

Enzootic abortion of Ewes (EAE)

Enzootic abortion is a serious disease of sheep because of the financial losses to the flock due to abortions which may affect up to 30% of ewes in a flock. The Shetland Animal Health Schemes operate a programme to prevent the introduction of EAE to Shetland and to enable flock owners to demonstrate freedom from EAE in their flocks.

This leaflet aims to provide information for producers on the disease and how to prevent its introduction to Shetland.

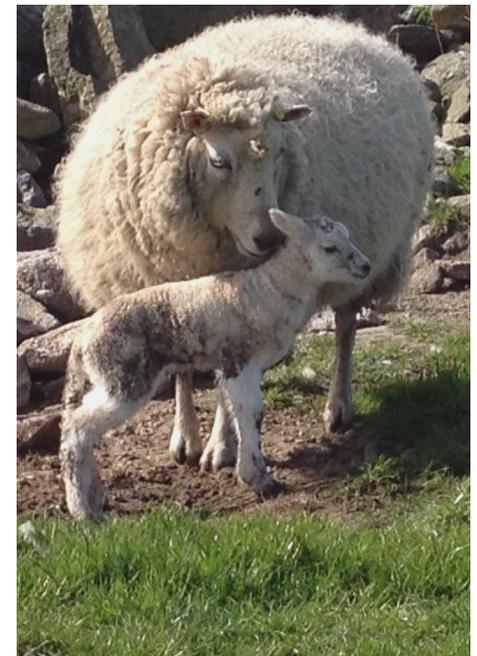
Shetland Animal Health Scheme

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ENZOOTIC ABORTION OF EWES



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DISEASE SUMMARY

Enzootic abortion is caused by a chlamydial infection. It largely causes abortion in the last 2-3 weeks of pregnancy. It may also cause the birth of weak lambs born before term or barren ewes.

It can also cause abortion and severe illness in pregnant women.

Lambs can become infected from their mother but not show any signs until they abort at their first or second lambing. The cleanings and fluids at lambing time are highly infectious to other female sheep. Ewes remain infectious as long as they are discharging, usually about 2 weeks post lambing. The organism can survive in bedding in a shed for up to 8 weeks post lambing.

Infection can spread very rapidly from one farm to another on boots, clothing, vehicles etc. if strict bio-security is not maintained. In the case of outdoor lambings, wildlife such as birds can spread infections by carrying infected cleanings onto another holding.

TESTING PROGRAMMES

All imported female sheep/goats are tested for EAE at the pier. They are then re-tested after their first lambing/kidding in Shetland. This is because the blood test at the pier will not identify all infected animals. It is only in late pregnancy that many sheep test positive for EAE. Positive testing females, their offspring and any other females from the same source must be returned to the vendor or destroyed.

All Shetland flocks are screened for EAE every three years. Abortions/still births should be reported to your vet and tested for EAE.

ADVICE TO IMPORTERS OF FEMALE SHEEP

Import the minimal number of female sheep needed for breeding purposes. Import only from EAE accredited flocks. These animals carry the least risk of introducing EAE to your flock. Remember requirements for isolation, strict bio-security and re-testing after imported female sheep first lamb in Shetland.

Do not import EAE vaccinated animals. Vaccinated animals can still introduce infection to your flock and may test positive for EAE on a blood test.

If any imported females are barren or abort, maintain strict isolation and bio-security and contact your local vet to test for EAE.

Female sheep of any age are a risk of introducing EAE as lambs can become infected from their mother and show no signs until they spread disease at their first lambing. Caddy lambs can introduce EAE to clean flocks.

If accredited sheep are not available consult with your vet as to the implications of buying non accredited female sheep. There is a particular need to consider the requirements for housing and isolation at their first lambing in Shetland and the implications of a positive EAE test both for the group of imported sheep and the rest of the flock. If a ewe testing positive for EAE has lambed in Shetland that flock will lose its EAE accredited status and sales of breeding stock will be restricted until it can be demonstrated by testing that no EAE infection remains in the flock. This is likely to be at least 16 months and could be over 2 years. If careful bio-security has not been maintained infection could easily spread at lambing time and infect the main flock.

In Shetland, were EAE to become established beyond small groups of imported sheep it would not be possible to eradicate it again. Imported non EAE accredited female sheep represent the greatest risk of introducing EAE to Shetland

SPECIFIC ADVICE FOR GOAT KEEPERS

Female goats can be infected with EAE and spread infection to other goats or sheep. It is therefore crucial that imported goats are included in the Shetland EAE scheme.

As goats may not be bred on an annual basis it is vital that importers notify their vet or animal health scheme officers when an imported goat is due to kid for the first time in Shetland so that it can be tested post kidding. Isolation and bio-security requirements at kidding are as described for sheep at lambing.