

NITHSDALE MONITOR FARM Lamb Finishing – SMARTShot B¹²



THE CHALLENGE

The Clonhie community group recognised that Cobalt deficiency is a common problem locally and thought it important to find out if giving Vitamin B¹² to lambs would make much difference to their performance.

It is recognised that Cobalt is deficient in most local soils and the community group were becoming aware of reports that lamb performance can be improved by giving them Cobalt drenches, boluses or Vitamin B12 injections to improve growth rates. Young, growing lambs have a high requirement for Cobalt which is used to produce Vitamin B12, important for energy metabolism. They will receive some Cobalt from their mothers milk, more so if ewes are bolused or are fed concentrates in early lactation, but as their rumen develops and their

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diet transitions from milk to grass it is crucial that they have their own supply or growth rates will slow down.

Cobalt drenches need to be given almost weekly to be fully effective, which is not practical pre weaning and boluses, although they last for several months are large and tricky to administer to young lambs. Using wormer products with added Cobalt is not advised as the main method of supplying Cobalt, in addition it is not advised to worm lambs frequently these days. So it was decided that it would be interesting to see whether the relatively large expense of using SMARTShot B¹², which also lasts for several months, would be financially worthwhile.

SMARTShot B¹² is a long acting injection of vitamin B¹² for sheep and cattle, which can improve energy and protein metabolism.

WHAT WE DID ON FARM

A proportion of the Clonhie 2017 lamb crop were given a 1.0ml injection of SMARTShot B¹² at marking time and the performance of all the lambs was then monitored using the electronic recording system. The growth rates of those treated with SMARTShot B¹² was then compared with those not treated.

THE RESULTS

The average liveweight of the injected lambs at weaning was 1.32kg higher than that of those not treated. The cost of the injections was 94p/lamb. The increased liveweight at weaning was worth £2.68/head (@ £2.00/kg) leaving a benefit of £1.74/lamb by weaning time.

WHAT HAS CHANGED ON FARM?

All Lambs received an injection of SMARTShot B¹² at marking time in 2018.

In 2019, given the increased number of singles and excellent grazing available, it was decided not to treat the lambs with SMARTShot B¹² as it was anticipated that most of the lambs would be thriving well enough to finish off grass in good time.

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