

## Enzootic abortion

Enzootic abortion is caused by a bacterium called *Chlamydophila* and is the most common cause of sheep abortion in the UK. It causes ewes to abort 2-3 weeks before term or produce lambs that are weak and rarely survive. The infection is spread through discharges from the uterus and placenta. The bacteria can remain viable on pasture for several weeks. Live lambs born to infected ewes or lambs fostered on will have a high chance of becoming infected. Enzootic abortion may also cause early loss of embryos resulting in a greater number of barren ewes at scanning time. Often ewes pick up infection as gimmers and abort the following year.

Control should be based around the following points

- ▣ Ewes that abort and deliver dead/weak lambs should be marked and isolated until uterine discharges have dried up.
- ▣ Aborted lambs and placenta should be removed from pasture/lambing sheds
- ▣ Hand washing after handling aborted ewes
- ▣ During a serious outbreak ewes can be treated with long - acting Terramycin
- ▣ Ewes that abort can be bred again but may shed Chlamydia during mating and lambing the following year
- ▣ Try to maintain a closed flock or obtain replacements from accredited flocks.

July is the time of year to be carrying out a vaccination programme. We would recommend vaccinating any hogs and gimmers due to lamb next year. The older sheep should have been exposed to the bacterium during previous years and hopefully be immune hence do not require vaccination. Vaccination involves a single 2ml dose during the 4 month period prior to mating. Vaccination **MUST** be performed at least 4 weeks before mating. Hogs can be vaccinated from 5 months of age. **DO NOT ADMINISTER TO PREGNANT ANIMALS.** The vaccine should last 3 years, but effectively for the productive life of the sheep in our experience. One important fact to note is that vaccinated animals can still abort the first year after

vaccination if they have been exposed to the bacteria at the previous lambing. This means that we should prepare for the odd abortion to continue next year. We would expect the lambing percentage to improve in vaccinated sheep, a conservative improvement of 10% would produce 10 extra lambs per 100. The pay back for a 10% improvement in lambing percentage would be almost tripling your money invested in vaccine.