



 **Intervet**
Schering-Plough Animal Health

TALKING SHEEP 2011

NEXT CHANCE TO HEAR 'TALKING SHEEP 2011'

The venue of the autumn Sheep Veterinary Society conference, to be held at Malvern, Worcestershire, from September 12th - 14th should be well-known to those interested in the breed, being also the home of the National Sheep Association. One of the main themes of the meeting will therefore be to explore matters of mutual concern with the farming community as, although our emphasis on certain subjects may differ slightly, the interests of our two organisations are essentially identical. Indeed Peter Baber, chairman of NSA, will be a key-note speaker introducing 'Current issues for Sheep health and Welfare' and is expected to bring up anthelmintic resistance, ear tags, lameness and several other topical issues.

As our 2011 spring meeting was held in Denmark in May this will be the Society's only full get-together this year on home soil, but thanks to regional meetings, sponsored by Intervet Schering-Plough under the banner of 'Talking Sheep 2011' there has been plenty of chance for education and socialising, in the name of sheep, to prosper already this year.

The 'Talking Sheep' concept, led by then President, Dick Thompson, and generously sponsored again by Intervet Schering-Plough Animal Health, was conceived in 2010 and has been an outstanding success again this year. The series of meetings, usually containing 4 or 5 short talks on various aspects of sheep health (usually ill-health) and management, was aimed particularly at giving young vets an early chance to present and discuss clinical cases with vets of all ages with a similar interest, in a non-formal setting. Many have taken the opportunity in 2011 and we hope this will encourage other recent graduates to work-up sheep cases and hopefully present these in future programs.

Although the series was meant to run between mid-January and mid-May, 'Lambing time' in Wiltshire and Somerset dragged behind the rest of the flock and hence presented what was billed as the 'Last Chance to hear Talking Sheep 2011', at South Cadbury in late July! The main subjects covered there were 'Control of Fly-strike', which would certainly have been very useful

in the recent heat wave, and 'Ram vasectomies'. It also featured the 'Poisons' section of a broader 'Sheep Quiz' prepared by current president Matt Colston that was used to tax the brains of attendees at Talking Sheep meetings at several other venues.

Poisonings have been a feature of other meetings where cases of copper poisoning have been described caused by 2 main factors – i) inappropriate extra copper given as boluses or poor ration provision. ii) Clover pasture, which seems to concentrate copper, grazed by susceptible breeds – which seems to include the increasingly popular Lleyn breed.

Talking Sheep 2011 included several new venues, as far spread as Cornwall and Northumberland, building on last year's established regional discussion groups in: North Yorks; Scottish Borders; Lancashire (2); Shropshire; Devon; Nth and Sth Wales; to a total of 14 meetings this year, attracting a total audience of over 400, with more than 50 short talks – only a small number of which were repeated at more than one meeting. Nottingham and Edinburgh vet students both held clinical clubs in conjunction with SVS and IntervetSP, broadening the scope and age range! Nottingham endured the longest talk with Dick attempting 'Everything you need to know about sheep in 30 mins' and missing his target only by a small margin! He was ably supported there by 2, 4th year, students, Ceri Owen and Tash Usherwood presenting the findings of their elective projects, and by recent graduate Alex Corbishley reporting a case of Infectious Keratitis.

Northern Ireland also joined the project for the first time with an afternoon gathering of 40+ vets watching and discussing presentations on worms, trace elements, emerging diseases such as CLA and OPC (SPA as was) and lameness as well as having a tour of the facilities at the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) Hillsborough.

A politically topical point that was raised several times during the series, not least by next year's SVS president Ian Davies from VLA Shrewsbury, was the massive benefits of surveillance work done by the VLA and SAC centres throughout the British Isles. This not only incorporates monitoring the incidence of traditional diseases such as Clostridials, or emerging problems such as CLA and anthelmintic resistance, but also newly identified conditions such as a peculiar nephritic condition in young Zwartbles as described by Ben Strugnell of Thirsk VLA. We can only hope that they get the chance to continue this good work under the new AHVLA umbrella.

Other clinical conditions that were covered this year included topics old and new and a particular favourite was the description of an outbreak of infertility and abortion caused by Border Disease, a close relation (or is it the same virus?) of BVD in cattle, by recent graduate Dave Allen at the St Boswells meeting, which exemplified all the attributes that we were looking for when the concept was devised.

Our autumn conference in Malvern will also continue the 'Talking Sheep' theme featuring several short presentations, including some of the case histories presented by recent graduates at the early regional meetings and delegates will be in for a treat as well as giving these speakers a further opportunity to hone their new found talents. We look forward to seeing a great flock of UK vets there next month.