



alnorthumbria
farm vets

Newsletter

March 2026

Spring is well and truly underway with lambings, calvings, caesareans and related cases keeping us busy both in and out of hours. As always hygiene, colostrum and navel dipping ideally with an iodine-phenol combination or NoBacZ Navel is the best advice to keep your calves and lambs healthy this spring and going forwards. We can blood test calves in house as a marker of colostrum provision.

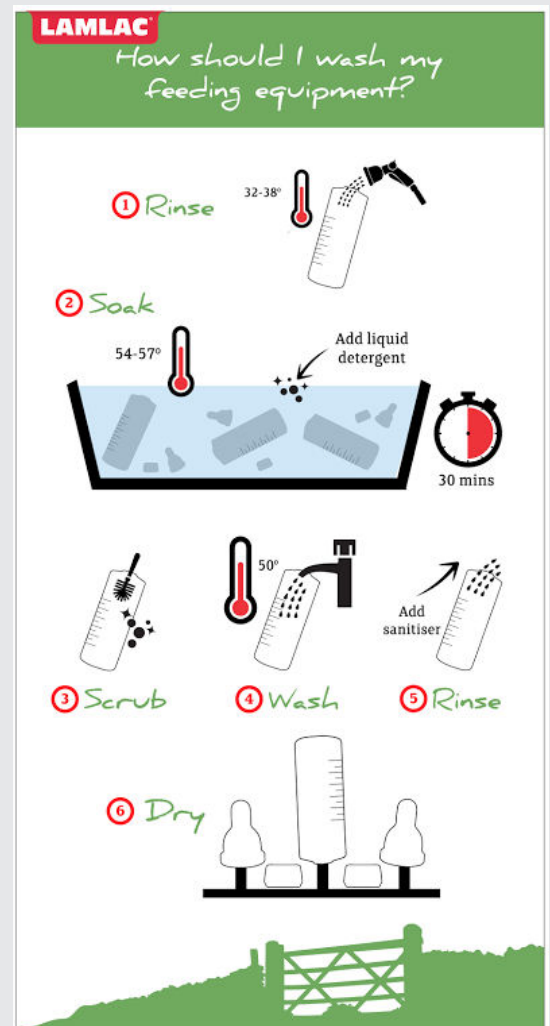
Hygiene At Lambing Time

Risk of diseases such as joint ill, scours and watery mouth can be significantly reduced with good hygiene— saving both time and lives at this busy time of year.

Key hygiene points:

- **Colostrum:** supplying vital support to lambs, both nutritional and immunity support with antibodies. By making sure that bottles, tubes, teats, mixing buckets and any other equipment used in feeding lambs is cleaned and disinfected.
- **Navel dipping:** aim to dip the navel twice. Once just after birth and again 6hrs later. This helps to dry and disinfect the navel quickly while adding a protective barrier. Options for disinfectants for the navel include iodine solution and **NoBacZ**.
- **Lambing Pens:** making a clean and dry environment for ewes and lambs can be done by:
 - Making sure that bedding is dry and cleansing is removed from pens.
 - Using **Stalosan** or alternatives to disinfect and dry pens regularly.
 - Keeping water troughs clean and don't use them for washing hands.
 - Isolate aborted ewes from others.

By adding a few steps into management of lambing pens and feeding will help have a more productive lambing.



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Student Article - The Downer Ewe - Lisa Vernon

In late February, myself and the vet were called out to see a down ewe.

On the journey over, we discussed the most common diagnosis when attending a down ewe just before lambing time, hypocalcaemia and pregnancy toxoemia being top of the list. However, the ewe's presentation on arrival immediately suggested a different pathology. She was in lateral recumbency, pressed against a wall, with her neck twisted to the right. She was also unresponsive, blind, and showing skin twitching.



The vet immediately realised what was going on, and to confirm his suspicions, he palpated along the inside of the ewe's mouth to assess facial muscle tone. The ewe showed asymmetrical tone, consistent with unilateral cranial nerve deficits. Combined with the head tilt, this strongly supported a diagnosis of listerial meningoencephalitis.

This disease is caused by the bacteria *Listeria monocytogenes*, and the cause of infection is usually mouldy silage, as the bacteria multiplies in high pH environments. Listeriosis can also commonly cause abortions, uveitis (also known as silage eye), and septicaemia.

The prognosis for listeriosis is often guarded to poor, largely because *Listeria monocytogenes* invades and multiplies within the brainstem. Effective treatment requires antibiotics capable of achieving therapeutic concentrations across the blood-brain barrier.

In addition to antibiotics, NSAIDs should be given, as well as considering supportive care such as B vitamins (also used to treat CCN) and fluid therapy.

The prognosis for listeriosis is fatal if untreated, however when treatment is commenced, prognosis varies depending on severity of the clinical signs and how quickly treatment is initiated.

Dropping off Sheep abortions samples at the vets

- Place the aborted lamb/s and placenta (cleansings) in a bag (no leaks!).
- Phone the surgery to let us know you are bringing samples in and discuss the case with a vet.
- DO NOT COME INTO RECEPTION WITH THE SAMPLES. Each branch will have a designated area to leave them outside.
- The vet will process the samples to be sent to the lab.
- The aborted materials need to be collected afterwards to be disposed of by the farmer (or a disposal fee will be charged).
- Remember to wear gloves and wash your hands after handling any abortion materials.
- Follow strict biosecurity measures on farm to prevent disease spread
- Speak to your vet for advice.

Don't Forget to Use!

- **Clostridial vaccinations** - Heptavac P (or Covexin / Bravoxin for certain farms) in ewes for boosters 4-6wks pre-lambing.
- **Fluke Treatments** - Solantel from now on to kill fluke in sheep. Speak to us about an injectable medication to kill adult fluke in out-wintered cattle from now on, or for housed cattle not treated in the autumn
- **Stalosan** disinfectant / drying agent for lambing / calving pens (organic version available).
- **Lice Treatments** - Spotinor - for lice problems in housed cattle. Crovect or Dysect for lice problems in sheep, and ticks in areas known to have Tick Borne Fever. These will not treat sheep scab so if concerned contact us.
- **Calf scour vaccination** - Rotavec Corona/Fencovis for spring calving cows to protect calves from scour.
- **Bovela and Spirovac** - Cattle vaccinations for BVD and leptospirosis respectively, pre-turnout.
- **Ewe Boost** - Treatment and support for ewes with twin lamb disease.