

Lamb And Young Breeding Stock Vaccinations?

Vaccination options for lambs (and then the transition of some lambs into breeding stock at a later date) can be confusing, with many different options available and, just as importantly, the potential for gaps to be left depending on the future intended use of the lambs.

A quick roundup of the diseases in question:

Clostridial diseases (diseases caused by Clostridium species of bacteria) – the most likely sign of these disease is outbreaks of sudden deaths, unless otherwise specified.

Lamb dysentery	Lambs under 3 wks old. Lambs are protected by drinking adequate colostrum, esp. within their first few hours, from vaccinated mothers.
Pulpy kidney	Lambs 4-10 weeks old from unvaccinated mothers, or who did not drink enough colostrum early enough. Also older weaned lambs which are not vaccinated when colostrum protection wears off.
Blackleg	Causes swelling of a limb and/or sudden death following bruising/cuts/abrasions of affected area.
Black disease	Affects sheep of any age following liver damage by fluke in autumn.
Braxy	Affects sheep feeding on frosted fodder such as root crops.
Malignant oedema	Causes “big head”, often tups following fighting. May be treatable if caught very early, but often fatal.
Tetanus	Causes stiffness, paralysis in death, often in lambs following tagging, castration or tailing which allows entry of bacteria.

A couple of less commonly talked about Clostridial diseases are also included in some vaccines.

Pasteurellosis – A fast-developing pneumonia and septicaemia caused by the bacteria *Mannheimia haemolytica*, *Bibersteinia trehalosi* and sometimes other bacteria from the *Pasteurella* family. This infection can be seen especially in lambs in late spring, older lambs in autumn and as a cause of severe mastitis in ewes, although disease can arise at any time. Dietary changes, excess handling or other stressors such as changeable or bad weather can predispose to an outbreak of sudden deaths.

Vaccination options available include:

Bravoxin 10, Covexin 10, Covexin 8 – Cover a range of the most common Clostridial diseases. The manufacturers recommend that, if the mother of the lamb was vaccinated, lamb vaccination should be delayed until at least 8-12 weeks of age. This is because the antibodies gained from the mother’s colostrum can interfere with the efficacy of the vaccine if given before this time. However lambs which received colostrum from unvaccinated mothers can be vaccinated earlier as the vaccination can be given from 2 weeks of age.

Heptavac P Plus – This vaccine covers a range of the most common Clostridial diseases in sheep plus it provides some protection against outbreaks of Pasteurellosis. While protection from colostrum from vaccinated mothers will protect the lambs until 8-12 weeks old for the Clostridial components, the immunity from the Pasteurella components only lasts for the first four weeks of a lamb’s life, so those farms wishing to continue lamb protection from Pasteurellosis may need to think about a Pasteurella-containing vaccine for the lambs a little earlier.

Ovipast Plus – This vaccine provides some protection against the causes of Pasteurellosis. Some farms may wish to use this on younger lambs from three weeks old onwards, before widening the protection to include Clostridial disease with other vaccines later on. It is also useful if an “extra booster” is needed 2-3 weeks before expected outbreaks of Pasteurellosis e.g. on farms which still lose older lambs to outbreaks of the disease in autumn.

Ovivac P Plus – This vaccine covers a range of the most common Clostridial diseases that affect sheep and also provides protection against Pasteurellosis – however, as this vaccine is designed for older lambs, it does NOT cover lamb dysentery which affects lambs less than three weeks old. This is important because - although your growing older lambs are not at risk from lamb dysentery - it could leave an immunity gap **IF** any of these growing older lambs are then used later for breeding stock. The colostrum they produce will not cover their newborn lambs for lamb dysentery, so a **full primary course** of a breeding stock vaccine covering lamb dysentery, rather than just a booster, should be considered before lambing these animals.

Lambivac – This covers three Clostridial diseases – Lamb Dysentery, Pulpy Kidney and Tetanus. Use of this vaccine will depend on whether or not there are any risk factors on farm that predispose to other Clostridial diseases which are not covered.

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