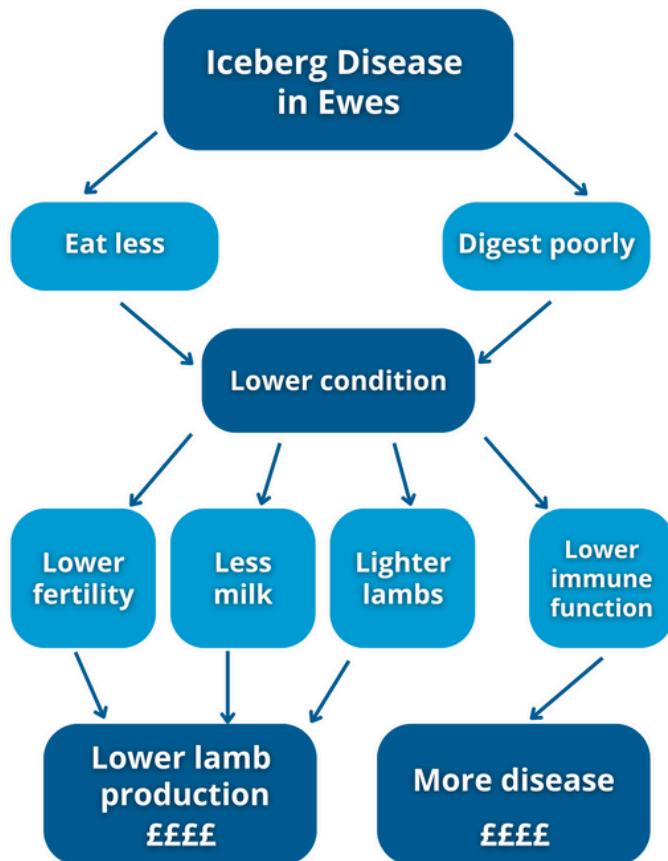


# MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## IS YOUR FLOCK AT RISK? THE IMPORTANCE OF TESTING FOR ICEBERG DISEASES

Iceberg diseases are a drain on your flock efficiency and profitability, chipping away at production:



If you want to know more about which diseases are causing issues in your flock, now is the best time to investigate and see what you have. Once you've drawn your cull ewes, pull out any poor ewes that do not have an obvious reason for being lean. If they are broken-mouthed, well past cast, or have had lameness or mastitis issues then that explains it. However, those that don't have an excuse may give you the answer you need to boost your flock's health. We will come out to lung scan and take blood and dung samples from some of these ewes, looking for the diseases that are likely to be a risk – you don't have to look for every disease.

Eleanor Legg BVM&S MRCVS

What diseases are we talking about? And how much does testing cost?

### Maedi Visna lab fee £52.10 for 12\*

MV virus causes lung and nerve damage and chronic-ill thrift. The disease doesn't show any classic signs to help us see it in a live animal, so blood testing 12 cull ewes will tell you if you have the disease. Older ewes are best for this test as it takes 6-12 months from infection to turn blood positive. If you have this disease then group management can limit the spread. If you are free of it, biosecurity is key to ensure you don't buy it in with new stock.

### Border Disease lab fee £10.07 per sample\*

BD virus is similar to BVD in cattle, causing most losses when pregnant animals are infected. Abortions can occur, but surviving lambs will usually be weaker and smaller. They can be persistently infected, meaning they continue to shed the virus throughout their lives, spreading the disease through the flock. PI lambs often have tremors and grow thicker coats, giving them the "hairy shaker" nickname but many infections show no classic signs. Adding this test to the bloods for MV will show your flock status, and control measures are the same as above.

### Johnes Disease lab fee £52.10 per pool of up to 6\*

This bacteria (MAP) is swallowed and damages the gut, invading the intestines and causing chronic thickening, meaning ewes get less out of their feed. Young lambs are most susceptible to infection, so ewes shedding the disease at lambing time are the highest risk to your flock's health. The textbook case is a very lean ewe with watery diarrhoea and a good appetite, but this only happens at the last stages. Unlike the disease in cattle, where blood tests are used to screen for infection, this is not useful in sheep, where looking for the bacteria in the dung is more reliable. We need dung from up to 6 individuals (separate pots of at least 10g) to pool to screen the ewes. If you buy in from different sources, one pool per source could be helpful, but otherwise one or two pools will be useful. If you have this in your flock, managing lambing practices will likely be the best way to control the impact, but vaccination can also be used.

### **Ovine Pulmonary Adenocarcinoma** *charged vet time!*

OPA, also known as Jaagsiekte, is another virus that causes tumours to grow in the lungs. The lung damage increases the risk of pneumonia and poor respiratory function. Infected ewes are often slow to gather or get out of breath much more than healthy sheep. The classic sign of clear frothy fluid pouring from the nose can be unreliable here too. There is no blood test for OPA, but screening the batch of ewes by scanning their lungs will tell you if this disease is affecting your flock. Culling ewes with visible lesions while they're still fit is the best way to reduce infection rates.

### **Caseous Lymphadenitis** lab fee £11.45 per sample\*

CLA is always included in the iceberg disease group, but in the UK, it tends to cause swellings around the face and throat, which don't usually have a direct impact on productivity for commercial flocks. The lumps can hinder swallowing/cudding, and they are a serious worry for flocks that sell breeding sheep, but most flocks won't need to look for this one.

Government funding is available in 2024 to look into iceberg diseases! Every sheep farmer in Scotland with over 20 sheep can claim £250 back with a form from us. If you haven't claimed the Preparing for Sustainable Farming grant before you will also get a £250 top up so that's up to £500 towards the cost of having us out to screen and help you limit any losses.

*\*2024 SRUC price*

*†manpower is key here – folk to keep sheep coming forward to scanning keeps it quick*

- The PSF grant allows 2 intervention claims in 2024 per enterprise.
- Other sheep options are for sheep scab, lameness, liver fluke or roundworms.
- Cattle options are bull fertility, calf respiratory disease, liver fluke and roundworms.
- £250 per intervention in 2024



## **BEEF MEETING** **Calf Health and Mineral Deficiencies**

**A huge thank you to everyone who joined us for our Beef Focus Group meetings in Lanark and Stirling!**

We had a great turnout and an informative discussion on Calf Health and Mineral Deficiencies, and we were pleased to have David Bell & Callum Harvey from Agrimin with us.

Our focus group members had the opportunity to compare their calf health data against the group's benchmarks, followed by a talk from David on trace elements, bolusing and mineral deficiencies.

Stay tuned for details on our next meeting, which will focus on calving!

