

VETERINARY ADVICE

Reduce the risk of disease when buying in new stock

MANY breeding and store animals change hands in the autumn sales, but remember, moving animals is the easiest way to spread diseases. Purchased stock can carry infections that home-reared stock has not been exposed to.

This also works the other way round. Both home-bred and purchased stock are at risk from each other.

How can the risk be reduced?

Talk to your vet and together develop a specific plan for your farm. In general, buy from the healthiest possible sources, isolate animals on arrival and monitor them closely for any signs of problems like pneumonia, lameness or scab.

During the quarantine period get any tests your vet has recommended carried out and treat or vaccinate animals as necessary. If in doubt, get them checked.

Does it matter where I buy my stock in terms of risk?

Buying stock from as few farms as possible is a good start, and always ask lots of questions.

BUYING IN

Andrew Barrett, of Kingsway Veterinary Group, Skipton, advises caution when buying stock

Asking your vet to speak to the vendor's vet can also be very useful. If the vendor isn't helpful, then you can draw your own conclusions from that.

Animals that are vaccinated might present a lower risk, but vaccination alone does not guarantee freedom from infection. Buying cattle from herds that are members of a CheCS-accredited scheme or sheep from accredited flocks gives much more certainty. If you are buying at auction, try and speak to the vendor or look at pen cards if they are available.

What about TB?

Purchased animals are often responsible for spreading TB onto farms in the low-risk areas. If you are buying from the "high risk" or "edge areas", making sure the farm has been TB-free for ten years and

carrying out your own post-movement test, while they are in isolation, are both important. It is easy to get caught out at auctions where cattle from TB-infected areas might be traded. The first two digits of the ear tag let you know where the animals were born.

Is breeding stock a bigger risk?

Breeding animals should be with you for a long time, so buying in cattle diseases like Johne's, Neospora, BVD or mycoplasma or sheep problems, such as Enzootic Abortion or Maedi Visna, can create problems for years and be a long-term drain on profitability.

All of these diseases can be carried by completely healthy-looking animals.

Your vet can advise you about testing, if you have not bought from an accredited source. BVD presents



ADVICE: Andrew Barrett

particular problems because healthy pregnant heifers and cows can be carrying persistently infected calves.

The new white ear tags used by XLVet practices show that animals have been tested, and the results can be checked online. In the case of bulls and rams, make sure you understand what warranty is being offered with respect to future fertility and speak to the vendor or auction promptly if you suspect a problem.

Should I worry about worms?

Resistance to anthelmintics and flukicides is increasing in the UK sheep flock and resistant parasites are hard to control. Purchased sheep should always receive a quarantine worming dose while housed or kept on a yard – your vet will offer advice about this.

Buying livestock is always risky, but with planning and help from your vet the risk can be managed.