

UNDERSTANDING YOUR FORAGE OVER THE WINTER

Some years are worse for twin-lamb disease, and this often comes down to two key factors: forage quality and flock health status. Even if you're feeding what seems like an adequate diet, underlying issues can tip the balance.

For example, a ewe suffering from Johne's disease (a chronic wasting condition) is far more vulnerable. Despite eating well, she cannot absorb nutrients effectively, leaving her energy-deficient and at risk of pregnancy toxemia.

If your ewes are in good condition but still going down with twin-lamb disease—despite feeding the same ration as last year—variation in forage quality could be the culprit. Silage and hay can differ dramatically between years and even between cuts within the same season. Energy, protein, and mineral levels fluctuate based on weather, cutting date, and preservation method. This means what worked last year might not meet requirements this year, especially in the final six weeks of pregnancy when 70% of fetal growth occurs and rumen space is reduced.

Twin-lamb disease is far more than a nutritional hiccup—it's a serious economic and welfare challenge for sheep farmers. Every case represents not only the suffering of the ewe but also potential losses in productivity and profitability.

When a ewe succumbs to pregnancy toxemia, the consequences can be severe:

- Dead or euthanized ewes, often at the most critical point in the production cycle.
- Weak or stillborn lambs, reducing flock output and future income.
- Costly emergency treatments, including veterinary visits, glucose drenching, and propylene glycol supplementation, which rarely guarantee full recovery.

Beyond direct costs, there's the hidden impact: time spent treating sick animals, stress on farm staff, and disruption to lambing schedules. In severe outbreaks, losses can spiral, affecting flock performance for the entire season.

The good news? Prevention is achievable and cost-effective. By investing in forage analysis and tailored feeding plans, you can identify nutritional gaps before they become a crisis. Knowing the energy, protein, and mineral content of your silage or hay allows you to:

- Match concentrate levels accurately, avoiding underfeeding or overspending.
- Plan mineral supplementation (lick buckets, boluses) based on actual need, not guesswork.
- Reduce unnecessary feed bills, while ensuring ewes receive the right balance for late pregnancy.

In short, proactive nutrition management is far cheaper—and far kinder—than firefighting twin-lamb disease after it strikes. It protects ewe health, lamb viability, and your bottom line.



DID YOU KNOW?

Holly, Megan & Susan can now test for twin lamb disease on farm with their portable Ketone readers. This is a quick and effective way to test if a ewe is short on energy or calcium.

DONT FORGET TO ORDER YOUR HEPTAVAC P!

As the season approaches, it's time to stock up on Heptavac P in our fridge. We are expecting there to be the usual supply issues and as members of the Flock Club we are keen you get the first offering. Shirley is committed to ensuring we have as much as possible prepared for everyone! We do also have stocks of Bravoxin-10 for those this vaccine.

To prevent any disappointment, please remember to call in your orders to our practice today.

We are happy to mark with your name and invoice later in 2026 when you need it. This way we know that you and your flock are covered.



BLUE TONGUE DO WE STILL NEED TO WORRY?

This year has brought a new challenge, Bluetongue 3 (BTV-3). So far in 2025 there has been 237 cases of bluetongue in Great Britain, with NI also losing its BTV free status at the end of November.

With winter on the way, the colder temperature means reduced midge activity and therefore reduced spread of BTV. Sadly, this does not mean we should forget about bluetongue especially as we head towards lambing.

If a pregnant ewe is infected with BTV it can cause lamb deformities or born weak or dead.

Therefore, it can present in a similar way to Schmallenberg. If you suspect either of these diseases then APHA are offering free testing of brain material. Other conditions, such as trace element deficiencies can cause similar signs of weak lambs so getting a diagnosis can be helpful to prevent more cases in the following years.





THE IMPORTANCE OF PREGNANCY DIAGNOSIS (PD) IN COWS

Pregnancy Diagnosis (PD) is a vital management tool in modern cattle farming. It involves determining whether a cow is pregnant after breeding, and it plays a crucial role in improving herd productivity, profitability, and overall animal health. Below, we explore why PD is essential and how it benefits farmers.

WHY PREGNANCY DIAGNOSIS YOUR COWS?

- Identify Pregnant vs. Non-Pregnant Cows PD helps farmers distinguish between cows that are pregnant and those that are not. This information is critical for making informed decisions about breeding, culling, and resource allocation.
- Improve Breeding Efficiency Detecting open (non-pregnant) cows early allows farmers to rebreed them promptly, reducing calving intervals and increasing the number of calves produced per year.
- Better Nutritional Management Pregnant cows have different nutritional requirements compared to non-pregnant cows. Knowing their status ensures that feed is tailored to support fetal development and maintain cow health.
- Economic Benefits By identifying non-pregnant cows early, farmers avoid wasting feed and housing resources. This leads to improved profitability and more efficient herd management.
- Health Monitoring PD can reveal reproductive issues such as infertility or early embryonic loss. Early detection allows for timely veterinary intervention, improving herd health and productivity.

Pregnancy Diagnosis (PD) in cows is a cornerstone of efficient herd management. By identifying pregnant and non-pregnant animals early, farmers can make informed decisions that improve breeding efficiency, optimize nutrition, and reduce unnecessary costs.

PD also helps detect reproductive issues promptly, ensuring healthier cows and more productive calving seasons. Ultimately, this simple yet powerful practice leads to better herd performance and increased profitability for the farm.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PREGNANCY DIAGNOSIS IN COWS?

1. Improved Breeding Efficiency
 - PD helps identify cows that are not pregnant (open cows) early.
 - Farmers can rebreed these cows quickly, reducing calving intervals and increasing the number of calves per year.
2. Better Nutritional Management
 - Pregnant cows have different feed requirements.
 - Knowing pregnancy status allows farmers to provide the right nutrition for fetal growth and cow health.
3. Economic Savings
 - Avoid wasting feed, housing, and veterinary resources on non-pregnant cows.
 - More efficient herd management leads to higher profitability.
4. Early Detection of Reproductive Issues
 - PD can reveal problems like infertility or early embryonic loss.
 - Early intervention improves herd health and future breeding success.
5. Strategic Culling Decisions
 - Non-pregnant cows can be culled or sold sooner, reducing unnecessary costs.
 - Helps maintain a productive and profitable herd.
6. Better Calving Planning
 - Knowing which cows are pregnant helps plan for calving seasons.
 - Ensures adequate facilities and labour during peak calving times.



DATES FOR THE DIARY

LAMBING COURSE

SATURDAY 17TH January

TIME: 9.30 -4PM, AT SEVERN EDGE FARM PRACTICE

FLOCK CLUB MEETING- SHEEP CASE MEDLEY

THURSDAY 8TH JANUARY

TIME: 6:30PM, THE DOWN INN

BEEF CLUB MEETING- JANUARY MEETING

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CALVES

TUESDAY 20TH JANUARY 2026

TIME: 6PM START, AT SEVERN EDGE FARM VETS

£125
INCL VAT

NEW FOR 2026!

Exciting Announcement for 2026: Small Holders Community Club

We are thrilled to share that we will be launching a Small Holders Community Club in 2026! We wholeheartedly invite anyone who wishes to join a small group of like-minded individuals to participate. We believe this initiative will foster a sense of togetherness and create a vibrant community in our area, where ideas can flourish and knowledge can be exchanged.

Reminder: Join Our Beef and Flock Club!

Don't forget about our Beef and Flock Club! It's not too late to sign up. If you have any questions, feel free to visit our practice and chat with the girls on the front desk. They will gladly guide you in the right direction.

happy new year

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT
THROUGHOUT THE YEAR!

