

HOW TO...

DEAL WITH COCCIDIOSIS

Why...

Coccidiosis is the disease caused by coccidian oocyst, parasites that use cells in the host to live and multiply. In sheep, the oocyst use the cells in the wall of the intestinal tract. The disease spreads from one animal to another by contact with infected faeces. Most healthy, adult, animals are carriers and show no sign of the disease, however young or weak animals may suffer severe symptoms, including death. This leads to severe production losses.

How...

Prevention

As treatments tend to be expensive, prevention is worthwhile. Coccidiosis is most common in areas where hygiene is challenged. This could be due to high stock levels, small areas of restricted space, or general poor housekeeping. By using a specialist coccidial disinfectant such as kilcox before lambing you could greatly reduce the risk. Good drainage and daily topping up of bedding will provide a cleaner environment or for smaller herds muck removal will keep the bacteria under control. Keeping stock densities low or moving lambs to new paddocks regularly will also remove much of the risk. Feed should be positioned high enough that it does not become contaminated with faeces. Stalosan is a dry powder disinfectant so can be used effectively throughout the lambing period without the use of water as a good solution to keeping bedding clean.

Treatment

Vecoxen is the only licenced coccidiocide for sheep as treatment and for prevention. It is recommended that all lambs in the flock are treated to reduce the infection pressure and assure better control.

Who...

Animals most affected by coccidiosis are lambs of 3-8 weeks. Ewes may be carriers and pass the disease through the environment to their young. Older lambs being weaned onto small but contaminated paddocks are also at greater risk.

Tips and Rules

- Use a preventative treatment such as Vecoxan
- Keep bedding as clean as possible
- Do not over stock
- Used coccidial disinfectants on hurdles/ pens and troughs
- Keep feed up high enough that it does not contact faeces
- Treat all stock at same time to diminish the cycle

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Checking the sheeps gum for anaemia. The flesh should be "Salmon Pink".

Symptoms

- Acute Diarroea (blood may be seen in faecies)
- Loss of appetite
- Dehydration
- Weightloss
- Fever
- Dullness to fleece
- Decreased growwth rate
- Weakness
- Abdominal pain
- Anaemia

Once symptoms are visible in the lambs, extensive gut damage will have already occurred. This can affect growth rate in lambs that recover so early diagnosis and treatment is essential

You Will Need

- Bi-oo-cyst or Kilcox
- Vecoxan
- Stalosan
- Biodry

Other Guides in the Series relevant to this article

Lambing Essentials, Intra muscular injections, Restraining and controlling Animals