

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF FLOCK HEALTH CLUBS



Sharing the cost of veterinary services & expertise
within a local community of sheep farmers

FLOCK HEALTH CLUBS

Flock Health Clubs (FHCs) were initiated in 2016 by Flock Health Ltd to improve communication and relationships between sheep farmers and veterinarians and to offer the first access to cost effective veterinary services.

In return for a monthly subscription paid to their practice, farmers receive access to regular discussion groups with other producers and a sheep focused vet. Resulting in increased sheep expertise and better relationships for both.



Approximately two thirds of sheep farmers only contact their veterinarian for emergencies and one fifth have all year-round contact

Kaler & Green, 2013

THE CASE STUDY

Flock Health Ltd believe that FHCs provide benefits but have no external evidence: this case study investigated if sheep farmers are actively getting involved in FHCs, the benefits they obtain and whether the concept has been useful for veterinary surgeons.

Aiming to ask both producers and veterinary surgeons for their opinions, 15 phone interviews were conducted with vets and 27 farmers surveyed during FHC meetings across the UK.



THE CLUB VETS

FHC members are viewed as generally innovative, commercial and in the top 5-10% of farmers in the area.

Every vet practice had a good relationship with FHC members: they rang the vet more, actively sought advice and were keen to improve and engaged. They were aware of topics covered in FHC meetings and the impact on their farms.

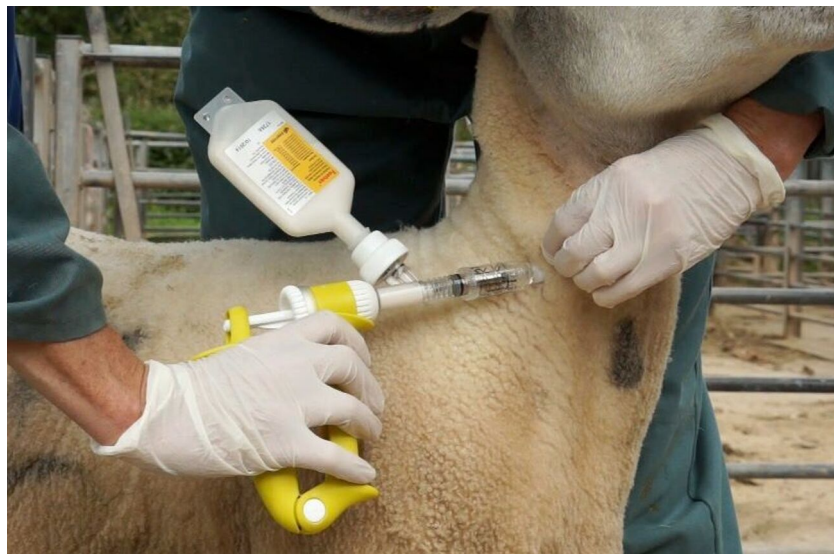
All agreed that smaller numbers of farmers attending meetings encouraged interactions between them.

A wide range of topics are discussed at FHC, but every group runs lambing sessions and topics of relevance to the members, making use of external speakers as well.

All agreed they had seen changes in their members flocks since joining FHC, the most common being reduced lamb losses, parasite management and lameness.



Flock Health Clubs meeting
in Shropshire, UK



VETS felt their relationships with FHCs clients were good and often better than with general sheep clients

VETS felt there was better communication with the club farmers

The FHCs members would contact them more

THE CLUB FARMERS

- 85% felt that membership fees are value for money
- 88% highlighted that the main benefit was the ability to develop and exchange knowledge between other farmers and their club vet
- No farmers surveyed felt that there were any disadvantages to membership
- 85.2% said that FHCs facilitated positive changes in knowledge improvements
- 77.8% noted positive changes within their management practices
- 66.7% had improved their relationship with the vets and their likelihood of calling them had increased

OUTCOMES

- Running an FHC improved the relationships between vets and member clients
- The groups should be no bigger than 25 congenial forward thinking people
- A practice could host 4 meetings a year on a range of topics reflecting the season, the local issues or sustainability factors, with plenty of time for discussion
- Vet practices often selected members and offered them a range of benefits
- Membership of FHC increases farmer knowledge and encourages them to be proactive about animal health
- Farmers liked the opportunity to develop and exchange knowledge with other like minded farmers and the club vet



The concept of FHCs could easily be introduced in partner countries with topics and learning tailored to the sheep industries in each country



POTENTIAL

The farm vet should be seen as an important member of a farm's staff. The developing of pro-active relationships recorded in the case study are an important step, with both working towards the prevention rather than the treatment of disease, when costs have already been incurred.

Farmers must trust and feel comfortable with their vet and this can be achieved through an FHC. FHC members considered and reduced their use of anthelmintics and antibiotics contributing to the long term sustainability of medications available to the industry. Further benefits accrue from FHC members changes in grazing and feeding and from matching of breed to system.

THANKS TO

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within the Flock Health Clubs for participating



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