MONITOR FARM Scotland

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STIRLINGSHIRE

Winter Meeting Report
Scanning and Managing OPA in your flock
11 October 2023

MEETING REPORT

Scanning and Managing OPA (Jaagsiekte) in Your Flock and the Benefits of Blood Testing Pre-Tupping for Minerals and Other Iceberg Diseases

Around **50** members of the farming community attended the meeting. **Dr Chris Cousens** from Moredun presented on Managing OPA in your flock. You can view the full presentation HERE.

OPA is caused by a retrovirus, which is referred to as **Jaagsiekte** Sheep Retrovirus or "JSRV" for short. This virus infects cells within the lungs of sheep, causing **tumours** to develop and fluid to accumulate within the airways. JSRV present within both the tumours and the fluid is a source of **infection** to other sheep.

Symptoms of OPA include respiratory signs and ill thrift. Infected animals may also display lethargy and exercise intolerance during gatherings or whilst being handled. The sudden death of sheep in good body condition can be due to secondary infection with pasteurella bacteria which cause pneumonia.

It should be **noted** that several of these clinical signs are very similar to that of **other** iceberg diseases - especially Maede Visna.

There is **no** treatment or vaccine for OPA. To **reduce** the risk of transmission you need to identify sheep with OPA as early as possible and remove them from the flock.

There are no good laboratory diagnostic tests for pre-clinical OPA.

Currently the **best** option is ultrasound scanning of the chest.

One of these ewes scanned positive for OPA – but which one?

Ultrasound Scanning to Identify OPA in Flocks

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Ultrasound screening looks useful for most flocks.

- to help to **reduce disease** prevalence (and therefore risk of passing on disease)
- or to show that a flock is **low risk** (several negative whole flock scans)

BUT the results must be interpreted properly. A single scan is a snapshot -"the vet did not find a lesion in the scannable region of the lungs of that sheep on that day".

To reduce risk of spreading OPA all sheep in the flock should be scanned and **positives** should be **removed**. Scanning only sale sheep should not be considered sufficient.

Sheep with pre-clinical OPA are a risk of **transmission** to others in the flock and especially to their lambs.

Regular scanning at 6 to 12-month intervals with **prompt culling** of all **positive** sheep can be used as an OPA risk reduction strategy within a flock.

Veterinary surgeons experienced in the technique can scan up to **120** adult sheep per hour but 60 to 80 is a more realistic figure. Typical fees are £1 to £2 per head.

Control & Prevention

The purchase of clinically healthy but infected **replacement** animals is the biggest **risk** factor for the introduction of OPA to a flock.

Once introduced to a flock for the first time JRSV can **spread quickly** and high numbers of individuals can succumb to

OPA.

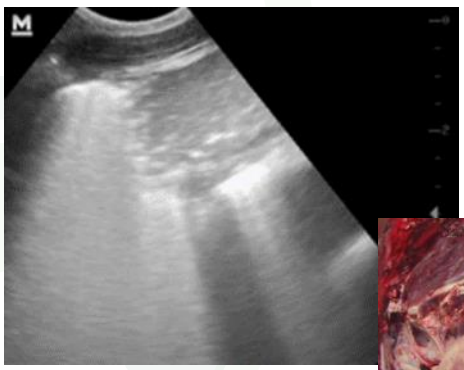
To minimise transmission there are two aspects to consider:

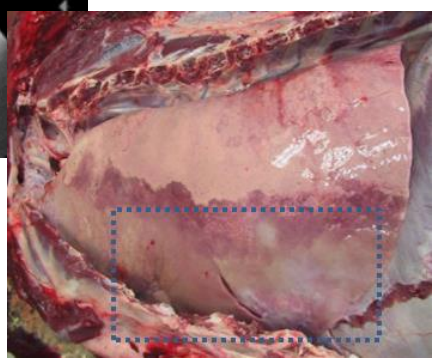
1. Reducing **contact** between individuals
2. **Removing** infected animals as soon as possible

Read more about Control & Prevention HERE

Watch a **video** on OPA scanning HERE

Ally from Endrick Vets demonstrated OPA Scanning





The denser white areas indicate suspect tumours

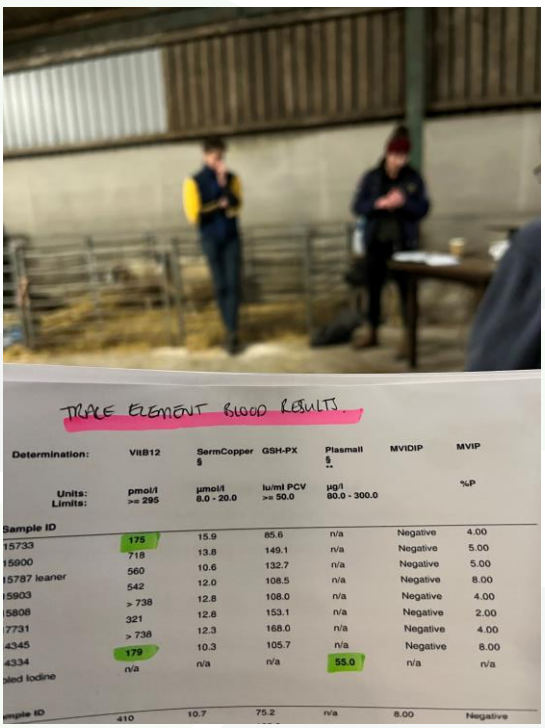
Benefits of Blood Sampling Your Flock for Minerals and Iceberg Diseases

Ishbel from **Endrick Vets** had taken **blood** samples from 8 animals in each of the ewe flocks to assess the **mineral levels** and the results were discussed at the meeting.

The averages have all tested to be adequate apart from **the Drumhead gimmers** which are **below average** in **Vitamin B12**. A pooled **iodine** test highlighted **lower** than average levels in the Blairfad cross ewes and Drumhead cross ewes and gimmers.

The **next step** will be to reference the results with the mineral/vitamin content of the forage crops and implement a **targeted plan** of mineral supplementation.

The flocks were tested for **Maedi Visna** and were all **clear**.



Determination:	VitB12	SermCopper §	GSH-PX	Plasmall §	MVIDIP	MVIP
Units:	pmol/l	µmol/l	iu/ml PCV	µg/l		%P
Limits:	>= 295	8.0 - 20.0	>= 50.0	80.0 - 300.0		
Sample ID						
15733	175	15.9	85.6	n/a	Negative	4.00
15900	718	13.8	149.1	n/a	Negative	5.00
15787 leaner	560	10.6	132.7	n/a	Negative	5.00
15903	542	12.0	108.5	n/a	Negative	8.00
15808	> 738	12.8	108.0	n/a	Negative	4.00
17731	321	12.8	153.1	n/a	Negative	2.00
4345	> 738	12.3	168.0	n/a	Negative	4.00
4334	179	10.3	105.7	n/a	Negative	8.00
led Iodine	n/a	n/a	n/a	55.0	n/a	n/a
mple ID	410	10.7	75.2	n/a	8.00	Negative

Vet Ishbel discussed the blood results

The phrase "Ice-berg Diseases" refers to a collection of **chronic**, infectious conditions which affect **sheep**. These diseases are so named due to the fact that for every visibly affected animal, there will be **numerous** other infected animals within the flock carrying the disease whilst only displaying **sub clinical** symptoms. Therefore, visibly affected animals generally only represent the "tip of the ice-berg".

As a result, it can often take some time before farmers become **aware** that they have an issue with these diseases within their flock. These conditions are a major source of **economic** loss for farmers, **reducing** both animal health, productivity and performance.

There are **five** main Ice-berg Diseases which affect UK farmers and these are – Borders Disease; Contagious Lymphadenitis; Ovine Johnes Disease; Maedi Visna and Ovine Pulmonary Adenocarcinoma (OPA).

There is a Preparing for Sustainable Farming grant to help you fund Iceberg disease screening. Speak to your **vet** for **advice** and further information.

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To find out more or to sign up, please contact:

Regional Adviser - Christine Cuthbertson

07769 366671
ccuthbertson@qmscotland.co.uk
monitorfarms.co.uk

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