

Quick Reference Guide

Enzootic abortion of ewes, (EAE), is the most common infectious cause of abortion in UK sheep. Outbreaks of Enzootic abortion occur in all types of flock and result in serious economic losses.

The Sheep and Goat Health Scheme for Enzootic abortion free flocks is run by Scottish Agricultural College Veterinary Services, (SAC VS), and has members in Scotland, England and Wales.

EAE – The disease in brief

EAE is caused by a highly infectious bacteria called Chlamydophila abortus.

How is it spread?

EAE is mainly spread at lambing time but may also be spread in the mating season. Sheep become infected when they come into contact with aborted lambs and placentas, (cleansings). The vaginal discharges which occur before and after abortion and over the mating period, contaminate the environment and are another source of infection. Infection can also be spread on hands, boots and clothing. During the spring the bacteria can survive on pasture for several days. Wildlife and birds can pick up infected abortion material and carry it to neighbouring farms. The most common way of introducing EAE to a clean flock is through the purchase of infected ewe replacements.



What does it cause?

Ewes which are infected in one lambing season will often abort the following spring. The bacteria damages the placenta and the majority of EAE abortions occur two to three weeks before lambing is due to start. The affected ewes show no signs of ill health prior to aborting. The aborted lambs are usually fresh and well developed. Live born lambs are often weak and die soon after birth.

Once EAE infection is established within a flock it is persistent and difficult to eradicate.

EAE is a human health hazard which can pose a serious threat to pregnant women.

What is the economic impact?

The financial loss to the industry as a whole is estimated to be £20 million per annum.

Veterinary researchers at the University of Edinburgh* estimate that the risk of an outbreak of EAE in a flock purchasing gimmers is 1 in 10. They have calculated that:

Enzootic Abortion - The Facts

- EAE infection once established within a flock is persistent and difficult to eradicate
- EAE is a human health hazard which can pose a serious threat to pregnant women



If one infected ewe is introduced into a 1,000 ewe flock then in the first year the cost of a single abortion is £45 but many more ewes will become infected.

In year 2 the cost of an abortion storm affecting 5% of the flock will be £2250.

In year 3 the cost of an abortion storm affecting 30% of the flock will be £13500.

Once a ewe has aborted due to EAE, it will be immune and will not abort again due to this disease. If no steps are taken to prevent further spread of EAE in the flock, an annual ongoing abortion rate of 5% would be expected. This will represent a 10% reduction in gross margin every year.

*Reference Scott et al, Veterinary Journal, 2007, 522-521

Sheep and Goat Health Schemes – the benefits of joining

- Helps you to minimise the risk of introducing EAE into your flock.
- Gives you membership of a nationally recognised health scheme with the opportunity to screen for other diseases.
- Enables you to advertise and supply buyers looking for EAE free ewe replacements.
- Gives you the opportunity to add value to your female breeding stock.

ARE YOU IN A POSITION TO SUPPLY THIS MARKET



I would like to receive information on becoming a member of the EAE Accreditation Scheme.

Name
Address
Postcode
Telephone /Email

**Please fill in the this form and return it to
Premium Sheep and Goat Health Schemes
PO Box 5557, Inverness IV2 4YT
T: 01463 226995 F: 01463 711103
E: sghs@sac.co.uk SAC Website: www.sac.ac.uk/sghs**