



Ovine Abortion Special

This is our summary of ovine abortion cases for the 2024-2025 lambing season.

WVSC Ovine Abortion Diagnoses 2024/25



Enzootic abortion of ewes (*Chlamydomphila abortus* or EAE) remains the most common diagnosis for abortion this year at **45%** (39% last year). **Toxoplasmosis** was less common than 2023/24 (**10%** compared to 22% last year) and **Campylobacter fetus fetus** was the second most frequent diagnosis at **21%**. These three diseases have been the most common causes of ovine abortion at WVSC since our records began.

The number of abortion enquiries was slightly down compared to the previous three years; however, the diagnosis rate was improved (59.5%). Other, non-infectious causes of abortion include metabolic and concurrent disease. One of the factors which has likely improved the diagnosis rate this season was the excellent number of submissions which included placenta in addition to the foetus. Toxoplasmosis can only be diagnosed by PCR of the placenta; this is also the tissue of choice for EAE testing. Other factors include providing us with as much clinical history as possible, blood sampling aborted ewes if you are on-farm (more scope for testing if a diagnosis

is not reached – we can perform serology at WVSC) and not freezing samples (secure in a double bag and refrigerate if there is a delay in submitting).

Bluetongue update: The midge season is fast approaching, and forecasts predict that in theory the whole of the UK will potentially be at risk from Bluetongue virus (BTV-3) by September 2025. Vets in farm practice should familiarise themselves with the clinical signs and characteristic lesions of the virus in all ruminants. As an additional note, vets in practice should consider this diagnosis when triaging cases for postmortem and if they suspect a case of BTV-3 vets in Wales should call APHA on 0300 303 8268 to arrange testing. The following link contains lots of useful information regarding the disease and case pictures as well as all the latest information regarding the Bluetongue Control Policy in Wales. <https://www.gov.wales/bluetongue-virus-btv> .

WVSC has some fantastic upcoming CPD courses on offer:

-Back by popular demand – Basic and advanced cattle scanning courses are running in September 2025.

-New to WVSC – Two practical farm animal postmortem days running in the Autumn.

Please contact us for more information.

Maedi Visna was confirmed in a ewe from a Mid-Wales crossbred flock. The ewe was one of four affected, and similar issues had been noted for the past few years. The presenting clinical signs were a progressive weakness and paresis in the hindlimbs. Sensory perception appeared to be present, but motor reflexes and function were reduced or absent. Histology confirmed the presence of Visna, isolated almost exclusively to the spinal cord.

Maedi visna virus (MV) is one of the small ruminant lentiviruses and is one of the diseases classically referred to as an 'Iceberg Disease'. Its name refers to the two forms of the disease, with 'Maedi' referring to the progressive pneumonia caused by the virus, and 'Visna' meaning wasting, which refers to the neurological form of the disease.

The disease progresses slowly over many weeks to months and is usually seen in ewes over four years of age. The neurological form of the disease (Visna) most commonly presents as an encephalitis, with clinical signs including head tilt, circling and altered mentation. The less common spinal form of Visna, as seen in this ewe, presents with either a unilateral or bilateral pelvic limb proprioceptive deficit which then progresses to paresis and complete paralysis. On histology of the CNS, meningoencephalitis with secondary demyelination is reported. The disease is fatal and progressive with no treatment available. Control is through selective culling of thin ewes and incorporating knowledge of this disease into replacement selection.

Cardiac necrosis was found in a 12-week-old pig which presented with a history of sudden death. This pig was one of two bought in eight weeks previously and the other pig appeared unaffected.

Postmortem examination revealed evidence of chronic fibrosis of the liver and significant scarring from previous larval parasite migration of the nematode *Ascaris Suum* (figure 2). This parasite causes the classic 'Milk spot' appearance due to focal hepatitis. Although the findings on the liver were striking, the general good condition of the pig and the lack of other systemic gross findings meant this was not deemed to be the cause of sudden death.

Histopathology of fixed tissues found myocardial necrosis, suggestive of acute toxic insult or oxidative damage. Bracken toxicity was discussed as a potential cause and is the most common toxicity seen in pigs grazed extensively outside. Usually, the pathology in these cases is more chronic but given the concurrent hepatic damage, the pigs' immune system would have been compromised so symptoms could have been more acute.



Figure 2: showing the pigs' 'Milk spot liver.'

WVSC VIOs: Bev. Hopkins, Claire Jones and Jane Lindop

Wales Veterinary
Science Centre
Y Buarth, Aberystwyth,
Ceredigion, SY23 1ND



01970 612374



enquiries@wvsc.wales



<http://www.wvsc.wales>



walesvetscience



@WVSCAber

Please check the eligibility for **free carcass collection** via this website:

<http://apha.defra.gov.uk/postcode/pme.asp>

The suitability of submissions for a postmortem exam. must always be discussed with the WVSC duty vet.