

Sleepy Sickness (Pregnancy Toxaemia):

Sleepy Sickness is a metabolic disease of ewes in late pregnancy. It is commonly seen in ewes carrying twins or triplets and often overweight. If food intake is less than the ewes requirements, she will use her fat reserves as an energy source, which can then clog up the liver and impair its normal functions.

Ewes will present with lethargy, recumbency or even death.

Treatment for pregnancy toxaemia involves increasing blood sugar with a product such as Ketol, and increasing grass supply. Once ewes are recumbent the prognosis is much poorer. Lambing may need to be induced, or a caesarean carried out to give the ewe and lambs the best chance of survival.

There are a few things you can do to lower the risk of sleepy sickness. Plan to lamb later in the year, such as September, when food is more plentiful. Scan ewes in lamb so that those carrying twins and triplets can be separated and fed accordingly. Keep ewes lighter in weight during early pregnancy, and increase feed supply in the last month of pregnancy when the ewe's energy demands are high.

If you have a ewe showing signs of sleepy sickness, contact the clinic immediately for the best advice.