

Sheep Farmers Newsletter September 2008

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Animal Health Centre

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Practice News

In the last newsletter I mentioned that Sid Taylor, ex Otautau, was starting with us towards the end of July. At the time that statement was correct but just prior to starting he ruptured his Achilles tendon playing squash

and so that has delayed his arrival by around 3 months or so.

We have also filled the vacancy for the second small animal vet in Balclutha – for a while now this position has been filled part-time by several vets living in the area and the odd large animal vet. The appointment of

Catherine Copland from the UK will allow for more continuity in the small animal area. Depending on NZ immigration and visa issues she will start Nov/Dec.

No need really to mention the difficult late winter period. It is quite wet underfoot and in most cases feed supplies are quite tight. However, we do seem to have escaped the worst of the rain that further north seems to have been getting. Metabolic disease, (in particular sleepy sickness) may be more prevalent this season – see later for a repeat and update of the sleepy sickness/milk fever article from August 02 newsletter.

Recent Animal Health Problems

1. Abortions. One good thing – there seems to have been fewer cases of abortion round the district. Talking to John Gill, the pathologist at Invermay, this seems to be common to other areas as well. I am aware of six cases of Salmonella Brandenburg at the time of writing (27th August), mainly from the Wairuna and Awamangu districts. Mostly these cases started later than previous years. Have also had a Campy abortion, from an unvaccinated flock.

2. Stuck in Mud. There have been a few cases of ewes or hoggets getting totally bogged down in the brassica break and in some cases drowning.

3. Lice. A few lice breakdowns have been showing up recently. The best approach for dealing with these varies depending on wool length, time till lambing etc. Contact the clinic for advice on handling these.

Reminders

1. Pre-lamb “Jabs”. With the damp weather there have been a few delays in getting these done. Booster 5 in 1 vaccination will still be effective if given as close as 4 days prior to the start of lambing.

2. Tailing Issues. While it may seem a bit premature to talk about tailing with lambing hardly started, by the time of the next newsletter in two months time, tailing will be well underway.

a) *Scabby Mouth Vaccination* – Check for takes 8 – 10 days post vaccination. There should be a raised “angry” scab along the scratch line.

b) *Long Acting B12 Products* – These two products (Smartshot & Prolaplan) are becoming increasingly widely used and are best given at tailing. This year Prolaplan will again be available at the reduced price of 67c/dose (was 82c), and also available on a delayed charge – charged February, pay March. If you use repeated injections of conventional B12 (Prolaject) you should perhaps consider using one of these long acting products instead – they ensure a consistent,

even supply of B12 and you can basically forget about Cobalt/B12 deficiency for the entire season when they are used.

c) *Ear Marker Sharpening* - We have been advised by the supplier that closer to tailing the demand for sharpening ear markers (& supplying new ones) becomes hectic, & delays in supply are inevitable. Check now & if your ear markers need attention drop them in now so we can send them away & you should have them back before tailing.

Weak Newborn Lambs

I am aware that there have been a few farms in the area change hands so there will be some farmers out there who may be unaware of the following technique I have been promoting for a few years now.

For reviving weak, cold, collapsed lambs that are nearly dead an intra-peritoneal (intra-abdominal) injection of 20% Dextrose can provide a rapid and truly spectacular recovery. It should be done in the paddock as soon as the lamb is found and before it is warmed up. It can even be done in the paddock to cold, sluggish lambs that have not yet collapsed and the lambs left with their mother. With the much improved lamb prices it will be worth trying to save every lamb you can.

Basically the technique involves injecting 10mls/kg (so 40 - 60mls) of 20% Dextrose (it must be 20% strength) through the abdominal wall between the end of the rib cage and the navel using a vaccinating needle (18G x 3/8”). The injected dextrose ends up around the stomach and intestines (not in the stomach) and is rapidly absorbed – far more rapidly than any orally administered product.

20% Dextrose now comes in a collapsible vaccipack so I suggest purchasing a 10ml disposable vaccinating gun and having the Dextrose pack, vaxigun and 18G x 3/8” needles in your lambing kit at all times. A leaflet explaining the procedure in more detail and the equipment needed are all available at the clinics. Try it – it is not difficult to do and I am confident that, like many other farmers, you will be amazed at its success rate.

Dry Ewes

Firstly dry dries. I am aware there are a few cases out there of increased numbers of dry ewes, especially two-tooths at scanning. While overall scanning levels are back a little on many places due to the dry conditions and lack of feed back in late summer/autumn, in most cases this should not cause extra dry dries. Ewe’s body weight/condition has to be pretty terrible before she will not have at least a

single. If you have a problem in this area, especially if it is ongoing, please contact me as hopefully, I can help sift through the issues and sort the problem out.

Secondly wet dries. If you are finding too many dead lambs (say more than 17 – 19% of lambs scanned) then get a sample of them into us for a post mortem. This will give us an idea of the reasons and we can implement a management plan to help change this. Identify the wet dry ewes – in cases where no vaccination for Toxo and/or Campy is carried out these diseases can be a hidden cause of lamb loss (you don't always see obvious abortions) and there are blood tests available (no lab fees) to see if there has been recent exposure and therefore losses due to these diseases.

Where vaccination with Toxovax or CampyVax 4 has been carried out it is most unlikely that these diseases will be an issue – the vaccines are very, very effective. Rarely though, in hoggets, complete protection with Toxo can be a little problematic.

PAR's

Just a reminder to the few of you who haven't sent your annual return back in yet. We are as lenient as possible with this but it has got to the stage where no return – no PAR without speaking to a vet. And if we have sent you a reminder letter and you are sure you have returned the original please accept our apologies – as you can guess they create a paper mountain in the office!

Calf Disbudding

For several years now we have operated a calf disbudding service which, as well as being used by dairy farmers, is used by bull-beef calf rearers and now the odd farmer with beef cows. Lets face it – it is a prick of a job for all concerned (farmers and calves) done in the usual fashion at several months of age.

Calves are disbudded using sedation and local anaesthetic (no pain, no bawling) for just over \$5/head at 3 - 6 weeks of age, which is the best time to do it. If left later than this more drugs and time are needed so a bit more expensive. Contact the clinic for more info.

Metabolic Diseases of Sheep

There have already been a few cases of sleepy sickness and milk fever occurring and the inevitable queries on how to tell them apart and what to treat them with. The essential features of each condition are as follows:

a) Sleepy Sickness (Pregnancy Toxaemia): The energy demand on a ewe carrying multiple lambs over the last 6 weeks, in particular, the last 4 weeks before lambing, are huge. If, through under nutrition, she cannot eat enough feed to provide that energy she utilises body fat as a source of energy – this can be more pronounced in fat ewes. A by product of this process is the production of ketones which are toxic. Mild underfeeding in the last 2 - 3 weeks pre-lamb can, even in the absence of obvious symptoms of sleepy sickness, produce enough ketones to depress newborn lamb survival. More extreme cases of underfeeding result in the classical signs of sleepy sickness progressing as follows:

- Affected ewes separate from/lag behind the mob and appear dull.
- Either not eating, or only picking a bit.
- Aimless walking, stargazing.
- Apparent blindness.
- Later ewes may become staggy, twitchy around the eyes, ears and muzzle and froth at the mouth.
- Go down, sometimes in a star-gazing position progressing to a comatose state and death after a few days.

Treatment: This needs to be given early in the course of the symptoms to have any chance of success. Due to brain damage, it is hopeless once the ewe is down and stopped eating. Give energy in the form of 160ml Ewelife orally. Either repeat this a few hours later, or follow up with Ketol or Ketovet. Other products farmers have used with some success are Headstart and Ewe Reviver. Put on good feed.

b) Milk Fever (Hypocalcaemia): Occurs mainly in good condition ewes before lambing, but can occur up to a month after lambing and often occurs within 24 hours of a sudden feed check, as after changes in feed, sudden storm or short periods of fasting following yarding.

- It is more sudden in onset than sleepy sickness and likely to involve greater numbers initially.
- Initially ewes will stagger about, however this phase doesn't last long and usually you will find them down.
- Usually found sitting down in sternal recumbency with their head to the side and in a pretty comatose state.
- May be slightly bloated.
- Sometimes their hind legs are stretched out behind them.
- There may be green staining round the nose and mouth from regurgitation.
- Progresses to coma and death in 6-36 hours – much quicker than sleepy sickness.

Treatment: 120 – 150mls Glucalpos, Calpromag (or similar products containing 25% Calcium borogluconate, and preferably, some magnesium & dextrose. Some of these products now contain Vit B12 which may help as well. Give under the skin over the ribs in at least two sites and massage in well. The response to treatment is usually rapid (within 30 mins) unless it is complicated by sleepy sickness as well, so treatment can be used as an aid to diagnosis.

It is possible to have both conditions occur together. If this is the case or you are not sure, treat for both bearing in mind you are not going to have a great success rate once ewes with sleepy sickness are down.

New Scabigard Applicator

Before purchasing your scabby mouth vaccine this year check out the new applicator on display at the clinics. This was trialled here last year and most of the farmers who tried it were quite enthusiastic about it. It is basically like holding a V grip vaccinator. The older style orange applicator will still be available as well. No charge for the applicator.

Pink Eye Treatment

Our apologies for being out of stock of the puffers you normally use to treat affected stock. What happened is the Aureomycin puffers we traditionally used got taken off the market (not sure why). We replaced these with more expensive Terramycin puffers. Then we couldn't obtain these and when they come back in stock we have been told they will now be an astronomical price – something like \$55 each. I have done a bit of thinking (and idea nicking I must admit) and to cut a long story short we are going to produce our own Pink Eye treatment. It will contain the same antibiotic as both puffers but in addition like many eye treatments for small animal use, also a corticosteroid to help reduce inflammation & tissue reaction. This will be produced as a mist spray that you will just direct at the eye. It will work out much cheaper than the puffers and should be more convenient to use. Hopefully by the time you read this we will just about have product ready for supply to those who have the puffers down on their PAR list.

Switch Drench – Hot Deal:

It might seem a bit premature to be talking about lamb drenching yet when they are barely even born, but at present there is a particularly good deal on Switch.

Just to recap, Switch is a new dual action combination drench containing levamisole (clear) and abamectin drenches. On most farms the triple combination drench Matrix will be the number one option for lamb drenching as far as delaying resistance development goes. Second best option on most farms (unless

drench testing shows otherwise) will be a yearly alternation of the two types of dual combinations (Arrest and Switch). Switch only came on the market last season and most of you have used Arrest (a white and clear combination), or copies of it, on and off for many years now, hence the time is right for many to make the change to Switch this season. It provides a cheaper alternative to Matrix (but to be fair slightly inferior in terms of delaying drench resistance). At the moment, (and we are not sure how long this will go for), there is a free 5lt with every 20lt drum so effectively a 25% discount. If Switch is the option for you this year why not estimate and order your season's requirements now to take advantage of this great deal that makes it cheaper than Genesis (abamectin) by itself. We will be able to delay the charging until you collect it or some such arrangement like charging it over several months. Contact the retail staff to take advantage of this.

Merchandise Matters

In addition to the super deal on Switch mentioned immediately above we have:

- ***Merial Ancare Sheep Drenches:*** Receive a high quality Merino wool T shirt with selected sheep drenches, mainly combination (including tape) options.
- ***Merial Ancare Cattle Drenches:*** Purchase a qualifying pack of their cattle drench and receive a pair of original Muck boots valued at \$145. This promo will shortly change to woks or kitchen blenders instead.
- ***Genesis Pour On 5.5lt:*** Get extra 10% free – great price.
- ***Genesis Pour On Herd Pack 12.5lt:*** Does 500 x 500kg cows @ \$3.01/head nett incl. GST – sharp deal.
- ***Genesis Injection Promo Pack:*** Buy 4 packets – great price - only 57c/ewe.
- ***Genesis Pour On 10ltr:*** Receive a solid 27 piece ¾” drive socket set free.
- ***Exit Pour-on 20lt:*** For lice control in sheep – only \$340.76 or 42c/75kg ewe dose.
- ***Tempor Lice Pour-on:*** Get 1lt free with each 5lt.
- ***Drench Capsules*** and the various versions of Cydectin injection are available on delayed payment.
- ***Tux 40kg:*** Only \$79.95 while stocks last.

Promotion Winners

Winners of the various prize draws from the spring supply night on July 24th were Phil Neame, Peter Deans, Allan “Baldy” Lyall & Stephen Korteweg.

John A. Smart B.V.Sc.