

# Is your livestock health plan in place for 2015?

► Ensure staff know biosecurity protocols

HERD or flock health planning is often thought of as time consuming paperwork, involving that 50-page document which sits in the office and only gets brought out for inspections. It would be better thought of as a crucial practical job to ensure the health and performance of your livestock.

With forward planning, many diseases can be prevented, costing far less than dealing with an outbreak, says Kirsty Ranson, who is a practicing vet in Cumbria.

She says: "If you already have a plan in place, there are several things you can consider when reviewing it for 2015.

## Prevention

"Does it provide you with a practical day to day guide of health problems and prevention? Have you and your vet discussed common disease problems on your farm, quantified them in terms of cases and come up with an action plan to reduce the incidence of disease?"

"There is no point trying to improve things if you do not have a line in the sand to measure against. Recording the incidence of common diseases such



Kirsty Ranson says with forward planning, most livestock diseases can be prevented.



as lameness and mastitis is vital.

"It can be as simple as a tally chart on the wall but provides somewhere to start and quantify the issues. From here, along with your vet, formulate an action plan to improve areas of your

herd/flock which are underperforming," adds Miss Ranson.

Most livestock plans will include a section on quarantine of newly-purchased animals, but all too often these guidelines are forgotten, especially once at the auction.

## Biosecurity

"One of the easiest ways to introduce disease on-farm is through purchasing stock. Even if you understand the importance of strict biosecurity, do all your staff understand it too?"

Make sure you and your employees are familiar with key biosecurity measures, such as:

- Do you know the source of origin?
- Is it relatively local (particularly important for TB)?
- Have you established what these animals have already been vaccinated for and the herd/flock status of the previous farm?

"Once purchased, isolate stock and discuss with your vet the tests you should be conducting to protect your herd/flock before they are mixed with others."

## Top tips

- Come up with a monthly planner for vaccines and wormers
- Decide on treatment protocols for common conditions, including drugs, dose rates and withdrawal times
- A good tip is to bullet point these on to a laminated A4 sheet and keep it somewhere

handy, i.e. in the medicine cabinet

- Make a tally chart to record common diseases in the month they occur. This is a quick and simple way of monitoring disease occurrence and will provide lots of useful information which can be reviewed and monitored

## Apps can help keep you organised

ONE digital tool which can help sheep farmers manage and record important dates in their flock health plan is the flock management calendar.

From the Eblex Better Returns Programme, the tool is free and provides a platform to record time-sensitive important tasks.

Once a tupping or lambing date is entered into the calendar, key production dates, such as when ewes should be scanned, when certain vaccinations should be given and when ewes and rams should be condition scored, are automatically set

throughout the year.

Weekly reminder emails for upcoming tasks are then automatically generated every Sunday.

Multiple calendars can be created for different groups of sheep by adding different lambing or tupping dates. Each group will then have its own specific calendar linked to it.

The tool can be used on smartphones, tablets and computers, and anyone can register.

- Details online at [www.flockcalendar.com](http://www.flockcalendar.com)

