**Sheep lameness strategy**

Introduction:

Sheep lameness is present in most UK flocks to some extent. It is costly, and reduces the welfare of the animal. Traditionally, lameness has been treated by antibiotic spray to the infected feet, and trimming of the feet. This strategy has been shown to be fundamentally flawed and has actually led to increased spread and antibiotic resistance.

Aim:

To provide a workable framework to prevent outbreaks of lameness and maintain low levels of lameness within the flock. Preferably below 5% of total flock. This strategy offers a holistic approach that is scientific, evidence lead and follows industry best practise. The strategy is based on advice obtained from the farm’s veterinary health plan and the advice of the agriculture & horticulture development board (AHDB) via direct contact and via the AHDB EBLEX better returns programme advice on reducing lameness.

Strategy:

1. Isolate lame sheep onto hard standing – leaving non-lame sheep in pasture.
2. Identify the cause of lameness in the sheep – Collect photo evidence for potential veterinary diagnoses of pathogen.
3. Treat lame-sheep with slow release injection antibiotics and antibacterial spray on all four feet. Under utilising antibiotics will lead to antibiotic resistant and it is therefore essential both injection and spray are used together.
4. Evidence has shown that foot trimming increases the spread of the infection and is therefore not recommended.
5. Use Zinc Sulphate footbath as recommended by the AHDB.
6. Use footvax to vaccinate sheep. Two doses are required 6 weeks apart but must be minimum 4 weeks either side of lambing.
7. Disease spread prolifically when sheep are in close proximity and it is therefore recommended treated sheep are returned to fields after treatment.
8. Cull away any ewes and their offspring who have been inflicted more then once.
9. Always work using aseptic technic (cleaning equipment between use) to prevent spreading of infection during treatment.
10. Hard stand water troth and shelters – spread Lyme.