

# ACTION ON SLOW FINISHING LAMBS

**This is a common problem, with many potential causes, including:**

- Coccidiosis
- Stomach and intestinal worms
- Liver fluke
- Mineral deficiencies
- Chronic infections in lambs
  - Lung abscesses, liver abscesses
- Poor mothering - insufficient colostrum and/or milk
  - Chronic infections in the dam e.g. iceberg diseases
  - Barber's pole worm, fluke, Johne's, MV, OPA, mastitis
- Undernutrition - has there been enough grass in front of them?

Often, by the time the problem is evident in autumn, the underlying cause has been and gone. Investigation of tail end lambs can frequently be frustrating if for example, the damage was done several months ago by

gut parasites. Mineral deficiencies are often masked by the concentrates purchased to fatten these lambs. On farm post mortem examinations of any lost lambs are often a fair place to start. If nothing else, it is useful to check for evidence of liver fluke and previous cases of pneumonia. If the problem was parasites much earlier in the year, the damage to the lining of the gut is devastating but microscopic.

### Being proactive about slow finishing lambs

Start three weeks before lambing, making sure ewes are being fed according to their needs. Soya is frequently limited in commercial ewe concentrates. Speak to your vet about feeding and metabolic profiling of ewes.

Next stop would be to ensure all lambs receive their fair share of colostrum, getting 10% of their body weight in colostrum in the first 18 hours, half of that in the first 6. This is crucial.

Check dung samples from 3-4 weeks of age with respect to coccidiosis. By the time lambs are scouring and obviously affected, lot of gut damage has happened.

Eight week checks on lambs and ewes: target growth rates in lambs should be in excess of 250g/day up to eight weeks. Check ewes BCS to plan ahead for when weaning needs to happen.

Weaning: if you are creep feeding, you should aim to have sold 60% of lambs by this time. If not creep feeding, DLWG from 8 weeks should have been over 200g/day.

Post-weaning: set stocked lambs should have sward heights of 6-8 cms.

Trace element profiling is best done on rapidly growing lambs not being fed any creep or mineral supplement. Yard lambs just before the vet is due as being without feed for a few hours can affect results.

Worm egg counts are useful in all systems, but very important in sheep only enterprises. Here, they are the best way to assess when to worm to limit pasture contamination, as "safe" grazing will be limited.

Cull ewes and ewes still thin some weeks after weaning can be blood sampled for iceberg diseases which may have limited milk supply.



**For more information, speak to one of the Torch Farm team**

## GODFRAY BOVINE TB REVIEW - KEY FINDINGS

**A review of the government's 25 Year Bovine TB (bTB) Strategy, led by Sir Charles Godfray, was published in November.**

The report, which was commissioned by Environment Secretary Michael Gove in February, aims to inform future strategies around the government's goal of eradicating the disease by 2038.

The findings from the report include:

- Evidence shows badgers do transmit bTB to cattle and contribute to the persistence of the disease.
- Control of bTB in badgers is necessary and inclusion of non-lethal methods (vaccination) is desirable.

- The bTB skin test misses too many infected animals.
- Industry must take greater responsibility for on-farm controls, biosecurity and safe trading practices to stop spread of disease.
- A strong argument exists for disincentivising risky trading by reducing compensation for slaughtered cattle.
- More can be done to help farmers with risk-based trading. (TBAS offers advice on purchasing decisions reflecting the risks of buying in infected cattle.)
- The number of cattle movements in England is very high and will inevitably be a risk for disease spread. Analysis is needed to see if the benefits outweigh the risks.

- Private vets are particularly important in providing TB advice.
- Suggestion of need for a disease governance panel to oversee and coordinate the activities of APHA, Defra, Natural England, local authorities, etc.



# REMOVE BVD FROM YOUR HERD: THE BVD STAMP IT OUT INITIATIVE

**S**ubstantial RDPE funding has become available to all cattle farmers (dairy and beef, breeders and rearers) to start or continue or take their herds' BVD control to the next level.

This funding includes farmers meetings, individual farm visits, up to £60 worth of initial check testing with the potential for further funding towards eliminating Persistently Infected cattle (PI'S) from confirmed 'infected' herds.

**Accessing the funding is easy:** come along to one of the local Torch Farm Vets **BVD STAMP IT OUT** meetings and we will get you signed up and started on the process.

We have secured funding for a significant number of North Devon clients, so don't miss out on this opportunity.

Keep an eye out on social media for the next available dates and call your local Torch branch to secure your place.

We'll meet at a pub local to you, discuss the initiative and see how best it can benefit your herd with lunch provided.

The first meeting will take place on Wednesday 12 December from 12-2.30pm at the Muddiford Inn, Muddiford EX31 4EY. Please RSVP to your usual practice or by email to [info@torchfarmvets.com](mailto:info@torchfarmvets.com).



**For more information please speak to a member of our team**

## DIARY DATES



### BVD STAMP IT OUT MEETING

See left for details

- **Weds 12 December, from 12:00 at the Muddiford Inn, Muddiford EX31 4EY**

### CHRISTMAS RUGBY CHEER

Eat, drink, be merry, and watch some great local rugby at Bideford RFC on 15th December.

The match against Chard RFC will kick-off at 14:30 but we'd be delighted if you could join us for a bite to eat and a little festive cheer from 12:30 onwards.

- **Sat 15 December, from 12:30 at Bideford RFC, EX39 2QS**

Please RSVP to our team at the Bideford practice on 01237 870456 or by emailing [info@torchfarmvets.com](mailto:info@torchfarmvets.com) by Monday 10 December.

### TORCH YOUNGSTOCK CLUB

To celebrate the launch of the Torch Youngstock Club we are hosting its inaugural meeting on:

- **Thu 24 January, from 11:30 at Awsland Farm, Peters Marland Torrington EX38 8QW** With thanks to the Ashton family.

Georgina Thomas of Trouw Nutrition will present "The science of calf feeding and practical tips" with a hot lunch to follow.

Sign up to the Torch Youngstock Club before or at the meeting to receive a free month on the scheme - we are offering 12 months for the price of 11 for everyone who signs up by 24 January.

Please RSVP by 18 January to [jenniferburnett@torchfarmvets.com](mailto:jenniferburnett@torchfarmvets.com)

### UPCOMING SHEEP EVENTS

Look out for a number of events from the Torch Sheep team in the coming months:

A series of evening practical lambing courses based at Torch South Molton will begin in January starting with "**Preventing neonatal lamb disease, with or without antibiotics**".

This will be an informal evening event in a pub (venue TBC) followed by a bite to eat.

More information and a full list of dates will be published on the Torch website and social media in December.

## THOUGHTS FROM OUR SQP ...



**Julie Rottenbury is our Group Pharmacy Supervisor (SQP). Jules is available for advice on parasites, nutritional products and selected vaccines.**

Fluke has been a bit of a surprise this year, after the dry summer we were expecting this autumn to be low risk, however stock have been attracted to the damper parts of

the fields to find the best grass (only grass!) This has resulted in autumn 2018 being at least medium risk.

The most effective flukicide at this time of year is Triclabendazole. The fluke doing damage right now are juveniles and triclabendazole is the only active to kill very young flukes. Nitroxil and closantel will target teenage fluke and adults. If these products are used, then the dose needs to be repeated. If you have any suspicions about resistance to triclabendazole on your farm, please speak to your vet. If you suspect you are not a "flukey" farm, there are diagnostic tests we can do which will show exposure or not and determine whether you do have a need to treat.

**Remember: target the parasite - use the right product at the right time.**

## TORCH LAMBING CLUB 2019

Ease those lambing stresses with one single fee to cover lambing related clinical work seen at any of our farm animal centres\*.

### When does Lambing Club run?

8.30am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday  
8.30am to 12.30pm Saturday

Work undertaken outside these working hours is chargeable at a discounted rate.

The lambing club covers work carried out over a consecutive 3 month period.

\*Bideford clients please speak to us about your options

### What work is included?

- Lambings
- Entropion
- Sick or Downer Ewes
- Sick Lambs
- Prolapses (excl. epidural charge)
- Post-mortems
- Caesareans (excl. surgical pack charge)

**To sign up or for more information please speak to a member of our team**

## A leading light in veterinary care

Bideford  
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Pilton  
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Roundswell  
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South Molton  
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