

How to get the most out of your Flock Health Plan

Almost 4,000 Scottish farmers signed up for the Animal Health & Welfare Management Programme option in the Land Management Contract last year. There was a further opportunity to enrol in this 5 year programme earlier this year. The typical sheep farm can benefit considerably from having a written Animal Health & Welfare Programme because of the number and diversity of treatments and management practices that have to be undertaken throughout the year. The use of the correct product or practice at the correct time can do much to improve flock health and performance.

Record Keeping

Data collected on specific productivity measures (e.g. number of lambs born alive and dead) and disease symptoms (e.g. cases of lameness) will greatly help when you sit down with your vet to review your flock's health plan. The information provided may identify where systems need to be revised or new treatments introduced. Basic record keeping maybe the shepherd's diary but SAC has developed a useful record book that can be used in all weathers.

Planning Meeting

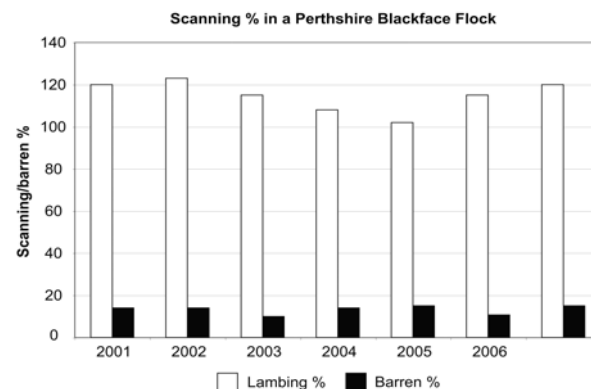
The records for this Perthshire Blackface ewe flock showed a decline in scanning percentage from over 120% in 2001 and 2002 to only 102% in 2005. The barren ewe rate was steady at just under the target of <15% (see figure 1). In discussion with the veterinary surgeon samples were taken to check for liver fluke disease, parasitic worms and trace element deficiency. Liver fluke disease and cobalt deficiency are known to occur on this farm and the treatment protocols were satisfactory. The tupps were checked to ensure that they were fertile and again no problems identified. However it was felt that tup hoggs may have been slow to come forward and a decline in grazing quality towards the end of tupping may have resulted in the ewes suffering a fall in body condition. A decision was made to put the tup hoggs to the ewes 3 days earlier and introduce feed blocks for the ewes to maintain body condition. This spring the scanning percentage

increased to 115% and the proportion of barren ewes fell to 10.7%.

Benchmarking

The sheep flock must hit its production targets to achieve its profit targets. For most commercial flocks the key target is the number of lambs sold. This figure is influenced by various factors throughout the production cycle including the number of ewes scanned in lamb and percentage of lambs weaned. If lambs are sold for slaughter, is the enterprise achieving maximum gain by ensuring lambs produced are in the top market specification? SEERAD have identified a number of benchmarking indices for the benchmarking option in the LMCs. This data will be of immense value to vets and farmers in refining their flock health plans. Meanwhile the SAC Farm Management Handbook 2005/2006 provides an essential record for UK farm business management. Copies can be obtained from SAC, West Mains Road, Edinburgh EH9 3JG or your local SAC Advisory Office.

Figure 1



Success through **Knowledge**



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

This project is funded by SEERAD



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Ref 0506/0038