here at the practice, we have two products which are beneficial to newborn lambs to help in many ways: **boost immunity**, provide essential **vitamins & minerals** and aim to **prevent** disease early on in life. They either come in a tablet or liquid pump and are **cheaper** per lamb than Spectam (Spectam currently 33p per lamb). These alternative products can be used on **every** lamb as soon as possible after birth.

The Practicalities....

In theory.... A set of healthy twins from a strong ewe, with a good bag of quality colostrum, penned in a clean pen... Should NOT require any antibiotics at birth.

Of course, theory is great, but isn't often reality!! The weather can be wet and the shed damp, no matter how much bedding you use. The ewes have done relatively well but these last few weeks have been harsh on them so some are not going to be looking as well as they could. As much as you try to get around every pen of lambs to make sure they have all sucked and look well, that can be impossible at times too!

If we can try and be a lot more **selective** with our antibiotic use, we are not only **saving money** but reducing resistance to the antibiotics that we use.

Target: lambs from thin ewes, weak lambs, triplets. A strong single should definitely not need anything!

If you ring the practice to order some drugs for lambing time - you will be asked what they are for and also, everyone at the practice will give the same advise about reducing the use of antibiotics. We will be restricting how much Spectam we give out.

We are always happy to help and discuss how health / management can be improved on farm so please don't hesitate to get in touch.