



Enzootic Abortion of Ewes (EAE)

EAE is caused by a highly infectious bacteria called *Chlamydophila abortus* and is the most common infectious cause of abortion in sheep in the UK. Outbreaks of the disease occur in all types of flock and result in serious economic losses. Once established, the infection is persistent and difficult to eradicate. EAE is also a human health hazard which can pose a serious threat to pregnant women.

Transmission

EAE is mainly spread at lambing time but may also be spread in the mating season. Sheep can become infected by coming into contact with any of the following:

- Aborted lambs and placentas
- Discharges from infected animals contaminating the environment (during the spring the bacteria can survive on pasture for several days)
- Contaminated hands, boots and clothing
- Abortion material carried by wildlife and birds
- Infected ewe replacements added to the flock

Impact on the flock

- Ewes which are infected in one lambing season will often abort the following spring
- The bacteria damages the placenta and the majority of EAE abortions occur two to three weeks before lambing is due to start
- The affected ewes show no signs of ill health prior to aborting
- The aborted lambs are usually fresh and well developed
- Live born lambs are often weak and die soon after birth
- Once EAE infection is established within a flock it is persistent and difficult to eradicate
- Following an abortion, ewes will often lamb normally in subsequent years. However, these ewes are disease carriers and may infect their own lambs and any other sheep that they are in contact with.

Female goats can be infected with EAE and spread infection to other goats or sheep.

Economic Impacts of EAE

- Financial loss to the industry is estimated to be £15 million per year
- A 5% abortion rate can reduce potential gross margin by 10%
- Each ewe that aborts can represent a reduction in gross margin of £95

If you breed replacements to sell

Join the EAE Accreditation Scheme!

Benefits of joining

Our specialist vets with extensive knowledge of this disease are available to discuss test results and action plans for your farm with your vet.

- As a member you benefit from preferential testing rates to keep costs down
- Helps you to minimise the risk of introducing EAE into your flock.
- Gives you membership of an elite nationally recognised health scheme with the opportunity to screen for other diseases.
- Enables you to be listed on our online database and supply buyers looking for EAE free ewe replacements.
- Gives you the opportunity to add value to your female breeding stock.

Advantages of EAE accredited ewes

- Enables buyers with clean flocks to purchase EAE accredited replacements from registered suppliers
- Gives buyers the opportunity to purchase clean replacements which can then be vaccinated in an effort to prevent the introduction of EAE or to eliminate EAE from their flocks
- Allows new entrants to the industry the opportunity to establish a clean flock
- Useful in organic systems

What does the Health Scheme for EAE free flocks involve?

Flocks are screened annually for EAE within three months after lambing. A proportion of the breeding ewes are blood sampled including those ewes that aborted or failed to lamb. Abortion material is screened for EAE and the other common causes of abortion. The cost of this is included in the membership fee. Certificates are provided by SRUC VS on an annual basis.

Who is eligible to join?

Anyone can join the health scheme for EAE free flocks provided that:

- You have not used an enzootic abortion vaccine.
- You have not purchased enzootic abortion vaccinated stock
- You have not had enzootic abortion diagnosed in your flock

For more info please contact:

SRUC Veterinary Services, Greycrook, St Boswells, Roxburghshire TD6 0EQ

Tel: 01835 822456 Email: psghs@sac.co.uk

www.sheepandgoathealth.co.uk



@SRUCVets



fb.com/SRUCVets