



ON THE HOOF

SRUC Veterinary Services – Bitesize local updates

Keep an eye out for bracken and oak toxicity

A quick reminder for beef suckler and sheep clients in upland areas to be aware of the possibility of acute bracken toxicity as a differential for extensive unexplained haemorrhage, resultant anaemia, immunosuppression and sudden death. The first clinical finding is usually a haemorrhagic syndrome due to severe thrombocytopenia. Epistaxis, haematuria, and petechial haemorrhages on mucosal surfaces and sclera are common. Affected animals are also often predisposed to sepsis due to neutropenia. Given these clinical signs considering the possibility of tick associated disease is also important.

We have recently investigated one possible case in this area and our histopathology team have informed us that they have also received case material from other farms as well.

If examining such a case at post mortem on farm please remember that there may be no bracken in the rumen at the time of death. Also collecting bone marrow allows a diagnosis to be confirmed. This is very easy to do by fixing one sectioned sternebrae including both bone and bone marrow which can then be processed for histopathology.

Our histopathologists also report cases of probable oak toxicity, one in a lamb with oesophageal necrosis, nephropathy associated with pale kidneys and multisystemic haemorrhage, the other in a post-weaned calf with multisystemic haemorrhage most pronounced in urinary tract, associated with peri-renal oedema and pale kidneys.

At least in some areas there is a heavy acorn crop this year.

If you wish to discuss potential cases, please get in touch with us OnTheHoof@sac.co.uk