

# Sheep Farmer Newsletter April 2007

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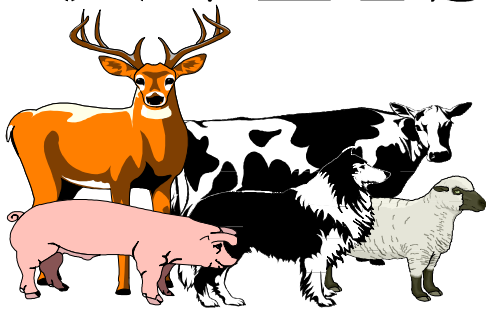
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## Animal Health Centre

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## CONTENTS

- Practice News
- Recent Animal Health Problems
  1. Internal Parasites in Lambs
  2. Pneumonia in Lambs
  3. Ryegrass Staggers
- Reminders
  1. Pre-tup Supplements
    - a) Anthelmintics
    - b) Trace Elements
    - c) “Snake Oil” Products
  2. Brassica Grazing
- Results of Drench Resistance Testing
- Your Feedback Required
- Salmonella Brandenburg Trends
- Pink Eye Treatment
- Annual PAR Return
- Merchandise Matters

## Practice News

Well, I’m pleased to report that after almost four weeks we finally got our computer system up and running again. Hopefully there weren’t too many of you inconvenienced or with account errors. Once

again apologies for this state of affairs – in this day and age it’s just not good enough!

There is one staff change to report on this time. Leanne Walker, one of the small animal vets in the Balclutha clinic, is leaving around mid April for a change of career focus.

Due to work related injuries a couple of the dairy vets cannot do certain aspects of their normal work so they will be filling in for the time being.

## Recent Animal Health Problems

**1. Internal Parasites in Lambs:** – Recently we have had a few cases of acute (in other words sudden and severe) outbreaks of parasitism in lambs that had previously been growing well. It is the usual story – following the first significant rain after a prolonged dry spell all the accumulated larvae on the pasture, (that haven't been killed in the meantime) suddenly have sufficient moisture to develop and do so almost in a synchronised fashion and 2 - 3 weeks following this rain you can get a huge worm challenge and stock can almost overnight go from doing well to not eating, looking hollow, losing weight and eventually deaths occur.

Quite often it could be only one mob on a particular paddock that is affected despite all mobs having a similar drenching date, presumably because that particular paddock's prior grazing history meant it had a high loading of parasite larvae.

Preventing this comes down to observation and good stockmanship – FEC's in these particular circumstances may not necessarily be a good guide as in a sudden challenge situation like this lambs can be dying from parasitism with low or even zero egg counts.

**2. Pneumonia in Lambs:** – There have been a number of deaths occurring lately in lambs due to this. I have covered the development and control of this condition several times in the past so will not elaborate here again. The April 2005 newsletter has quite a bit of space devoted to this disease if you keep back copies of the newsletters. If not just ask and we can give you the information

**3. Ryegrass Staggers:** - There have been several reports of this disease occurring lately. It is caused by an endophyte fungus, so we don't see as much of this condition as we used to because over the last few years there has been quite a lot of pasture replacement with nil endophyte ryegrasses. Once you start experiencing the actual disease control can be difficult/inconvenient and really involves providing an alternative feed source – silage, summer crop, e.g. Pasja, nil endophyte pasture. Prevention is obviously pasture renewal with nil endophyte ryegrasses.

## Reminders

**1. Pre-tup Supplements:** - This is one area that for some reason has always attracted more than its fair

share of bullshit. With lamb prices and financial conditions what they are, you need to ensure that your hard earned dollars are spent wisely. So bearing that comment in mind we will look at each of the areas:

**a) Anthelmintics** – In most cases this is **not** needed. Check with FEC's, particularly the two-tooths – you need to do 10 individual counts from each mob, not one average count as you lose a lot of information with an average. Some people give worm drench solely as a vehicle to get selenium and iodine into their ewes – water works perfectly well for this.

**b) Trace Elements** – The important two are selenium and iodine.

- **Selenium.** If using prills these should be on at least a month pre-tup. An oral dose can be given 1 – 2 weeks pre-tup.
- **Iodine.** If no Flexidine has been used an oral dose of Pot Iodide should be given – this can be combined with Se if necessary.

We can provide a mineral mix containing these two trace elements and other far less important ones for less than 4.5c/ewe, so any more than this and you are wasting money. Please bring in an empty 20lt drum per 2000 ewe doses.

**(c) "Snake Oil" Products** – There is no shortage of these - trace element products, probiotics, various so-called fertilisers etc. Most of these have no science behind them and make outrageous claims as to their benefits. When being hounded by a salesman:

- Ask to see trial data results from a **controlled trial** – that is a trial where 2 groups of animals had otherwise identical treatment, apart from the fact one group did not receive the "snake oil" product in question.
- Check the actual levels of the claimed contents and don't take the salesman's word for anything. Many products contain very low concentrations that are too little to be of any use. If they can't provide the actual levels or claim commercial sensitivity (a common ploy amongst the bullshit brigade) send them off down the drive. There are some parallels here with the recent Ribena court case!!

Please feel comfortable asking us about the various claims, concentration levels etc. I have just finished analysing for a client yet another ADE product that has only 1/50 – 1/4 of the levels of Vit A, D, E & iodine that are actually required. At the end of the day spend your money wisely - don't get sucked in!!

**2. Brassica Grazing:** - We routinely see an assortment of vague problems 1 - 2 weeks following the start of grazing brassicas and as this will have happened by

the time of the next newsletter it needs mentioned now. Following are a series of “rules” to help ensure good stock performance when grazing brassicas:

**a) Minimise exposure to toxic sulphur compounds.**

These compounds damage red blood cells resulting in loss of appetite and varying degrees of anaemia and in severe cases redwater and death. Kale and chou are worst for this. To help avoid this use low sulphur fertilisers, e.g. DAP, prior to sowing.

**b) Allow stock to acclimatise to the crop.** I know many of you don't do this and some seemingly get away without obvious problems however, by introducing stock gradually you will at the very least reduce the check that occurs when stock go onto brassicas and allow them to reach maximum growth rates sooner. Initially run animals on crop 1 - 2 hours/day (about 20% of diet) building up to 100% of diet by 7 - 10 days. Alternatively continue to provide a run off block of older pasture.

**c) Feed extra fibre.** Brassica crops are highly digestible and don't contain much effective fibre. Feeding supplementary fibre such as straw, hay etc slows the flow of feed through the rumen and gut allowing a more effective rumen fermentation and digestion. Studies have shown that lambs fed 0.2kg DM. of straw/head/day had higher growth rates than those fed only brassicas.

**d) Ensure stocks trace element/vitamin status OK.** Studies have shown that applying mineral mixes containing copper, cobalt and iodine to soils that are low does not lift the levels in brassicas (the same applies to selenium). Any trace elements/vitamins needed have to be given directly to stock. Of main concern are iodine, vitamin E and selenium levels in all stock and copper levels in cattle & deer.

**e) Break feed to allow regrowth and utilisation.** Studies have shown that cattle grazing turnips had significantly higher live weight gains when shifted daily onto a fresh break than those given a new break weekly.

**f) Removal from brassicas.** Brassicas contain high levels of calcium. Milk fever can result if stock close to lambing or calving are removed from brassicas and put on low calcium feeds such as early spring pasture. This is one of the reasons why I think it is preferable that ewes (and cows) are not grazed on brassicas within a month of the start of lambing (or calving).

### Results of Drench Resistance Testing

We have been doing quite a few of these tests (FECRT's). While results vary from pretty good to

not so good there have not been any farms this year or last year that got a pass for all worm species to all drenches. In other words all farms tested so far have had a resistance identified. There are some who have had resistance to all three actives given singly identified.

It is really too late now to be setting up a test for this season unless you have lambs now with adequate egg counts (that is >500 Strongyle and >50 Nematodirus average) as it can become difficult to get reasonable levels of some worm species (Nematodirus and Ostertagia) later in the season. I really wanted to raise the awareness and maybe prompt more of you into checking out your status come next season.

### Your Feedback Required

We have amongst our sheep farmer clients a very loyal bunch that regularly purchases the majority, if not all, their animal health requirements, (drench, dip, vaccine etc etc) from us and for this loyal support we are extremely grateful. Without this support the extent of the veterinary service you all receive would be somewhat curtailed and/or more expensive.

The level of competition in the farm merchandise field is increasing – we are very aware that our retail store has to compete and have never shied away from that. However apart from the fact that there are now companies trying to subsidise animal health products with products where they have plenty of margin – grass seed, fertiliser etc there are a lot of salesmen coming up your drive trying to get your business. There have been some discussions here about whether we need to join that trend – in other words do you want people employed by Clutha Vets coming up your drive and subtly (or not so subtly) trying to sell products? Please give us your feedback on this aspect.

While on this subject have you noticed the term “animal health specialist” being increasingly used by personnel in some agricultural companies who are invariably trying to flog off various animal health type products?

In the veterinary profession “specialist” is a very hard earned distinction awarded to a very small number of real experts in their field who have achieved further postgraduate qualifications and practical professional prowess. For example I cannot call myself a sheep specialist or parasite specialist even though I spend much of my working day in these areas, unless I receive this accord from our professional body – precious few ever attain it actually.

So the next self-styled “animal health specialist” up your drive should be seen for what they are – a

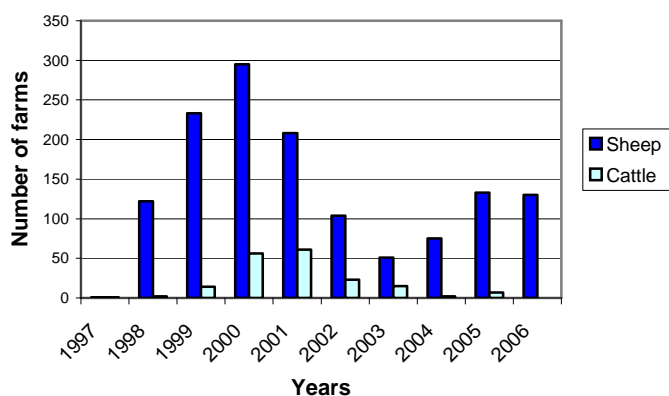
salesman using the term as an instrument with which to flog products, (invariably drench) in an area of which they have, at best a pretty superficial knowledge.

In the confusing world of internal parasites I firmly believe there is no one better qualified to help you unravel the situation re drench resistance and internal parasite management than your rural veterinarian. These are the only people fully trained in parasitology (the vet course has 2 years of parasitology), animal health, effects of parasitism on production and general animal husbandry.

In the meantime thanks to all those who provide us with their support. With an apparent trend in some sectors of society (Generation X/Y?) towards more fleeting loyalties it is really appreciated.

### Salmonella Brandenburg Trends

I thought you might be interested in the graph below of the incidence of Salmonella Brandenburg in Otago and Southland since the beginning of the disease back in 1997.



The numbers are based on samples submitted to Invermay, so are in fact a large under-representation of the actual number of farms because there are lots of cases that are farmer and/or vet diagnosed and therefore don't reach the laboratory. However the trend in numbers is interesting and fits the pattern seen in Salmonella outbreaks. It is virtually exactly what we predicted quite a few years ago. That is an initial epidemic, settling down and then as immunity wanes an upsurge in numbers but not to the extent of the initial outbreak. What I would expect from now on is a waxing and waning over a 3 – 5 year cycle.

Vaccination recommendations are unchanged – 2 doses to the two-tooths (don't worry about doing in-lamb hoggets) 4 – 8 weeks apart and if required a booster dose to the mixed age ewes. The booster doses are best given early – mid June.

### Pink Eye Treatment

At this time of the year there are always some pink eye outbreaks about. Aureomycin puffers are currently out of stock and will be for about another month according to the company. If the puffers are not available you can use the aerosol can Tetravet Blue. Aim the aerosol across the eye, not directly at it and give a short blast. **Do not use Tetravet Spray** – this has a purple (rather than blue) dye in it that is not scourable.

### Prescription Animal Remedy (PAR) Return

Later on this month you will receive the annual PAR renewal form. This is about 3 months earlier than the last couple of years. The reason for this is that processing all this takes a huge amount of office time and we wanted to get this completed before the busy spring period. Please return this form ASAP - this will enable us to complete the legal requirements so that you can purchase PAR's from the retail staff. Failure to return this means they cannot legally supply you your PAR's. Don't blame us – we're just the messengers - we don't make the rules!

### Merchandise Matters

The list this month is as follows:

- **Ancare Drenches** – Receive a Canterbury Drytech polo top on selected drenches – the “resistance fighting” Arrest, Matrix and Genesis drenches.
- **Virbamec 20Lt Mineralised** – Buy 20lt & get 10lt free.
- **Genesis Pour-on** - Purchase a 6lt promo pack and pay for 5lt.
- **Cydectin Pour-on** – Pay for 15lt and get 17lt i.e. 2lt free.
- **Eclipse and Genesis Pour-on** – Get the classic Ancare oilskin vest with these products. Remember *Eclipse*, a combination pour-on is the product of choice for drenching cattle < 12mths of age.
- **Merial Drenches** – Get \$40 - \$50 Prezzy cards with Triton and Alpha.
- **Sheep Lice Pour-ons** – Magnum and Exit pour-ons available at great prices.
- **Tempor Lice Pour-on** – Buy 5lt and get a bonus 1lt.
- **Prolaject and Prolavax** – Save the barcodes and send to Bomac to receive sunglasses or a summer pack (sunscreen, hat, radio etc.)
- **Kaiwaka Clothing** - Get ready for winter with 30% off all shop stock.

John A. Smart B.V.Sc.