

Tips for Rearing Healthy Store Lambs through to Finishing

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When buying in store lambs it is important to select high-quality stock from known suppliers with a good health status and vaccinated against pneumonia and clostridial diseases.

Lambs should be quarantined on arrival and treated for sheep scab and resistant worms using SCOPs principles. Treatment could include moxidectin (Cydectin 1%) or an OP plunge dip & monepantel (Zolvix) or derquantel/abamectin (Startect). It is important to check withdrawal periods with short keep lambs. If they cannot be treated against scab the lambs should be kept separate from any other sheep.

Foot health

The lambs should also be walked through a footbath containing 3% formalin twice during their three-week quarantine period. Any lame lambs should be turned and examined for evidence of scald.

Any sign of ill thrift should be investigated. Common causes are poor nutrition, parasitic gastroenteritis, cobalt and selenium deficiency and liver fluke.

For short-keep, lambs the aim



Any signs of ill thrift should be investigated as soon as store lambs arrive on the farm.

should be to finish on grass or forage crops by November. Feed planning helps maximise the use of pasture, and supplementing this with forage crops minimises the necessity to buy in concentrates. This is one of main factors in profitable store lamb production. Lambs should be weighed and required growth rates matched to available feeds. Minerals and long roughage should be provided with forage crops.

Medium keep store lambs generally refers to lambs are grazed on stubbles or forage aftermaths and then finished between January and March on concentrates.

Fluke control

In addition to the treatments listed above for short keep stores, if fluke is a risk these lambs should be treated with triclabendazole in October and faecal samples checked for fluke eggs three weeks later to ensure effective treatment.

Systemic pasteurellosis is the most commonly diagnosed cause of death in store lambs with mortality rates up to 20%. Clostridial diseases such as pulpy kidney and enterotoxaemia often follow a change of diet, and so store lambs should be protected against pneumonia and clostridial disease using two doses

of Ovivac P Plus four weeks apart. Concentrate feeding brings the risk of grain overload from either heaps of grain on stubbles or too rapid an introduction of grain feeding. Adequate roughage should always be available and whole-grain fed if possible to slow down fermentation.

Where lambs are housed for finishing on concentrates it is important that wether lambs have unrestricted access to fresh water to avoid urolithiasis or gravel. Ewe rations containing magnesium should be avoided. Addition of ammonium chloride to the ration can help prevent this condition.

Cerebrocortical necrosis (CCN) or deficiency in vitamin B1 is also a risk when the lambs diet is changed with the



Be aware of brassica poisoning when running stores on fodder crops.

addition of concentrates

Long keep is the grazing of store lambs on poorer pastures before finishing on brassica crops and/or concentrates in the spring. Check that these lambs are not small due to previous ill health pre-purchase.

Hill lambs coming down to lowland pastures have often lost their immunity or are naive and are at risk of nematodirosis and coccidiosis, so any outbreaks of scour or sudden death should be investigated. Pastures which carried lambs the previous year increase this risk.

Trace elements

In addition to the treatments listed above for medium-keep stores and where trace element deficiencies are diagnosed, ruminal boluses are often the most cost effective means of supplementing these conditions in long keep lambs.

Rape and kale when fed exclusively can cause brassica poisoning. The main toxin is s-methylcysteine sulfoxide, which causes haemolytic anaemia. This toxin increases with the age of the crop so long-keep store lambs should not be grazed on these crops for prolonged periods, and a pasture run-off or supplementary feeding should be



Whether stores lambs are kept for short, medium or long-term, health and nutrition are critical.

provided. The risk of poisoning can be further reduced by introducing lambs to the crop gradually, grazing the crop for a few hours a day to start, rather than switching suddenly from pasture to all crop.

One clostridial condition that can kill older store lambs is braxy. It is seen in store lambs grazing frosted turnips in late autumn. Prevention is as for pulpy

Kidney and blackleg, using clostridial vaccines.

If silage is fed listeriosis is a risk, but this can be reduced by ensuring a low pH, good quality, soil free silage is used.

The aim is to have the store lambs ready for market to catch the usual price rise in March, and hopefully if their health has been looked after the profit will follow.

MAXIMISE LAMB NUMBERS & BREEDING PERFORMANCE!



TYPICAL COSTS
3 - 5p
per ewe per day

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