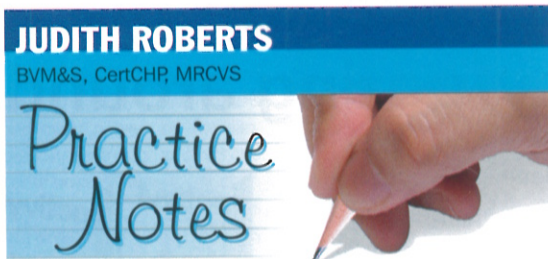


DEFROST AND DOLE OUT KNOWLEDGE

LAMBING time actually begins a long time before the first lambs are seen at the practice.

First off tends to come the obligatory newsletter piece reminding farmers to stock their lambing cupboard with provisions, and reminding them about common problems and treatments.

For the past few years there has also been an increased demand for lambing classes and farmer or farm staff education. This may be along the lines of a revision class for experienced staff to reaffirm their confidence or check they are up to date with current practice, but, increasingly frequently, it is for beginners wanting to know



where to start and wanting some knowledge and skills to enable them to diagnose and tackle the first few problems they encounter.

I am going to share with you some of the experiences of running lambing classes, both for farm staff and veterinary students, hopefully to support the

thinking of those of you who already do it, but also to point out how fun and rewarding it can be for those who don't.

Defrosting

Other than on-farm support and education during call outs, most lambing classes rely on frozen dead lambs from still-

births or neonatal losses the previous season, so that the class can be held before the next season starts – the first tip is to find freezer space and start collecting now. These lambs want defrosting a good day or so before the class so they can be readily manipulated.

Make sure that in a beginners class the participants are pre-warned to expect dead lambs, blood and possibly some descriptive language that will be required to help them learn what is normal and what isn't. Of course, health and safety is vital in protecting everybody involved from any diseases that could be transmitted through this kind of practical demonstra-

tion. All that said, pairing people up to identify the presentation and posture of a dead lamb in a bucket that is covered by a clinical waste sack to make an orifice provides more entertainment than any other class I have taken.

When one person is setting up a lamb (or multiple lambs in presentation), the other is learning how to handle lambing ropes and snares.

It is the time for practice feeling without seeing, guided by the other half of the team that has placed the lamb. At the start, many participants are nervous and hesitant, but once they learn the simple tips to determine forelimbs from hindlimbs, singles from multiples and place ropes or snares, their enthusiasm and confidence starts to take hold.

Assessment

Educating farmers about lambing time is not just about manipulating the lamb to ensure a successful birth.

Topics that should be covered include neonatal assessment, umbilical cord dipping, ringing tail, tagging, feeding and stomach tubing. In more advanced classes, I cover diseases, intraperitoneal glucose injection and some of the medicines and products that are used on-farm.

I have found that younger children can be great participants in the classes. They are often keen on the demonstrations and having reading material helps them understand the concepts that have been covered.

Once people have attended the class and are using their skills on-farm, they have a better working relationship with their vets and practice to call for advice or help, and are using terminology that helps more easily determine whether veterinary intervention is required or whether they are capable of continuing with moral support and confidence that their actions are correct.

Although for many of you lambing time will now be over for this year, it is definitely still appropriate to consider gearing up for the next lambing period. Preparation with all these things is always the key to success, and I consider our role as vets is vital in educating and supporting all farmers with whatever help they require and can benefit from.

Gid in sheep

Before I run out of space in this article, I am going to take the opportunity to remind us all about gid in sheep.

Although incidence has decreased

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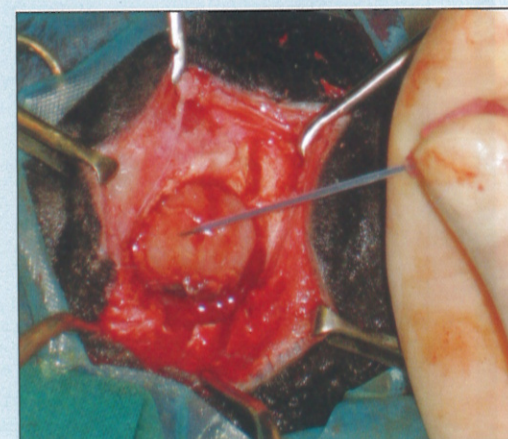
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1. Eliminall Spot-On Solution Cat Datasheet. 2. Eliminall Spot-On Solution Dog Datasheet. 3. Data on file - Pfizer Pet Owner's Spot-On Evaluation Study number 111651.



For further information please contact Pfizer Animal Health, Walton Oaks, Tadworth, Surrey KT20 7NS [NFA-VPS] Pfizer Animal Health, 9 Riverwalk, Citywest Business Campus, Dublin 24 [POM] Eliminall contains fipronil. Use medicines responsibly (noah.co.uk/responsible). Feb 2012.

■ DEFROST AND DOLE OUT KNOWLEDGE

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matically reduced in the past few decades, with tapeworm treatments and improved management policies, it should still be in our memories as a differential diagnosis for neurological disease in sheep. The coenurus cyst, gid, can take up to eight months to fully develop and can reach up to 5cm in diameter.

Clinical signs usually occur a few

months after ingestion of the *Taenia multiceps* oncospheres from contaminated dog faeces, with the signs determined by the location of the cyst.

Most cases of the disease occur in younger sheep, with most cysts occurring in one cerebral hemisphere. Lesions in this location will cause blindness and proprioceptive defects in the contralateral limb with sheep circling, head pressing and sometimes a palpable depression or softening in the frontal bone overlying the lesion.

The location of a cyst can be

determined by palpation and neurological examination of the affected animal, with diagnosis confirmed from response to treatment or post-mortem. Treatment involves surgical excision of the cyst – brain surgery on a sheep. It is performed under general anaesthesia using a bone trephine, plenty of care and patience, and then forceps once the cyst has been drained via a needle and syringe.

The defect is then repaired and closed with the sheep recovering on antibacterial therapy and pain relief.

JUDITH ROBERTS graduated from the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies, Edinburgh in 2003. She spent three years in practice before moving to the University of Cambridge as the farm animal resident and then to Lambert, Leonard and May. Her interests lie primarily in cattle medicine and surgery, and she is working towards a PhD in conjunction with the University of Lancaster's engineering department, using advances in technology that can be applied in the veterinary field.



Clearly, these cases are not always suitable candidates for surgery, either because the signs are advanced or the cost is prohibitive. However, if at all possible, I would recommend having

a go because success doesn't occur without trying and, in the worst case scenario, brain surgery on a freshly euthanised sheep is still rewarding and memorable. ■