

# Flock Health Planning

## Vaccination of Sheep



### Carcase damage means loss of value

Vaccination is important to successful flock management, but incorrect or careless injection techniques produce abscesses which have to be cut away in the slaughterhouse and reduce the value of the carcass. Most flockmasters never see the carcass mutilation which is necessary to remove vaccination abscesses from high-priced areas.

An abscess on the rib cage of an export-quality carcass can reduce the value by 10 to 20 per cent. A survey carried out in a Welsh abattoir found injection abscesses on 1.3% of carcasses - a significant loss to the industry.

### How to vaccinate correctly and avoid carcass damage

Vaccinations should be carried out as hygienically as possible and always in the upper third of the neck of the sheep.

### The basic rules of safe and efficient vaccination are:

- Check the instructions and administer the injection as instructed;
- Avoid injecting into or close to high priced cuts;
- Use sterile equipment and change the needle frequently;
- Only vaccinate clean sheep;
- Do not rush – it takes longer in the end. Work carefully, smoothly and quietly.

### For subcutaneous injections:

- Part the fleece by lifting a fold of skin;
- Vaccinate just under the skin. Do not penetrate the underlying muscle;
- Insert the needle parallel to the body surface – not at an angle which gives too deep a penetration;

### Cleanliness is essential

Multi-dose disposable equipment, used according to the manufacturers instructions, reduces the risk of bacterial infection. Frequent changes of needle are necessary – ideally after every 25 sheep and always whenever there is a break in the work. Always use sterilised needles and handle them only at the base. Do not touch the shaft or the point.

Never keep unused vaccine in an opened container after a day's work. Bacteria multiply rapidly in 12 to 14 hours and left over vaccine can be dangerously contaminated.

### Avoid dirty sheep

Never vaccinate wet sheep or through a dirty fleece. The work should be carried out on a dry day when the sheep are clean. Vaccinating dirty and wet sheep contaminates the needle for all subsequent injections.

### Avoid High Priced Cuts

Vaccination must always be carried out high in the upper third of the neck (scrag).

