

B.A.B.S NEWSFLASH No12

MARCH 2009

Hello everyone,

I hope you are all well and enjoying the better weather. After a mad couple of weeks I am pleased to say that my kiddings are all over and so far so good, all mums and kids doing well. I was a little concerned at first as my first kid returned from a 2pm disbudding and stayed asleep in the kitchen until 9pm. Apparently another anaesthetic used for the goats has been taken off the market and my vets are having to use a new one which seems to send the kids into a very deep sleep. After the first disbudding the vets used a medication to bring the following batches of kids around. They have still been very drowsy well into the evening, but do not seem to have come to any harm. I expect I will have to pay extra! I will let you know the cost when the bill comes in it will be interesting to compare prices from around the country.

STUD LIST

We are hoping to get the stud list out even earlier this year to give people a chance to see what is available well before the breeding season. We are again hoping to get a comprehensive list of all the males that are out there, so please send in details of all your males even if you do not wish to let them be used by other herds at this time. We realize that some males you may not wish to keep and may move on. Just let us know and we can add your provisos. We do understand that asking for an early list may mean changes may well be made by the autumn.

Please send your male's details to

Debbie Vernon Westward, Faversham Road, Wychling, Kent ME9 0DH

Tel 01795 886202 email shanverngoats@googlemail.com

For Sale

\$208/331+Wedgewood Jambo BA017139D

\$148/208+ Broadwater Pieteron BA017739D

R 148 Broadwater Pomfret *4 Br Ch BA017224D

Contact; Sue Gow (Wiltshire) Tel 01249 720621or email robingow@tiscali.co.uk

Goat Veterinary Society News

BLUETONGUE UPDATE March 1st 2009

It is interesting to note that during February, 4 cases of Bluetongue have emerged in Scandinavia. All were originally picked up on surveillance of bulk milk samples, which have been followed up in detail.

2 cases are in Sweden, one just west of Kalskrona, and the other at Kalmar, about 50 miles further north. Both are BTV8 infections.

One of these cases includes a PCR positive animal which must have been quite a surprise find. That however underlines just how difficult it might be to eradicate BTV from the UK without full a very good take up of vaccination in 2009.

Bulk milk surveillance is not being carried out in the UK this winter, and so it is a matter of concern that this discovery was only made through bulk milk monitoring, and that is a very inexpensive method of monitoring which has not been applied in the UK.

Apparently it has not been "verified". However it seems to have proved its value in Sweden. It does seem that bulk milk sampling has the ability to flag up possible problems at a minimal cost.

The Two cases in Norway are both in the southern peninsula. Again, both were revealed through bulk milk sampling. Both are in the Kristiansand peninsula of southern Norway.

These two cases have as yet not been serotyped, but it would be very surprising if it were not BTV 8.

SHORT DATED VACCINE

DEFRA have put out the following advice.

"Farmers and veterinary professionals are reminded that Bluetongue Vaccines should not be used beyond their expiry date.

Intervet have worked with Defra and the Veterinary Medicines Directorate to investigate the possibility of extending the expiry dates on some of the early expiring stocks of vaccine. However, the medicines legislation does not allow for the extension of shelf lives for products after they have entered the supply chain. This means that extensions are not possible. Livestock keepers should therefore continue to abide by the expiry dates given on the vaccine packaging".

That statement came out late on Friday 27th. I appreciate that it is not a lot of help when so much vaccine expired the following day!!

DEFRA continue to extol the need for vaccination again in 2009. WE realise all too well that a combination of bad weather and good uptake of vaccine in the front line of infection last year were the only things that avoided disaster. I can only say that we have not looked as hard for BTV over the winter as have for instance Sweden and Norway, and their experience shows all too well that we are still in VERY serious danger, made worse by potential new sources of infection from various PCR positive imports last year. The reported suggestions that there is a low appetite for revaccination this year is therefore worrying, if understandable. Too low a level of vaccination this year could lead to a nasty shock if weather conditions are right.

GOAT IDENTIFICATION

DEFRA have announced that sheep and goats going for slaughter before 12 months of age will not need electronic identification from December 31st 2009 onwards, just a single conventional tag. It is not yet clear whether this means that second tags will not be needed until the age of 12 months. I suspect they will be needed, but implementation of the newly negotiated rule is to be subject to further consultation, so there will be a chance at least to argue the point again!!

BLUETONGUE VACCINATION March 4th 2009. IMPORTANT

The use of any BTV vaccine in goats continues currently to be off label. That means that the prescribing veterinary surgeon should give the client the best available information to enable that client to make a properly considered decision.

The GVS does not make any specific recommendation of any particular vaccine, but provides information to members to help them guide their clients as and when it becomes available. The GVS is extremely grateful for the help they have had from manufacturers in compiling this information, but must make it clear that as with any other product without a country and species specific Marketing Authorisation, the final decision on use, and final acceptance of any risk lies at all times with the client. This information is provided in good faith and in consultation with manufacturers with the object of promoting best practice as applicable to each vaccine.

Neither GVS nor any manufacturer can take responsibility in the event of this advice subsequently being proven to need amendment. The GVS welcomes the interest and concern being taken by manufacturers in researching the use of their vaccines in goats. Inevitably that means that updates can only be put out as and when an advance of knowledge is made concerning the use of each particular vaccine in turn, and that that advice will vary from vaccine to vaccine, and is subject to change at any time.

INTERVET Vaccine Update: March 4th 2009

A recent telephone call to the Intervet Schering-Plough helpline, established that they are now advising callers that revaccination of goats with Nobilis BTV8 can be carried out with a single booster dose, not more than 12 months after the previous vaccination.

Best practice continues to be that revaccination is carried out in anticipation of the vector season, in effect around April .

USE of the MERIAL Vaccine

Merial have kindly made the following statement concerning the use of their vaccine in goats.

“Vets should be reassured that highly purified BTVPUR vaccines have been used on a large scale in Europe since 2004, and have an excellent efficacy and safety profile in the target species. (licensed for cattle and sheep). We have no concerns regarding safe use in goats, but full efficacy is yet to be demonstrated. (Studies not completed).

BTVPUR vaccination in goats is off-label and as such must always be subject to the prescriber making his own assessment of the relative risks and benefits.

Merial has direct experience of use of BTVPUR in goats and we have no concerns regarding safety.

We know that goats require two doses of vaccine 1 month apart to achieve significant levels of sero-neutralizing antibodies, (Similar pattern to cattle)

We do not have challenge study data to demonstrate efficacy, and neither has any duration of immunity been established.

Vaccination should be carried out prior to the main vector season (E.G. in early spring.)

For primary vaccination, the evidence above suggests 2 doses one month apart are required.

Revaccination should occur prior to the next vector season.

There is no evidence one way or the other as to whether revaccination with BTV vaccine in goats requires a single dose or a repeat of the primary course. **However, based on current knowledge and experience, Merial recommend that the single dose or course are given annually prior to the vector season.** This decision should be made by the prescriber, each of whom may have their own preferred approach. There is nothing wrong with this provided they (and their) clients are clear as to the background and the fact there is simply no evidence either way, and the biggest “Risk” is one of failure to achieve full immunity.

In the unlikely event that vets experience any problems surrounding the use of BTVPUR in goats, Merial will work with them to support investigating such cases”.

Merial have also confirmed that they consider that while any primary vaccination should consist of two doses of the same vaccine, subsequent revaccination can be with either vaccine.

FORT DODGE Animal Health

Fort Dodge Animal Health introduced a cattle BTV vaccine Zulvac8 Bovis , last Autumn. The company at that time suggested that this vaccine should not be used in sheep or goats. We are aware that it has been recommended for use in goats in certain areas, and have made enquiries from Fort Dodge. They tell us, which is common knowledge, that their sheep

BTV8 vaccine is at an advanced development stage. They, like the other two manufacturers have been doing trial work in goats, the results of which will be used to guide veterinary surgeons in its use in goats, which we assume will at least initially be off label. We will update you as soon as is appropriate.

In the meantime, any use of Zulvac8 Bovis would be at the risk of the client and on the recommendation of the prescribing veterinary surgeon.

BTV in EUROPE update

As anticipated, the 2 cases in Norway have been confirmed as BTV8.

Reports that were not published on the DEFRA and OIE websites which are the ones I rely on have come to my notice that it was reported a month ago that BTV11 is now present in Belgium. It appears that the initial case was picked up on serosurveillance in November, but could not originally be typed. Virus isolation and PCR testing was negative.

It is thus assumed that the infection was picked up sometime in the summer of 2008, though it is impossible to know how it got there. Another 7 farms in Belgium have since disclosed seropositive cases, but only about 2 animals overall have shown any signs of disease that might have been Bluetongue.

I have to confess that I have not been able to find out much about this strain, any experts out there, HELP!! From what I can glean on the Web, it seems to be relatively innocuous all round, and has mainly been seen in North America. I am open to correction!!

Final figures in France to the end of 2008 are that around 24,000 premises became infected with BTV8, and around 4400 with BTV1. Of those, 82 had the misfortune to have both.

BLUETONGUE UPDATE March 6th 2009

BTV6 in Holland and Germany, and BTV11 in Belgium.

BTV6 has been found on 22 holdings in Holland, with 23 seropositive animals, and on 23 holdings in Germany, with 45 animals positive. BTV11 has been detected on 14 premises in northern Belgium. Clinical signs have in each case been either non-existent, or so mild as not to attract attention at the time. It is now considered certain that the BTV6 episode is the result of use of a South African produced modified Live attenuated vaccine, which would have been illegal. That also probably applies to the BTV11 finding, though investigations, centred at IAH Pirbright, are at an earlier stage.

Extensive surveillance in Belgium and Holland has not led to any evidence of circulating virus. Indeed, although some of the animals were PCR positive, mainly in the case of BTV6, no virus has been isolated from any samples taken. On that basis, it has been agreed that the temporary restriction on exports from Belgium, Holland, and a PZ in Germany, can now be lifted, which means that these countries revert as from now to the same status as the UK, excluding northern Ireland.

We have of course all been concerned about imports from "Danger areas" that are part of the same BTV8 PZ as we are. To put things in perspective, in 2008, Belgium, there were 13 recorded premises with BTV8, and in Holland 7. There were 2113 infected premises in Germany. I can only put these figures forward as fact. People must make up their own minds as to the possible risk of importing disease into their herds or flocks.

Whichever way you look at it, it appears that live vaccine has been used illegally in Germany, Holland and Belgium, and those "Responsible", have caused a great deal of difficulty, and no little cost, to their fellow countryman farmers.

FRANCE

French Farmers suffered logistics difficulties in 2008 in that vaccine availability lagged behind disease progression. They have had a torrid time, and a group of French farmers recently visited England to spread the message of just how hard they were hit by BTV in 2008.

It must be recognised that they have a major problem. At the same time it must also be recognised that the French authorities and farming organisations are doing their best to rectify the situation. There is a concerted effort to vaccinate all susceptible animals in France against BTV8. by the end of April. Officially, that is compulsory, but at ground level there appear to be misunderstandings. Currently, France also of course has a major problem with BTV1, mainly in the South West, but also in the Cap Finisterre region of Brittany.

French policy is to vaccinate the whole country against BTV1 and BTV8 by the end of April. It seems that that will be difficult to achieve, but priority with BTV1 seems to be being given to the current known infected zones, and a buffer zone beyond. It is likely that France will hope to divide the country into 2 zones re BTV1, a PZ, and a "Blue Zone". That

now seems to be official terminology, an area where vaccination is allowed, with stringent surveillance conditions, but the Blue zone is NOT part of the PZ, so exports within the EU BTV8 PZ could be allowed without vaccination and blood testing. It would not be possible to achieve this without a lot of expensive surveillance.

A RISK ASSESSMENT exercise is under way to look at potential dangers from BTV1 in France crossing the channel. Animal Health is in touch with manufacturers re possible availability of BTV1 vaccine in case of need. Obviously the first priority MUST be a high level of vaccination in France, but it does seem that vaccine will be available to us, but just when and how much is as yet unclear, and it could be that if BTV1 does arrive in the UK, the overriding factor in policy would be the best use of available vaccine according to where disease flared up.

DEFRA 2009 POLICY

Vaccination will continue to be voluntary but heavily promoted by DEFRA. There is concern that complacency may set in and lead to a low level of vaccination. The IAH at Pirbright are convinced that only the good uptake of vaccine in 2008 in the original PZ saved us from disaster last year, and with nearly 25000 infected premises in France, the chances of BTV8 being under control in France this year must be rather low, and there is a very high likelihood of disease crossing the channel again. Add to that the strong possibility that virus had circulated in England at a limited level from clinically unaffected animals last year, and from imports, and we could well have a problem. It will only take one case of an infected cow producing an infected calf/placenta, and the whole scenario could restart.

And finally!!, A joint BTV1/BTV8 vaccine is under development. Current expectation is that the earliest it could become available is the end of this year.

Nick Clayton.