

# Metabolic Diseases in Sheep – “Sleepy Sickness”

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## **EWES: PREGNANCY TOXAEMIA “Sleepy Sickness”**

- Occurs in late pregnancy, BEFORE lambing (often when ewe carrying twins or triplets)
- When food intake is less than the requirements. The ewe uses fat reserves for energy which clogs up the liver
- It is often a heavy ewe

## **Signs/symptoms**

- Lethargy (hence the name “sleepy sickness”), recumbency and death

## **Treatment**

- If early (before recumbent) – Ketol, Ketol Extra, Acetol or a similar product. Increase grass supply if possible
- Once recumbent, poorer prognoses. Abort lambs or caesarian. This reduces energy demand on ewe. But cost??
- Follow treatment with increase in feed

## **Prevention**

- Increase feed pre-tupping (increases ovulation rate), then **decrease** feed during early pregnancy. This means ewes are lighter so feed requirements are less, and hopefully there is more saved pasture for feeding late pregnancy
- Increase feed during last month of pregnancy when energy demands are high
- Lamb later in the year, eg: September when feed more plentiful. Early lambing means ewes are heavy in lamb in depths of winter. OK if you have plenty of feed
- Scan (usually practical only for larger flocks) so you can separate ewes carrying singles/twins/triplets and feed accordingly
- Don't have ewes too fat going into last month of pregnancy
- If they are too fat going into last month of pregnancy, it's too late to reduce weight then. Also fat ewes are more likely to have “bearings” (Vaginal prolapse).