



## Information for Sheep Owners

### Nutritional

Sheep need extensive access to grass or, for their diet to be supplemented with hay or silage when levels are inadequate. If offered, Silage must be good quality and with no signs of mould, as a bacterium *Listeria* can grow and cause neurological signs if consumed. Generous amounts of water should always be available as sheep can drink between 3 and 20L per day. Around 6 weeks before lambing, sheep pellets should be offered to pregnant ewes to ensure they are up to the energy requirements of lactating.

### Toxins

Pasture grazed by sheep should be checked for toxins such as Yew trees, ragwort, acorns and sources of lead (e.g. batteries). If sheep are given pellets not designed for sheep (particularly those for cattle) or fed sheep feeds too regularly (i.e.: every day all year), the levels of copper can be overwhelming and cause liver damage and associated signs, such as crusty ears and yellow gums (jaundice), or even death.

### Worming

Worms can cause ill-thrift in all ages of sheep and can cause fatalities in lambs if they have a high burden. Coccidiosis (a protozoan parasite) can affect lambs up to 6 months of age. The best practice is to submit faecal samples from each group of animals (submit lamb and ewe samples separately) for worm and coccidia egg counts every 6-8 weeks from spring-time (March). This allows treatment of the animals only when required and prevents the development of resistance to wormers. Sheep of all ages can suffer from liver fluke, these are most active in the autumn when it is wet and muddy and they can cause liver damage in the sheep. A fluke egg count should be done to assess the need for fluke treatment in Autumn.

### Ectoparasites

Blow-fly strike can be a serious condition in sheep and should be treated in early summer with a pour-on product (E.g. Crovect, Clik).

### Vaccines

Clostridia are a family of bacteria that are found in both the environment and naturally in the sheep but can cause sudden death and so all sheep should be vaccinated with Heptavac P, Ovivac, Bravoxin or a similar drug. Immunity lasts for around 12 months and so annual boosters are usually given 4-6 weeks pre-lambing with lambs vaccinated from 3 weeks old. Pasteurellosis, a group of bacteria causing pneumonia is also covered by most of these vaccines. A treatment and quarantine program for new sheep brought into the flock is also a good idea to help prevent bringing in disease.

**Signs your sheep is ill: isolated from the flock, not eating, droopy ears, head lowered, lethargic and losing condition.**

Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check pasture for toxins</li> <li>• Use pour-on product to prevent fly-strike</li> <li>• Clostridial vaccine to lambs from 3 weeks old</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worm and cocci count every 6 - 8 weeks from March / April</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fluke egg count (late autumn)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diet of sheep feed and / or hay / haylage / silage if necessary</li> <li>• Clostridial vaccine to ewes before lambing</li> </ul>

