

Sheep Farmer Newsletter February 2007

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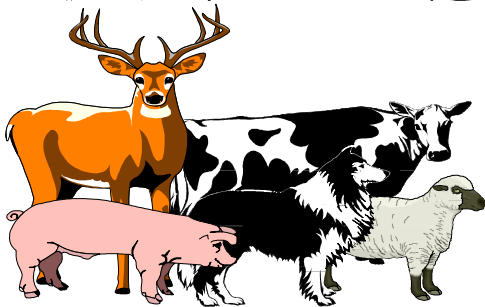
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Practice News

No doubt you will have been wondering where this newsletter and maybe your account had got to. We have had major computer issues here since the end of January – a component failure (the motherboard) in the main server has meant we have been without computers since then and it appears that at least a fortnight will pass before they are up and running. The server was sent to Auckland and then we

had to wait for a part from Singapore. When the server arrived back down here it still wouldn't go and this time appeared to have two dead hard drives so back off to Auckland again. The accounts and this newsletter have been put together on a cobbled together (dare I say it Mickey Mouse) system – all a bit third world really and most frustrating. So apologies for the late appearance of your accounts – not that anyone is probably concerned about the late arrival of an account! Also in some cases there will be

entries from January missing, as we have had to try and get the accounts out regardless. These should appear on your February statement. Because of the late arrival of the accounts the cut off date for claiming your 10% incentive discount has been extended from the usual 20th of the month to the last day of February.

Apart from the above section the bulk of this newsletter was written a fortnight ago so some of the articles are almost a little dated now!

John Howie is back for 5 weeks or so – he's a bit like a bad smell – keeps coming back! One or two of the dairy vets have the odd niggle that could interfere with scanning/pregnancy testing so he's here to cover for that.

Like the rest of NZ the weather locally has been dull and cooler than normal over the last couple of (even 3) months. On the whole most of you seem to be having reasonable lamb growth rates despite this however I'm sure they would improve if we could get some more sun. There seems to be an abundance of clover rich feed at the moment and lamb growth rates should now be quite good.

Recent Animal Health Problems

1. Scald: - With the abundance of lush green grass and damp conditions underfoot a number of cases of scald have been occurring in lambs and rams. Where large numbers are involved troughing in Zinc Sulphate is the best treatment although formalin can also be used. If there is just the odd ram affected you can use an antibiotic aerosol (Tetravet) for spot treatment – many of you will have had this product listed at the time of your PAR consultation so obtaining it will be no problem. If you are getting scald in rams look out for foot abscesses, as scald can be a precursor to this.

2. Fly Strike: – A few cases of this being reported lately so keep an eye on stock. If you start to get large numbers a dip that does both fly and lice may be in order- one of the IGR one's would be best – contact the clinic for more information.

3. Pulpy Kidney: - Again with the abundance of lush cloverly feed about at present, a few cases of Pulpy Kidney are occurring. Obviously if this is happening to you, you need to vaccinate them. If you do this remember to boost a month later any ewe lambs that could be retained for breeding and then they are set-up for their lifetime programme. Vaccination can be combined with cobalt/B12 administration (Prolovax) if necessary.

Reminders

1. Teaser rams – You have very little time left to organise this, as vasectomies need to be done at least six weeks ahead of the time of use, which is either 17 or 34 days pre-tup. Contact the clinic immediately if you require any done. The use of teasers can increase the number of ewes mated earlier in mating (as well as increasing slightly the scanning %) which if the schedule continues to drop around Christmas time must all help in getting more away earlier when the schedule is higher.

2. Pre-tupping Nutrition – The biggest influence you can have over the likely scanning % you will achieve is through the bodyweight and condition of your ewes at mating – nothing new in that – it has always been the case. The answer to improving the average bodyweight of the ewes is to focus to a large extent on the tail end of the flock. An average mating weight of 65kg might sound OK but if 15 – 20% of the flock are under 50 – 55kg the flock, as a whole will under perform. The size of the tail end (in terms of the number and the degree) sets the scanning level. Preferentially treating and feeding the bottom end of the flock can make a large contribution to the overall scanning percentage. Now is the time to be separating out and lifting the tail end.

3. Pre-mating Injection/Vaccinations – Following are the general recommendations for the various procedures – there is some flexibility here and there so for specific advice contact the clinic staff.

a) Toxovax – Toxovax should be given once at least six weeks ahead of tupping to the two-tooths as work by AgVax has shown a seasonal rise in Toxoplasma infections starting in late March. Where hoggets are being consistently lambed they can be vaccinated instead. It has been shown that in immature hoggets (<40kg) the response to vaccination can be somewhat unpredictable, so the rule of thumb for vaccinating hoggets is vaccinate them 4 – 6 weeks pre-tup and if they are under 40kg at this time then apart from the fact that they probably shouldn't be being mated it may be advisable to revaccinate these as a two-tooth.

Toxovax is a highly perishable live vaccine with a 7 – 10 day date life. Do not shake the packet vigorously when mixing (gently rock it back and forward) and administer within two hours of mixing. Keep unused packets chilled. Inject into the muscle of the neck.

Toxovax vaccination has been shown in trials to give an average lift in lambing percentage of 3%. Recent blood testing on a number of farms has shown that Toxoplasma organisms were present on all farms tested.

b) Campylobacter Vaccination – The programme consists of two doses 3 – 6 weeks apart to the two-tooths, both shots given preferably pre-tup, although avoid the booster dose in the two weeks immediately pre-tup. No booster dose annually is required in older ewes. If hoggets are lambed give the two shots to the hoggets, but in their two-tooth year they will require one booster shot pre-tup.

On average this will improve your lambing percentage by 5% where there have been no obvious abortions due to Campylobacter. On farms with diagnosed Campy abortions **all** ewes should be vaccinated twice pre-tup the next year and the average improvement in lambing percentage will be around 9%.

There are two vaccines available – because of its coverage against abortion due to *C. jejuni* (as well as the more common *C. fetus*) we are recommending CampyVax4 be used.

Toxo and Campy vaccinations are two procedures (along with iodine supplementation) that I think should be in the standard preventative armoury of all sheep farmers interested in maximum profitability from lamb production.

c) Androvax/Ovastim Vaccination – There are certain circumstances where the use of either of these products to increase the number of lambs scanned (usually by 20 – 25%) can be useful. There are a number of farmers who use them in ewes that have previously scanned with a single for example. In general I would not recommend their use where scanning exceeds 160 – 165%.

The programme is similar for both products although Ovastim can be used closer to mating if need be. In previously unvaccinated ewes give the first dose of Androvax 9 – 10 weeks pre-tup and the booster dose a month later at 5 – 6 weeks pre-tup. In previously vaccinated ewes give the one booster shot 5 – 6 weeks pre-tup. With Ovastim the first dose can be given 6 – 9 weeks pre-tup and the second dose at least 3 weeks after the first and 2 – 4 weeks before the introduction of the rams. The two products are interchangeable in that one will boost the other & vice versa.

d) Flexidine Iodine Injection – Give 1.5mls intramuscularly at least 6 weeks pre-tup.

e) Salvexin+B Vaccination – This barely qualifies as a pre-mating procedure. In previously unvaccinated animals two shots 3 – 6 weeks apart are required and the first shot could be given late pre-tup or early post-tup. The second shot should be given late May to mid June. Previously vaccinated sheep should be given their booster shot in late May – mid June.

For the last two years running there has been an upsurge in the numbers of farms affected after a period of 3 – 4 years of lower numbers. The numbers reported to the lab for 2005 & 2006 were very similar and about ¾ of the peak numbers reported back at the end of the 90's. While it might be a reasonable assumption that numbers may well start to decline again (disease outbreaks due to Salmonella organisms are inclined to wax and wane in cycles depending on immunity etc) really it is anyone's guess as to what this year will bring. There will be extra environmental contamination around (it has been shown that *S. Brandenburg* can survive for at least a year in covered yards) and this could mean that this year's two-tooths could be more at risk and therefore vaccination of this group at least, could be a good idea. I would not bother vaccinating in-lamb hoggets – while they can get the disease it is quite uncommon in this age group – I've only ever seen three cases in hoggets and none involved large numbers. Vaccination, while it does not totally prevent the disease (unfortunately) it definitely does reduce the impact of the disease by around 2/3 – 3/4's. Contact the clinic if you want more info/assistance over this matter but at the end of the day it is your decision.

Uddering Ewes

This is best done at least a month after weaning as a number of cases occur soon after weaning and also it is hard to feel

much in a distended udder. Avoid yarding ewes in the few days immediately after weaning as this can cause more mastitis. Normal udders can have a degree of lumpiness so watch you aren't culling normal ewes. If unsure we can double check the ones you have pulled out.

Wormy Matters

1. Drench Resistance Testing. We have a number of Faecal Egg Count Reduction Tests (FECRT) underway at the moment and others waiting for the allocated lambs FEC to get to a high enough level - an average of at least 500epg is needed but nearer 1000 would be better. Obviously if a particular species of worm happens to be absent then the drenches will not have been tested against this worm. For this reason tests probably need to be carried out by about mid – end March otherwise it can sometimes be difficult to get enough *Nematodirus* and *Ostertagia*, both important worms as far as potential resistance goes.

2. Beef Cattle. Remember the results of the national survey – 92% of farms had some evidence of resistance to the “mectin” family. Because of this I think it is unwise in cattle up to about 12 months of age to use these products routinely by themselves. Combination products should be used where at all possible – Arrest C can be used orally or more conveniently Eclipse Pour On (a mixture of abamectin and levamisole) can be used. Levamisole by itself is not recommended, as it is quite poor against *Ostertagia*.

3. Deer. Houston we have a problem! We have anecdotal evidence of some mectins not appearing to work as well as they should on the odd farm but no definite evidence as yet. The problem is levamisole is useless in deer so there are no effective combination products available. I know it is not very convenient but an oral Oxfen drench to fawns, while it doesn't last as long against lungworm as the mectins will help ease the pressure on the mectin type drenches.

Lamb Growth Rates in Dull Summers

Many years ago about this time of year in 1982 I carried out a trial on the effect of Vitamin A, D & E supplementation on lamb growth rate during a rather dull summer. While, unfortunately the results have been misplaced/lost I have found a reference in one of our 1982 newsletters that for a month following dosing lamb growth rates were doubled. Hence this season it could well be worthwhile to try this again. LSD liquids compatibility with some anthelmintics has been lab tested so dosing with LSD can be combined with drenching.

While on the subject of LSD some of you will be aware there is the odd “similar” (but cheaper) product out there that claims to be “the same”. The main one of these has been analysed in an independent laboratory and found to contain **one fourteenth** of the required level of Vit. E - in other words it is next to useless. Whether this is because of insufficient amount added originally, poor stability because of inadequate packaging or low quality ingredients we don't know however it is yet another case of “you gets what you pays for”

There is a little more evidence emerging on the use of LSD pre-tup in ewes. In the Feb 06 newsletter I reported on a local trial where supplemented ewes had a 4% improvement in scanning % over non-supplemented ewes. A trial in North Canterbury has shown a similar result and one in Marlborough showed significantly increased conception rates in the first cycle in supplemented ewes. This latter, in these days of plunging lamb prices just as the majority come on stream could be helpful in getting more lambs weaned and away earlier.

Bureaucracy & Red Tape

This only goes from bad to worse. Apparently we are now supposed to sight your chemical handling certificate before you purchase formalin and certain dips – mainly the organophosphate (OP) ones such as Xterminate, Seraphos etc.

If you like you can fax us a copy (418-1282) and we will keep this on file. Since you paid (wasted!) money for this certificate why not make some use of it! Several farmers have said they are still struggling to work out if they had learnt anything they didn't already know that was any use at the course.

Toxovax Orders

The Toxovax order form was included with the December statement along with the newsletter etc. It seems a little goblin got in the works and a small number of people didn't get one. So if you haven't ordered yours yet (or can't remember if you have) contact the clinic **ASAP**. It will usually be a minimum of 2 weeks, but could be up to 4 weeks from order to delivery.

Scabby Mouth

It looks as though the faulty Scabine issue has now finally been settled with a compensation offer of up to 85c/lamb however you must first register with the call centre set up for this purpose (0800-773-777)

So far there haven't been too many cases of disease either as a result of the faulty Scabine or on farms that don't vaccinate. If you do require some lotion to treat affected lambs please bring in a container with you.

Cobalt/B12 Levels

Quite a few farmers have been asking what levels have been like this season. So far I have not seen any low ones although a lot of the results I see are following supplementation by some means on another. Low cobalt/B12 levels are not the only cause of scaly ears. To get an Optigrow done on lambs going to any works contact the clinic as soon as you have the numbers, date etc.

Merchandise Matters

The list this month is as follows:

- **Ancare Drenches** - Receive a Canterbury Drytech polo top on selected drenches (Arrest, Matrix, and Genesis).
- **Virbamec 20Lt** - Get 2 x 5lt free and pay only \$369.31 for 30lt of this generic ivermectin.
- **Genesis Pour-on** - Purchase a 6lt promo pack and pay for just 5lt.
- **Cydectin Pour-on** - Pay for 15lt and get 17lt i.e. 2lt free.
- **Prolaject/Prolavax** – Collect the barcodes off the packs and send to Bomac to receive sunglasses or a summer pack (sunscreen, hat, radio)
- **Trough Blocks** – Sick of slimy water troughs. Chuck one of these blocks in each trough.
- **Genesis Power Doser** - Air powered drench/pour-on guns. Talk to Rhiane in the Balclutha clinic about this labour saving device.
- **Tux Dog Biscuits** - Special for February \$59-95/40kg.
- **Hills Science Diet Canine** - Purchase a 16 - 18kg bag and receive any small bag of science diet free.
- **Kaiwaka Clothing** – 30% off all shop stock including children's and weathershield clothing.
- **Rumenzyme Plus** - Buy 20lt get 5lt free.

Promotion Winners

- **Toxovax Orders:** Winners of the weekends for two at Danseys Pass for ordering Toxovax by Christmas were Peter and Nellie McNab, Kelvin and Rhiandra Ross and Max and Paula Miller.
- **Ancare Stewart Island Fishing Trip:** Winners of this are Don McLaren, Colin McKenzie, Jasper Clark, John Gilchrist, Nigel Craig, Blair Smollett, Tony Chittock, Lincoln Wrigley, Lee Anderson, Stephen Gold, Sean Williams, Stuart Holland, Gerald Holmes, Barry Gray and Greg Stott plus of course their "mates"

News Flash

From the Sydney Morning Herald Court News

A seven year-old Aboriginal boy was at the centre of a courtroom drama yesterday when he challenged a court ruling over who should have custody of him. The boy had a history of being beaten by his parents and the judge initially awarded custody to his aunt in keeping with child custody laws requiring that family unity be maintained as much as possible. The boy surprised the court when he proclaimed that his aunt beat him more than his parents and he adamantly refused to live with her. When the judge suggested that he live with his grandparents the boy cried out that they beat him also. After considering the remainder of the immediate family and learning that domestic violence was apparently a way of life among them the judge took the unprecedented step of allowing the boy to propose who should have custody of him. After two recesses to check legal references and confer with child welfare officials the judge granted temporary custody to the NZ cricket team whom the boy believed were not capable of beating anyone!!!

John A. Smart B.V.Sc.