

As autumn approaches fast, Andy advises about monitoring for lungworm, Izzy warns of the dangers of grass staggers, and JP discusses pink eye in sheep. Amy closes the newsletter with some advice on how to dose your animals correctly.

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No Safe Grazing From Lungworm!

Everyone knows that lungworm (*Dictyocaulus viviparus*, also known as husk) is a threat to young cattle during their first grazing season, but did you know that it's not possible to have safe grazing from lungworm?

When lungworm larvae pass out of the cattle in their dung, some invade the *Pilobolus* fungus which grows on cattle dung. When the fungus releases its

spores the lungworm larvae hitch a ride, travelling across the pasture on the wind with the spores. This means that even pasture which has not had cattle on it for some time can still pose a lungworm risk to young stock.

Prevention of lungworm using prophylactic anti-helminthic (wormer) dosing can become expensive and while resistance is not usually a problem in the lungworm themselves, repeated dosing may lead to the

development of resistance among intestinal worms on the same pasture.

The farm animal practice can help you by examining dung samples for the presence of lungworm larvae, allowing you to reduce your anti-helminthic usage and save money.

To test for lungworm please send a pooled faecal sample from six at-risk (first or second grazing season) animals



to the farm animal practice. The dung samples are ideally collected direct from the animals' rectum, however when this is impractical fresh dung samples may be collected from the pasture. And only a small amount of dung is required from each animal - no bucket-fulls please!

Grass Staggers



A recumbent cow requiring treatment for grass staggers
(Source: Nadis)

Grass staggers occurs when the cow's intake of magnesium (Mg) is exceeded by her output, and is most commonly seen in lactating cows at pasture because absorption of Mg from the grass is poor,

and the cow's output in milk is high. The clinical signs such as restlessness, staggering gait, aggression, convulsions and ultimately death can occur very quickly due to the fact that cattle only have a limited ability to store Mg and mainly depend on daily intake from their diet. Therefore anything that upsets this can lead to an increased risk and whilst there may not be a flush of grass (yet), suckling large calves, fluctuating temperatures, heavy rain or any other form of stress such as weaning can all trigger staggers.

As time is of the essence for treatment, we recommend that you always keep a few bottles of Magniject on farm to give under the skin once an animal is affected with clinical signs and call the practice a.s.a.p. However, as with many other diseases prevention is the key to success and it is essential to ensure a regular supply of Mg

to all at risk animals. This can be by dosing cattle with Mg boluses, providing lick buckets, in-feed supplements, ... or by feeding hay or low quality silage to cows at grass which will slow down the rate of passage of feed through the cow's intestines and thereby increase the length of time for absorption of Mg to occur.



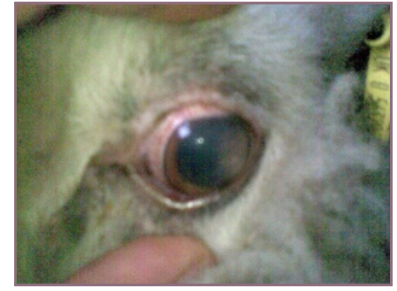
Pink-eye in sheep

Pink-eye (ovine infectious keratoconjunctivitis) is the most common eye disease of adult sheep and is caused by *Mycoplasma conjunctivae* (mycoplasmas are microbes smaller than bacteria but larger than viruses). *M. conjunctivae* is present in the tear film of many sheep, and only causes disease after some other source of irritation to the front of the eye such as driving sleet or snow, dust or flies. Disease outbreaks may also be seen when animals are exposed to *M. conjunctivae* for the first time e.g. when a bought-in animal introduces it to a flock.

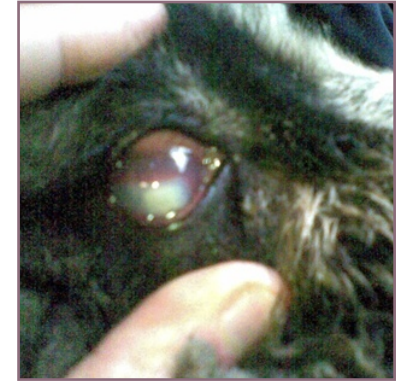
The disease typically starts as a reddening of the conjunctivae (membranes around the eye) followed by reddening and cloudiness of the front of the eye which starts at the edge and moves centrally. Animals may

spontaneously recover from mild disease, but the disease course and severity can be much reduced by a single intramuscular injection of long-acting oxytetracycline. Cured animals still carry the mycoplasma and do not develop immunity and so can be affected again.

In the event of an outbreak, isolation of affected animals until they recover can help reduce the number of cases, as well as management changes to reduce close face-face contact e.g. substituting a snacker for trough feeding. Unfortunately many eye diseases look similar in the late stages so if you are unsure whether the problem is pink-eye, or there is a major outbreak or poor response to treatment, please contact the practice.



Early stage of pink-eye



Late stage of pink-eye

Why and how to dose your animals correctly

Both under-dosing and over-dosing animals with drugs is costly and potentially dangerous. Under-dosing leads to extra vet visits and wasted drug (drugs do not work if not enough is given), and increases the risk of developing resistant strains of bacteria in your herd or flock. Conversely, significant over-dosing can cause death and is wasteful.

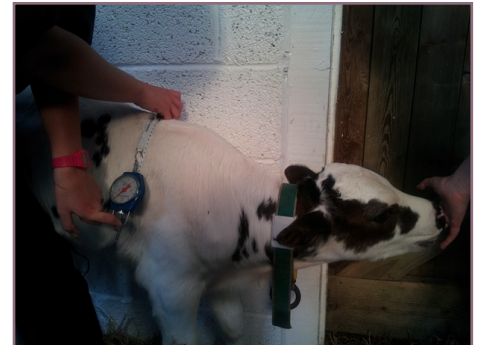
Electronic or spring balance weigh scales attached to handling equipment are excellent tools and should be used for accurate dosing for an individual sick animal or when dosing a group with products such as wormers (sort animals into size groups and then accurately

weigh the biggest one per group).

Where electronic scales are not available, calves and cows can be fairly accurately measured using a weigh tape (one size for calves and pigs, and one size for cows). These are placed around the chest behind the elbows and give an estimated weight in kilograms. These tapes are readily available and we are happy to order them for you through the practice. For sheep it is harder as two measurements are needed to estimate weight; the chest girth and the body length. However, smaller sheep or lambs can be weighed using a sling or feed sack with a hook weigh scale. For the tech geeks amongst you there is an app. that converts the measurements you take of your sheep into its weight in pounds (if you use this remember to do the conversion!)

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=goatweightcalc.sorb>.

Measuring your stock accurately will mean better response to treatment, better use of drugs, and will help us all to reduce the rate of emergence of resistant pathogens meaning that we can successfully treat animals into the future.



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