

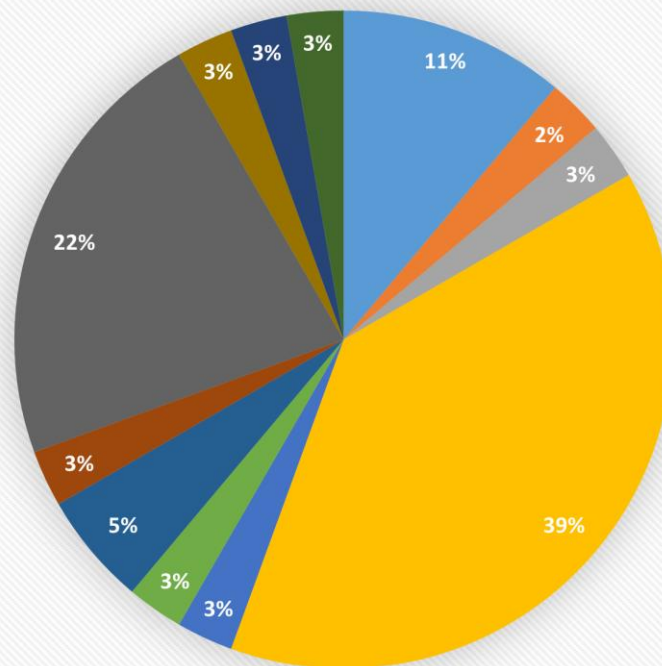


## Ovine Abortion Special

This is our summary of ovine abortion cases for the 2023-2024 lambing season.

We've had a very welcome influx of new staff at WVSC over the past few months. Claire Jones is a new Veterinary Disease Investigator, Hazel Wright has taken up the role of Centre Manager and Elen Jones is an addition to the administration team.

### WVSC Ovine Abortion Diagnoses 2023/24



**Enzootic abortion (EAE)** remains the most common diagnosis for abortion this year at 39%. Toxoplasmosis has beaten *Campylobacter fetus fetus* to second place this year with rates of 22% and 11% respectively.

**Schmallenberg virus (SBV)** has been a big problem nationally, however only one submission to WVSC resulted in a SBV diagnosis. We suspect farmers and private veterinary surgeons (PVS) are diagnosing SBV based on the notable gross pathology, and testing is being carried out by PVS without the involvement of WVSC. In addition, infection before day 25 of gestation causes early embryonic death and a high barren rate rather than abortion. We are also aware that SBV PCR can give a negative result even when SBV is involved, depending on the stage of gestation at which infection occurs. Therefore, it is worth blood

sampling barren ewes for SBV if you have a high suspicion of SBV involvement.

**Bluetongue Virus (BTV)** is something we have been especially vigilant for this year due to a new strain (BTV-3) emerging in autumn 2023. Some gross changes, particularly to the central nervous system, caused by SBV cannot be distinguished from BTV without further testing. Three abortion submissions to WVSC this year had such changes: hydranencephaly, or porencephaly (Fig. 1). These were seen alongside domed skulls and malocclusions. Due to the notifiable nature of BTV, APHA is notified and BTV is negated before continuing the abortion enquiry. All three cases reported to APHA by WVSC were negative for both BTV and SBV. One case was diagnosed with EAE, another with Toxoplasmosis and no diagnosis was reached for the third. We are pleased to report that

APHA were very efficient in negating BTV, usually only delaying the abortion enquiry by 24 hours. We can still undertake microscopy for EAE in-house while the BTV result is pending.

**Upcoming Sheep Modular CPD – Our popular Sheep course starts with Pre-tupping day course on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> August in Aberystwyth. £300 for the day or £1100 for the all four modules.**

**Contact us to book your place.**

### How to get the most from your abortion enquiry

36 out of 67 submissions this season resulted in diagnoses (53.7%). Other, non-infectious, causes of abortion include metabolic disease and concurrent disease. The following will improve the probability of identifying the cause of abortion:

- Ensure the placenta is submitted – Toxoplasmosis can now only be diagnosed by PCR of the placenta; this is also the tissue of choice for EAE testing.
- Border disease is no longer tested for as standard – if you think border disease is involved, please let us know.
- Do not freeze samples – if there is going to be a delay, please refrigerate the foetus and placenta. Freezing delays testing and means we cannot run cultures.
- Blood sample aborted ewes – holding a blood sample can mean more scope for testing if a diagnosis is not reached. We can run serology for EAE, Toxoplasmosis and Border Disease here at WVSC.
- Provide us with a full history – this really helps us interpret gross changes and select tests appropriately (this goes for all submissions, not only abortions).

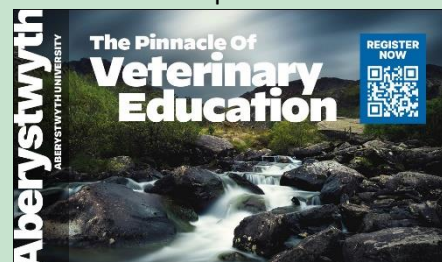
**Remember we are here to help and advice. If you would like any advice from our Vets please give us a call or email us on [wvsc.vet@wvsc.wales](mailto:wvsc.vet@wvsc.wales). We are happy to provide advice on diagnostic testing, diseases in farm animals and post mortems.**

***Campylobacter coli*** abortion was diagnosed for the first time at WVSC in a small flock of 40 ewes with a 25% barren rate. *C. coli* is a commensal found in the gastrointestinal tract of sheep. It is unclear as to why these bacteria occasionally become pathogenic, but it has been postulated that it could be down to perinatal immunosuppression. The bacteria translocate from the GIT to the uterus and set up a placentitis and foetal pathology. Control is achieved by reducing faecal contamination of food and water and promptly removing aborted foetuses and contaminated bedding. It is a sporadic cause of abortion and wasn't thought to be related to the high barren rate in this flock.

### UPCOMING DISEASE ALERT

The summer months are typically our quietest at WVSC; in recent years a broad range of diagnoses have been made in June, July and August. Some repeat offenders are: Parasitic gastro-enteritis (PGE), Pasteurellosis, Coccidiosis, poisoning, dosing gun injuries, Lungworm and Clostridial disease.

Remember that we have a parasitology lab here at WVSC. We would be glad to receive your samples over the summer. Please see our website for more information and price list.



WVSC VDIs: Bev. Hopkins, Jane Morgan, and Claire Jones  
Locum VDIs: Ian Davies, Kate Hovers and Ciona Smith

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



**01970 612374**



[enquiries@wvsc.wales](mailto:enquiries@wvsc.wales)



<http://www.wvsc.wales>



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Please check the eligibility for **free carcase 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.