

# Managing stores over winter

**Emily Gascoigne** and **Andy Adler**, vets at Synergy Farm Health, discuss best practice and management when keeping stores through the winter

**M**anaging store sheep or beef cattle over winter can be simple for farmers buying at the right price and finding suitable housing and feed to manage costs and maintain margins. But there are some common issues to look out for when managing stores through the winter that can impact on profit margins.

## BUYING IN ANIMALS

This is a threat to the disease status of your enterprise, either from the risk of introduction of novel diseases onto your premises or introducing naive animals onto a farm with pre-existing disease. Moving premises and mixing groups is highly stressful for all classes of livestock.

Buying the healthiest animals possible and from as few sources as possible will reduce the risk of introducing infectious disease and minimise stress from mixing groups.

Key diseases of concern when introducing store lambs onto farm include: anthelmintic resistant species or worms, flukicide resistant fluke, sheep scab and infec-



tious lameness such as contagious ovine digital dermatitis. These pathogens are an immediate threat to store lamb productivity and a long-term threat to the productivity of your main sheep enterprise. Key diseases to be aware of for beef enterprises are similar, but with additional concern around respiratory health.

## PLANNING AND CONSISTENCY

Planning and consistent store management will reduce the risks to your store enterprise, maximise its performance and limit threats to other sheep and beef enterprises on farm. A comprehensive plan, designed with your vet, should be put in place for all animals coming on to your premises. This should include a novel derivate drench, a long-acting macrocyclic lactone for scab (sheep), a period of isolation and a lameness/fluke management protocol. Ideally a period of isolation for

pre-existing groups of farms of three weeks should be observed to allow preventative medicine to be given and for pre-existing disease to become obvious.

## VACCINATIONS

It is desirable to have lambs on clostridial and pastorellosis vaccination schemes prior to movement and changes in diet. For beef cattle, checking their BVD status is essential. Nowadays increasing numbers of stores are sold with white BVD tags indicating they have been tested for BVD. This is a gateway disease for other respiratory pathogens. If you have a BVD-free farm, always buy animals that have been tested for BVD. By doing this you will help to protect them from respiratory infections.

Additional vaccination programmes recommended pre-sale, especially if buying stores at weaning and housing straight away, include SureCalf regimes that provide additional respiratory protection in vulnerable animals.

## INTRODUCING NEW LIVESTOCK

Once the animals are on farm, avoid exacerbating stress levels

in incoming lambs and beef cattle by maintaining lower stocking densities, grazing well sheltered pastures, avoiding moving between housing and pasture and gentle transitions in diet.

Double checking lambs and steers for evidence of testicular remnants may prove a worthwhile exercise to reduce the risk of any surprise lambs or calves in the spring.

If animals must be housed, do so when dry and maintain ventilation through buildings.

## REALISTIC TARGETS

Realistic targets help to ensure progress is on track and can help identify problems. Lighter lambs (<30kg) destined to be on farm into the spring should be maintaining 100g/day, while heavier lambs (>35kg) needing minor finishing should be targeting 160g/day. Weighing lambs onto farm will help batching of lambs, ease of selecting lambs ready to go and facilitate monitoring.

*Synergy Farm Health, part of the XL Vets group, consists of 28 farm focused vets based in Dorset, Somerset and Devon. [www.synergyfarmhealth.com](http://www.synergyfarmhealth.com)*