

Tips for season ahead to ensure fat lambs

WITH the lambing season well under way, it is important to pay close attention to factors such as nutrition and disease to ensure some fat lambs.

What are the main factors that determine lamb growth?

Genetics. – Careful selection of terminal sires based on EBV rather than “picking a good sort” has been proven to improve lamb performance. EBVs measure the genetic superiority, based on a number of criteria and determine the ultimate potential for performance in the offspring.

Nutrition. – Nutrition, of both lamb and ewe, is the fuel for growth. Good ewe nutrition in mid to late pregnancy ensures milk production in the ewe.

Optimal grassland management is crucial for maintaining lamb intakes. Aim for sward heights of 6cm of lush, leafy growth. When possible, wean onto 8cm of hay/silage aftermath.

Control thistles and moles to maximise grass yield and consider

VETERINARY ADVICE

Rachael Ridley BSc (Hons), BVM&S, MRCVS, of Bishopton Veterinary Group, discusses the best ways of staying on top of lamb health

creep grazing or paddock rotation versus set stocking to maintain intakes.

This year, many people will consider creep feeding lambs from one month of age to make up for the shortfall in grass. Talk to your vet about testing and supplementation if the trace element status of the flock is suspected as a limiting factor to flock performance.

Disease. – Control of disease in growing lambs is crucial to maintaining growth rates. Even subclinical disease will reduce performance and lengthen finishing periods. Disease monitoring and flock health planning come into their own at this stage of the production year.

My lambs are now one-month-old. What disease should I be looking out for over the next few months?

Coccidiosis and Nematodirus are two concerns in lambs aged three to eight weeks. Timing will vary from year to year. Both cause scour, ill thrift and, in severe cases, death.

Various coccidial treatments are available – disease is easily diagnosed by faecal sample. White drenches (Benzimidazoles) are the drug of choice against nematodirus – use disease forecasting to help time treatments.

Monitor lamb worm burdens by egg counting and treat accordingly. Be thorough when treating lambs and adhere to SCOPS worming principals. Investigate any scour or ill thrift problems at the time. Trying to work out what went wrong after the event can be expensive and frustrating.

There are many other conditions



LAMB CHECK: Vet Rachael Ridley, of the Bishopton Veterinary Group, offers some tips on keeping lambs in top condition

which affect growth and production throughout the flock year. Work with your vet and plan

ahead for the growing season and with a bit of luck your fat lambs will be just that.