



February 2025

Dear Members,

We are excited to be sending you the latest proceedings and hope that you find it interesting. Under the reality and threat of emerging disease incursions, the committee have been busy attending meetings with Ruminant Health & Welfare Steering Group, Defra, APHA, VMD, Bluetongue Roundtable with Ministers, SCOPS steering Group, Sheep Scab Strategy, Pathway Veterinary Group and OPA Working Group on behalf of the society, to name a few. These meetings have resulted in items we would like to draw your attention to. With thanks for your ongoing support.

Request for case examples after lack of vaccines

Concerning the ongoing issues with vaccine supply, the Animal Health and Welfare Board for England (AHWBE) have been putting pressure on DEFRA to find solutions to resolve the situation in the short and longer term. To add weight to their efforts, they would like evidence of the impact that unreliable supply is having on livestock. Evidence could include

- Case reports from individual farms with outbreaks of vaccinatable disease
- Increased mortality rates compared with previous years
- Increases in abortions compared to previous years
- Number of flocks not vaccinated, we have some historical national figures we can use, but local's stories would also be helpful
- Increases in clostridial disease diagnoses on postmortem

If you have any data relating to a particular case, please check that your clients are willing to let you share it. Encourage them that the intention of the AHWBE is to persuade government to act. Please ensure that the data is **FULLY AND COMPLETELY ANONYMISED**. Please then send it to secretariat@sheepvetsoc.org.uk.

Work with BVA on tail docking and castration

The BVA's view is to reduce these procedures and to add details of alternative methods and they want feedback from SVS. The committee discussed various related issues and that in some areas and depending on the farm product, tail docking and castration have been reduced. In some management situations, such as store lambs, bigger farms can keep the sexes separate to prevent unwanted pregnancies but where this is not practical, castration is still very much required.

****NEW** SVS BTV3 guidance - Bluetongue awareness and raising vaccination**

Over the next few months, farmers and their vets are facing tough choices, due to the uncertainty around the spread and severity of *Bluetongue virus* serotype 3 (BTV3), which crossed the channel from Europe in August 2024 into the UK. For further information and copy of our guidance:

<https://sheepvetsoc.org.uk/knowledge-hub/svs-btv3-guidance/>

ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE PATHWAY

The only number to call for queries is 03000 200 301

This is the RPA call centre and all staff should be able to transfer calls to the correct team even if the first person who answers doesn't have all the answers.

Farmers can also email this address to raise queries: Ruralpayments@defra.gov.uk

Regarding timings between visits see the flowchart at the bottom of this blogpost but don't forget sheep have 4 years of testing <https://ruralpayments.blog.gov.uk/2024/09/19/get-funding-to-improve-animal-health-and-welfare-your-questions-answered/>

Warning to check farmers' agreement number before doing Pathway Follow Up visits

The agreement number must start with IAHW and not AHWR. If the agreement number was issued before the end of June 2024, it will start with AHWR and AHWR agreements now only allow for a single claim for a Review – this changed in January 2025, prior to that you could claim a Follow Up with an AHWR agreement.

From January 2025, farmers with an existing AHWR agreement need to sign up for a new agreement before they can do a Follow Up. The new agreement number will start with IAHW. If they've already claimed for a Review on the AHWR number, farmers can go ahead with a Follow Up and claim for it with their new IAHW reference, providing the claim is made within 10 months of the Review claim and that the IAHW number was issued before they did the Follow Up.

An IAHW agreement allows for multiple claims – up to three Reviews and Follow Ups until the scheme ends in June 2027.

There is some information on this on the gov.uk website at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/farmers-how-to-apply-for-funding-to-improve-animal-health-and-welfare#what-to-do-if-you-completed-a-review-in-the-old-animal-and-health-welfare-service>

Events

Spring online conference: May 2025 -Date to be confirmed.

Autumn Conference: 22nd – 24th September 2025 in Llandrindod, Wales

Check out our website for other news and events <https://sheepvetsoc.org.uk/>

Yours sincerely,



Kim Hamer VetMB CertAVP(SHEEP) Dip.ECSRHM MRCVS
Sheep Veterinary Society President