

# Sheep Farmers Newsletter July 2008

Clutha Vets Animal Health Centre

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## Animal Health Centre

### **Balclutha**

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## **Practice News**

Well, this newsletter represents the start of the second century of Clutha Vets. A couple of weeks ago we had our Centenary celebrations which went off pretty

well. Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June was the Golf Tournament with 90 odd players. Friday was the Open Day at the clinic with various displays put on, and a barbecue followed by refreshments, speeches and supper over at the Rosebank Lodge. On Saturday night there was a

dinner for past and present staff and board members. A 113 page book covering the history of Clutha Vets has been produced – there are some spare copies at the clinic so if you would like one just let us know.

As I indicated in the last newsletter we have managed to secure a large animal vet, this one is male and has around 25 years experience which makes him a rare breed. Sid Taylor comes to us from Otautau where he has been for quite a few years now. Originally from South Africa, Sid's wife works in Dunedin so the commute is now somewhat shorter than it was. Sid will start here towards the end of this month.

Apart from a cold blast during the last week of June, so far the winter hasn't been too bad – there has been some grass growth so hopefully this has assisted you all in the battle to have sufficient feed supplies for stock this winter. Because of the dry summer/early autumn, scanning may struggle to match last year so it will be important to try and ensure as high a lamb survival as possible and adequate nutrition is a very important component of this. Lamb prices look pretty promising in the medium term so we want as many of the little buggers kept alive as possible (forget those silly ideas about converting to tit pulling). A reasonable part of this newsletter will be devoted to aspects affecting lamb survival.

### Recent Animal Health Problems

On the whole there haven't been too many issues with sheep health over the last couple of months.

**1. Internal Parasites.** As a hangover from the feed stresses of summer/autumn the odd internal parasite problem pops up from time to time in hoggets and also in adult stock. While outbreaks of clinical parasitism in ewes may not be that common it can and does occur occasionally and invariably there is a feed pinch somewhere in the history. Keep a close eye on the ewe condition and, if in doubt, check some FEC's. I am expecting a trickle of worm problems to occur in ewes all the way through to around lambing.

**2. Campylobacter in Bulls.** This is a venereal disease of cattle (nothing to do with Campy in sheep) that can result in reduced levels of fertility. Until recently it has been virtually impossible to diagnose, but recent DNA test developments now allow a straight forward method of diagnosis. Cases have recently been found in the Milton area, including in a new bull from a stud (which implies the stud is infected as well).

In newly infected herds pregnancy rates can be half that of normal but in herds where the disease has been present for a few years pregnancy rates overall may be only moderately below normal with severe infertility confined to replacement heifers or cows.

If any of you have some lingering suspicions over this then contact us as now we have a reliable test to diagnose this disease.

### Reminders

It seems a bit early to be talking about pre-lamb matters yet but with me missing a newsletter in February I am now on alternate months to that previously and to talk about pre-lamb issues at the beginning of September is leaving it a bit late.

**1. Clostridial Vaccination.** The pre-lamb booster shot should be given to the ewes 1 - 3 weeks pre-lamb. Unlike last year supplies of vaccine should be fine. There are various options apart from straight Ultravac – you have Prolovax (B12 + 5in1), Nilvax (levamisole + 5in1) and Eweguard (Cydectin + 5in1 +/- B12). All are available in a plain or selenised version. Good immunity will be passed on to the newborn lambs from all the above products if, and only if, the ewes at some stage earlier in their lives received two doses of Ultravac (or Prolovax) 3 - 6 weeks apart.

If, when skinning dead lambs for mothering on purposes you find a jelly-like material clotted around the navel under the skin, then something is not quite right with your vaccination programme (or you don't have one and should!).

**2. Trace Elements.** The two important ones are selenium and iodine. Selenium, if necessary, can be administered with Ultravac, Prolovax etc. Unless Flexidine was used earlier in the year (in which case iodine supplementation will not be needed) then iodine can only be given as an oral dose. The correct timing for this is, in severe cases, 8 and 4 weeks pre-lamb, and in moderate cases, (the majority), 6 weeks pre-lamb. Many farmers, because of convenience factors, administer it too late with Ultravac, Prolovax etc.

**3. Vitamin E.** A deficiency of Vit E in particular can result in poorer lamb vigour and survival. This is practically guaranteed where stock (both sheep and cattle) have been on brassicas, but it is also likely on other winter feed as Vit E is low in stored feed (hay, baleage etc.) and in mature grass.

Various factors influence the best timing of administration of Vit. E making it hard to give a generalised recipe so enquire at the clinic for advice for your specific situation. LSD liquid represents the gold standard for quality & stability – even better than LSD powder. As I have said before beware the crap copycat products with poor stability &/or low levels of components.

**4. Pre-lamb Long Acting Anthelmintics.** There have been a few developments in this area since last year however the story as regards the responsible use of these products has not really changed over the last few years. See later in the newsletter.

### Abortion Submissions

This season is no doubt about to descend on us so I thought some hints on best practice might be in order.

- Don't send in samples off the first 1 or 2 abortions – they could be unimportant one-off cases.
- Send in fresh aborted fetuses, preferably 2 from 2 different abortions i.e. not a set of twins. Black mummified fetuses are no use.
- If possible include some placenta (after-birth).
- Make sure they haven't been scavenged – seagulls can sneakily remove gut contents through the navel & stomach contents are a preferred sample.
- Put fetuses in something leak-proof – e.g. at least 3 supermarket plastic bags.
- Preferably bring them in by 1.00pm each day but especially on a Friday.

Taking note of the above should maximise the chance of getting an accurate diagnosis and avoid wasting money.

### Pre-lamb Long Acting Anthelmintics

The message in this area has not really changed in the last few years and that is that the *whole flock* use of these products does accelerate the development of drench resistance. You can have maximum productivity or maximum sustainability (minimum drench resistance), but you can't really have both. Where each farmer sits is really a matter of personal choice and some thought needs to be given to the extent to which these products are used on farms. In other words first decide if, and to what extent, you are going to use these products – having said that it is too early to decide yet – don't be forced into making purchases for an event several weeks away when you can't predict what conditions are going to be like at the time. Factors such as ewe condition, feed ahead, pregnancy status and the parasite challenge are not known.

The second decision to be made is (assuming some product is going to be used, however you may well not use any) what product, and this is where things get messy. Note that some of the advertising used by some of the companies is extremely selective in the information provided – any point no matter how minor, where their product is superior is pushed to the extreme while any bad points, no matter how major, are ignored. I have already seen examples of this on TV.

There are quite a wide range of capsules and injections available – five different capsules and roughly eight different injection products. There is absolutely no doubt that from the resistance development point of view the No 1 choice for minimising this on the overwhelming majority of farms will be Bionic Combination capsules. At the other end of the scale the worst products in this regard, in my opinion, are the moxidectin (Cydectin) injection products. This is because they all have relatively long periods of sub-lethal activity (the so-called tail) where more resistant worms can survive while more susceptible ones are killed off giving an advantage to the more resistant ones. The other point I wish to reinforce from the last newsletter, to counter some of the afore mentioned advertising, is that the new so called Cydectin LA (long acting) is only long acting against one worm type down here.

In summary don't rush into any decisions yet and obtain veterinary advice over the best option for you – if this is to do nothing we will advise that. One bit of good news is that capsules have reduced in price a bit and which means that Cydectin LA is about the same price as the capsules, hence you will get far more bang for your buck out of a correctly chosen capsule.

### Pre-lamb Ewe Management

For most sheep farmers income is determined by the total weight of lamb weaned which is, in turn, a factor of lambing % and lamb growth rates. While the potential lambing is determined at mating time how well the ewes are managed in the last month of pregnancy has a large influence on both lamb survival (and hence final lambing %) and growth rates.

Something like 60% of a lamb's growth rate up until weaning is determined by how its mother has been fed in the 4 - 6 weeks before the lamb is born. This is because underfeeding in this period when close to two thirds of foetal growth occurs, reduces udder development, milk and colostrum production, lamb birth weight, vigour and early suckling behaviour.

One month out from lambing you are looking at 1.6kg DM/day of reasonable quality pasture for a 70-75kg single bearing ewe and 1.9kg/day for a twin bearing ewe. At full term this has risen to 1.8 - 1.9 for the single and 2.3 - 2.5kg DM/day for the twin. Shearing during this period will also dramatically increase energy requirements often when feed is tight, so is probably better carried out earlier (midwinter).

Multiples, because of rumen capacity (fitting it all in) problems need high quality feed available – the best pasture will be the previous seasons young grass paddocks or fresh regrowth. Barley is a good

supplement at this time – start off gradually at 50gms/head/day getting up to 200gms for twins and 250-300 for triplets over a period of 7 - 10 days. These ewes should not fall over from a metabolic disease or get too many bearings as long as a feast/famine feeding regime is avoided.

### Upcoming Events

**1. Spring Supply Night.** This, now annual, event is increasing in popularity and is scheduled this year for Thursday 24th July. As usual there will be just vets, no sales reps there to discuss any queries you may have – a good opportunity to cover off some of those tricky issues such as pre-lamb long acting drenches. A barbecue and refreshments will be available and as usual there will be plenty of good specials on the night. Timing is Clydevale from 12.30 – 3.00pm and Balclutha and Milton from 5.00pm – 8.00pm.

**2. Clutha Vets AGM.** This is to be held in the Lawrence Golf Clubs' new clubrooms on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> August at 8.00pm. The speaker is Doug Edmeades, the well known independent fertiliser consultant. The overall theme of his talk will be getting the most bang for your (increasingly large!) fertiliser buck.

### New Product – Dectomax Injection for Sheep

Dectomax injection has been around for years for internal parasite control in cattle and is highly regarded in this area – it is one of the better “mectin” type products. Pfizer have just obtained registration for its use in sheep, the specific target market obviously being the above mentioned pre-lamb anthelmintic usage in ewes.

Basically it is a shorter acting long acting product (if that's not “double Dutch”) but it doesn't have the disadvantage of the long sub-lethal tail period of Cydectin – it is 4 - 5 times shorter. Used in conjunction with Ultravac it gives a cost effective and safer (from the resistance point of view) pre-lamb drench and vaccine option.

### Merchandise Matters

This month's list is as follows:

- **Eclipse 2.5 & 5lt, Genesis 2.5 & 5lt, Eprinex 5lt Pour On and Genesis Injection (2 x 500ml):** Purchase any of these products and receive a pair of original Muckboots valued at \$145.
- **Genesis Pour On 5.5lt:** Get 10% extra free – great price.
- **Genesis Pour On Herd Pack 12.5lt:** Does 500 x 500kg cows @ \$3.01/head nett incl GST – sharp deal.

- **Genesis Pour On 10lt:** Receive a 27 piece ¾” drive socket set free.
- **Tempor Lice Pour-on:** Get 1lt free with each 5lt.
- **Cydectin Pour-on:** 10 % bonus product free on all pack sizes (2, 5 & 15lt) or on the 15lt pack forego the extra 2lt and receive a gas barbecue and LPG table heater instead – your choice.
- **Exit Pour-on 20lt:** For lice control in sheep – only \$340.76 or 42c/75kg ewe dose.
- **Eukanuba Premium Performance Dog Biscuits 20kg:** Buy 3 bags and get \$40 off, plus every 11<sup>th</sup> bag is free.
- **Drench Capsules** and the various versions of Cydectin injection are available on delayed payment.
- **Dectomax Injection/Ultravac 5 in 1:** Buy a 1250-1400 dose (depends on ewe weight) combination of these products and receive 2 free vaccination guns, a beanie and dog whistle all in a flexible chilly bag pack.
- **Milligans Calf Milk Powder:** Very limited stock @ \$81.50/20kg nett incl GST. Price will rise by \$4 - 5/bag after this.

Just a reminder about our retail direct dial line –  
**(03) 418 1281**

### Promotion Winners

**Merial/Ancare Sony 40”LCD TV's:** Further to the one listed in the last newsletter five more names have been drawn from amongst all the purchasers of qualifying Merial/Ancare products. The lucky winners of these flash new TV's were Chris Lawlor, Sharon & Ken McRae, Bruce McCorkindale, Scott Smales and Craig Lawrence.

### One Liners

1. Always try to be modest. And be VERY proud of it!
2. If you think nobody cares about you, try missing a couple of payments.
3. Love may be blind but marriage is a real eye opener.
4. Attempt to get a new car for your spouse – it'll be a great trade.
5. Everybody repeat after me – “We are all individuals.”
6. Bills travel through the mail at twice the speed of cheques.
7. Borrow money from pessimists – they don't expect it back.
8. 99% of lawyers give the rest a bad name.
9. 42.7% of all statistics are made up on the spot.
10. Trust everybody but make sure you cut the cards.

John A. Smart B.V.Sc.