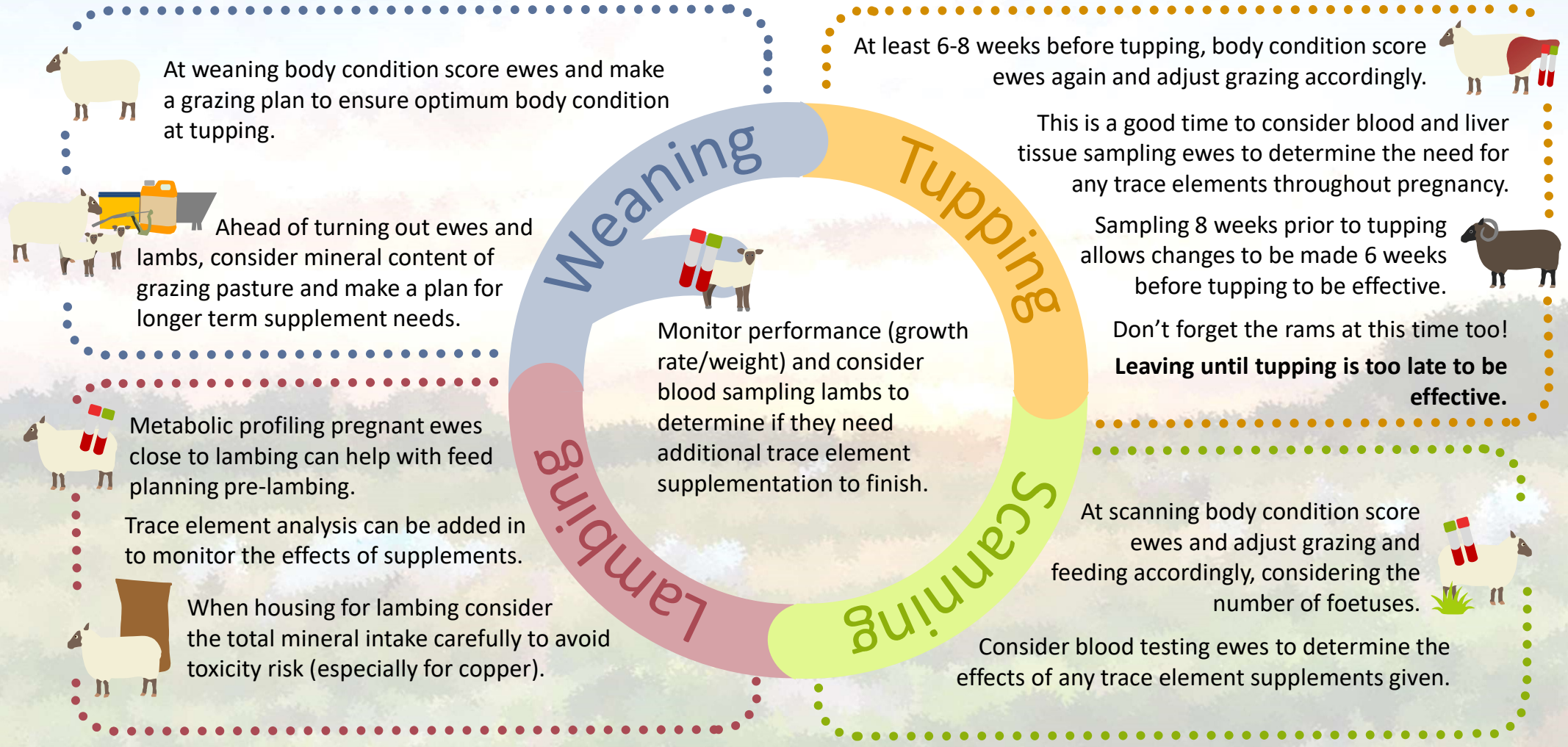


Flock trace mineral planning for optimal health



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Forage sampling

Each season sample the grazing fields by walking through the field in a rough zig-zag. Use scissors to sample the grass at ~5 cm from the ground whilst wearing gloves. Collect snippets from various points across each field to give an overview of the whole field in the sample. Take care to avoid gateways, field edges, water troughs or other areas of potential soil contamination.



If you do not want to sample all fields consider choosing different fields each year to build a whole farm picture.

Mineral content of pasture changes with weather and season. Staggering the analysis of pasture by 1-2 months each year will help build the picture of the effects of seasonality and rainfall.

Conserved forage should be based on samples from multiple bales, taken either from a minimum of three bales or from several places across a clamp. Samples need to be taken from deep within the middle of bales rather than the surface.

Conserved forage data if analysed from a single field, can be used to give an idea of pasture trace mineral content for the field it was harvested from- saving sampling and analysis costs.

Animal sampling



Blood samples are reflective of the short term changes in trace mineral status and intake.

Liver samples are reflective of the longer-term, historic intake.

Where live animals are used for blood sampling and liver biopsy, ensure that healthy individuals are chosen and represent a typical cross-section of your flock. For flocks managed as a single group choose 6-8 healthy individuals for

sampling, or 4 from each management group to be representative of the whole flock/group. A cheaper alternative to liver biopsy is to recover liver samples from the abattoir.

If considering live liver biopsy ensure that if necessary sheep are treated for liver fluke a few weeks before and that other serious health problems are dealt with to avoid complications post-biopsy.

Always test and monitor the success of your trace mineral supplementation strategy to optimise health and avoid ineffective or unnecessary supplementation. The duration of supplements will differ for your farm, flock and animals.

The best way to optimise your flock health is to test, check and adjust in a continuous cycle.