

Watery mouth in lambs

Emily Reeves BVetMed MRCVS

The mantra for using antibiotics responsibly is “as little as possible, as much as necessary”.

There is increasing public and political awareness of the potential overuse of antibiotics across all farmed animals with the subsequent pressure to reduce their use. There is a responsibility on all of us as an industry (pharmaceutical companies, vets and farmers) to use antibiotics responsibly and every bit helps.

Watery mouth is caused by the bacteria *Escherichia coli*. When a susceptible lamb ingests *E. coli* the bacteria enter the small intestine and rapidly multiply. The bacteria then die and release toxins which trigger the symptoms:

- Excess salivation, dull and reluctant to suck
- Abdominal distension progressing to dehydration, collapse and death

As we all know, watery mouth can be very serious and recovery rates are low once lambs develop the disease, therefore prevention is definitely better than cure. Watery mouth can be a significant challenge, however if hygiene and colostrum are managed successfully, antibiotic use can be minimised. Oral products may be used just where there are known issues with colostrum. The aim is therefore targeted treatment rather than blanket use.

Targeted treatment options:

- Only treat twins, triplets or other lambs at risk of poor colostrum transfer.
- Do not use routinely until the first case of watery mouth occurs or delay treatment for the first 1-2 weeks of lambing and increase this interval in subsequent years.

Prevention of watery mouth:

HYGIENE IS ESSENTIAL - if there is less *E. coli* around there is less chance of lambs becoming contaminated. Mucking before disinfecting with a drying agent and disinfectant is essential. We stock **Ultra-dri Gold** powder for lambing pen disinfection, it kills most pathogens within 5 minutes of application and absorbs excess moisture on the floor of the pen.



COLOSTRUM IS ESSENTIAL- lambs must receive good quality colostrum within the first 6 hours of life but preferably within 2 hours. Ewe colostrum is far superior to artificial colostrum but artificial colostrum can be used as a top up or when there are no other options. In general products advertised as Colostrum replacements are preferred over Colostrum supplements.

Lambs need 50ml/kg liveweight per feed and 210ml/kg liveweight in the first 24 hours. Lambs born and raised outdoors need 15% more.

What can you do if lambs start scouring?

No matter the cause, animals that are scouring require fluids and electrolytes and, if suckling, milk. It should be the aim of any oral rehydration therapy to provide a balanced source of sodium, potassium and chloride as well



SRUC telephone numbers

SRUC Vet Services is re-organising its telephone system with the aim of improving the service to clients, as they implement the new model of disease surveillance.

Heath Scheme enquiries (PCHS, PSGHS and BVD schemes)

- The number remains 01835 822456
- Email enquiries can be used to avoid phone queues – please email PCHS1@btconnect.com

All other enquiries (e.g. post mortems, clinical pathology samples, disease surveillance)

- Please use the Veterinary Services number 0131 535 3130.
- When you ring the Vet Services number, you will be given menu options to ensure that your call goes through to the right location/Department.



Practical advice for worming ewes at lambing time

Jennifer Still BSc (Hons) BVM&S MRCVS

Worming ewes at lambing time, often with long-acting products, has become a common practice on UK sheep farms. The Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep (SCOPS) group provide regularly updated “best-practice” guidelines on worming sheep and recommend a targeted approach.

There is a relaxation in immunity in adult ewes around lambing time, called the periparturient rise (PPR) which can increase the number of worm eggs she puts onto pasture. Ewes should be treated selectively depending on their likelihood to produce the most eggs.

Generally, those under the most pressure in late pregnancy include gimmers, those in low body condition and triplet bearing ewes; these are the ones which need to be treated.

A major factor in the development of resistance is the overuse of anthelmintics in adult sheep which are treated unnecessarily. The Animal Plant and Health Agency carried out a study in 2018 which found no advantage in blanket worming ewes pre-lambing and suggested that farms using SCOPS principles use less anthelmintic than other farms, without loss in performance or increased worm burden. Current recommendations suggest leaving 10-20% of ewes in each grazing group untreated, however many farmers are finding they can leave even more untreated by following SCOPS guidelines.

The key take home message is to treat selectively this year. Fit, healthy and mature sheep have a good immunity to most species of worms so the need to treat adult ewes is limited. If you have any questions about worming please discuss with one of the farm vets at your branch.

Multimin - A Trace Element Injection

Rebekah Carling BSc (Hons) BVetMed MRCVS

Multimin is a prescription only, trace mineral injection for cattle containing: zinc, copper, manganese and selenium.

These 4 trace elements are necessary components of antioxidant enzymes which are required to combat oxidative stress in the body. Oxidative stress can lead to cell and tissue damage thereby impacting on health and performance of cattle.

At various times of the production cycle there will be increased demand for these trace elements and it might not be possible for oral supplementation to meet these demands - low intake or poor bioavailability. Therefore Multimin can be used as a single, subcutaneous injection, during, or in advance of, periods of stress in the production and breeding cycle which may lead to deficiency of zinc, copper, manganese and selenium. Please see figures as to when Multimin is recommended.

After injection the trace elements are absorbed into and transported by the bloodstream (peaks seen at 8-10 hours post injection), stored in the liver (seen at 24 hours post injection), before being incorporated into the required enzymes (increases of enzymes seen from 15 days post injection). Please be aware that this injection is therefore only a 'boost' during periods of high stress and therefore NOT an alternative to a bolus.

Dairy Cattle

Cow	Heifer	Calf
		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 Days Pre-Calving • 30 Days Pre-Calving • 35 Days in Milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 Days Pre-Breeding • Pre-Calving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth • Every 3 months
Ideal for transition cows		

Beef Cattle

Cow	Heifer	Calf
		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Calving • 30 Days Pre-Breeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 Days Pre-Breeding • Pre-Calving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth • Vaccination • Weaning / grouping and housing



Contacts:

Berwick	01289 330066	Out of Hours	07000 758333
Coldstream	01890 882322	Out of Hours	07000 758333
Duns	01361 883742	Out of Hours	01361 883742
Galashiels	01896 753759	Out of Hours	01896 753759
Kelso	01573 224496	Out of Hours	01573 224496