

Lambing – are you all set?

You're just about to start the most busy and exciting time of the year – lambing season. Are you ready for it? Here are a few things worth considering for you to be prepared to make sure the season goes as smoothly as possible.

Make sure you have all the gear to help your ewes lamb (plenty of lubricant, gloves, ropes, etc), all the medicine to be able to fight all the major metabolic problems that may rise during this season (twin lamb disease, lack of calcium, etc), and very important, as well, make sure you've got everything at the ready to welcome the new-born lambs (colostrum, iodine, clean and dry bedding, lamb stomach tube, etc).

We will try hard, but losses around lambing are inevitable. It's expected that a percentage of these lambs will either be dead when born or die in the first days. Mortality rates above 15% need to be investigated. There are many reasons why this happens, and it is important to keep an eye out and act quickly. Lamb losses during birth are normally due to big-sized lambs, or small-sized ewes, the body condition of the ewe (fat ewes have more problems during lambing), the age of the ewes (older animals will struggle more as well as first lambers). Lamb losses in the first few days can be due to a number of neonatal diseases (scours, joint-ill, etc); and losses before lambing (including abortions), can be due to a series of pathogenic agents such as: *chlamydia* (enzootic abortion), *toxoplasma*, *salmonella*, *campylobacter*, etc.

It is useful to divide your losses into these 3 groups. We can't guess what caused the abortion, so you should speak to your vets in order to arrange for the foetus and placenta to be sent to a lab to be tested so we can devise an action plan. Sometimes, it may just be a case of being careful with hygiene, especially as lambing moves towards the end and contamination builds up, other times it might be necessary to include a vaccine.

As a final note, and because we are entering times where we need to work together and be more and more aware of how we are using antibiotics, do you have an idea of how much Spectam you are buying and using? How are you using it? As a word of advice, and in order to work towards the goal of responsible use of antibiotics, perhaps instead of blanket treating every lamb, try to use it just on doubles or triplets. Leave strong singles untreated and maybe delay use until the middle of your lambing season and not right from the beginning. The contamination of the pens builds up, so you'll have a better chance of controlling things if you only use it when the pens start to be more contaminated. Also, something that goes hand in hand with responsible use of antibiotics is to have good management routines, in this specific case, dagging out your ewes, making sure your lambs get the right amount of colostrum at the right time to have the maximum protection from their mothers, as well as disinfecting their navels as soon as they are born. Implementing these steps will maximise lambing success.

Need further help?

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.
Call the practice on **01566 772371** or visit us online.