

# Sheep Farmers Newsletter November 2008

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## Animal Health Centre

### **Balclutha**

Bruce Bissett	B.Ag. B.V.Sc.
John Smart	B.V.Sc.
Andrew Robinson	B.V.Sc.
Jason Darwen	B.V.Sc.
Suzanne Craig	B.V.Sc.
Rob Mills	B.V.Sc.
Teresa O'Riordan	B.V.M&S.
Alisa McDonald	B.V.Sc
Hanneke van Kooten	D.V.M
Hamish Moore	B.V.Sc
Sid Taylor	B.V.Sc MACVSc

### **Milton**

Peter Kalb	B.V.Sc.
Jillian Wilson	B.V.Sc.
Bernie Vaatstra	B.V.Sc.

### **Locums**

Ali Maw	B.V.Sc
Pam Doig	B.V.Sc

## **Practice News**

Things have been rather hectic round here lately. Injuries, babies and a general lack of vets has put the pressure on. Sid Taylor has re-ruptured his Achilles tendon so it will be well into the New Year before he arrives (was to be last August).

In addition to all this we have two resignations in the pipeline. Alisa McDonald leaves just prior to Christmas, and Bernie Vaatstra at Milton leaves in January. Bernie has decided he would rather receive our smelly samples than send them – he has applied for a pathology scholarship with Gribbles (the lab service we use). We do have

another vet coming to Milton but the idea was to increase the vets there to four, not just maintain the status quo!

Unless you started lambing quite early most of you should have struck reasonable weather at lambing. Initial reports suggest quite a good lamb survival, which will help make up for the lower average scanning due to the drought last summer/autumn. On top of that lamb prices are looking much rosier so overall, the outlook is much better than the last three or so years. Forget any ideas about milking cows!

### Recent Animal Health Problems

Actually, on the sheep side there have not been too many problems to report on. Salmonella brandenburg abortions were definitely back although on those farms where it did occur the impact was far from minor. If I look into my rather cloudy crystal ball I would predict another couple of quieter years with S. brandenburg then an upswing again in the number of cases as flock immunity levels decline.

There were a few cases of Campy and Toxo abortions, all in unvaccinated flocks.

**1. Dry Ewes.** There seems to be a few instances of more than the usual number of dry ewes, especially two-tooths about back at scanning. The possible causes of this are numerous but, unless they were **very** light at mating it is unlikely you can blame the drought – sure the scanning % will be back as there will be fewer multiples, but the actual dry % shouldn't be markedly affected. With a bit of investigation usually it is possible to make some (often quite rapid) progress in this area, so call the clinic if you have a problem.

### Reminders

**1. Teaser Rams.** These need operated on a minimum of six weeks prior to use so you need to be looking at getting this done over the next 2 - 3 months. Many farmers find the use of teasers, especially over two-tooths to be quite beneficial. They can be used at ratios of 1:300 – 1:500.

**2. Ram Runs.** The form for this will be included with the Dec statement next month. If you return this promptly we can organise the runs more efficiently saving on time & mileage. Included on the form is a slot for indicating the number of dogs/pups for vaccination which saves you having to bring them into the clinic. There has been a bit of parvo about lately and prevention is way better (and far cheaper) than cure.

**3. Toxovax Order Form.** This will also be sent out next month (in tandem with the ram run form).

Toxovax should be given at the latest 6 weeks & preferably 8 weeks prior to the start of mating. As it has about a 10 day shelf life from the time of arrival in the clinic, pre-ordering is essential and this must be done at least 4 weeks ahead of when you require it. Every year we have people who forget to order and want it at the last minute so, when the order form arrives next month, order it then and there. As an incentive to order early, (which also helps the manufacturer with production scheduling) all orders placed prior to Christmas will go in the draw for one of three trips for two for a luxury night away at the Danseys Pass Hotel, including dinner, wine and breakfast.

Blood testing of quite a few flocks now, has shown a 100% incidence of Toxo occurring so there will be very few, if any, flocks where vaccination will not be worthwhile.

**4. Optigrow Checks.** Telephone either clinic to arrange this prior to despatch of the stock to any works. In lambs selenium and cobalt should be checked and in cattle or deer selenium and copper. From November onwards up until the first draft, blood tests in lambs can provide useful information on cobalt (and selenium) status – contact the clinic to arrange this.

**5. Drench Checks.** Irrespective of which drench you are using you should check on its effectiveness at least once a season, preferably after one of the earlier lamb drenches in the season. Take samples off 10 lambs 10 - 12 days post drenching (keep samples separate). Counts should all be zero – if not there is a problem that may, or may not, be drench resistance. Further testing is needed to sort this out.

**6. Pulpy Kidney in Lambs.** Latterly there has been mild weather and regular rain so that grass and clover are booming away. That, combined with a move to some of the new high sugar grasses, means pulpy kidney cases are more likely to occur. It surprises me that quite a few farmers seem quite prepared to accept a few deaths from pulpy kidney. Why not get in before this occurs and vaccinate. Best timing will vary from farm to farm depending on when cases occur – contact the clinic for advice for your particular circumstances but at 14c/dose one lamb saved for every 600 or so vaccinated will pay for the vaccine.

### Internal Parasite (Worm) Developments

As is usual at this time of the year a large chunk of this newsletter will be devoted to this topic, which is probably appropriate as this represents the start of the new internal parasite year. Recent developments include:

**1. Opportunity To Save On A FECRT:** I have recently managed to secure some funding from Meat & Wool NZ through Wormwise (the name given to the national internal parasite initiative), which I have decided to use to subsidise on farm Faecal Egg Count Reduction Tests (FECRT's). I have received funding of \$7000 which will be used to subsidise FECRT's on 14 farms to the tune of \$500 each. What this means is that instead of paying the usual cost of around \$1200 - \$1300+/- \$200, you will only pay \$700 - \$800 +/- \$200. The reason for the range is the cost depends on the number of larval cultures needed which in turn depends on the result. The greater the number of drenches with less than 100% results means more larval cultures are needed. I already have a shortlist of 5 names, so to take advantage of this opportunity to save \$500 and gain some really useful information you need to contact the clinic ASAP. The first nine farmers (you have to be a full time farmer, not a life style type one) to contact the Balclutha Clinic (03 418 1280) will be able to take advantage of this offer so don't delay – first in, first served.

**2. Preparation for FECRT Testing:** Irrespective of whether you are lucky enough to get a subsidised test (see above) or not, the initial preparatory steps are the same. To get the most out of the test results we need –

- All worm species present so timing is important – the best time in South Otago seems to be between the end of December and the beginning of April.
- FEC's of at least an **average** of 500epg, but preferably nearer 1000.

In other words you want your group of test lambs to hit counts of 500 - 1000 between the end of December and the end of March. The exact method to achieve this depends on your weaning date and any pre-weaning drenches but in most cases the best procedure would be to give a pre-weaning drench (if this is your normal practice) and at weaning mark 80 - 100 ewe lambs, don't drench them and either run them separately or they can run with the rest of the mob – it doesn't matter which. Starting 6 - 8 weeks after their pre-weaning drench do the occasional FEC to see how counts are going, and when they reach the required level we can conduct the test. The length of time it takes these lambs to reach suitable FEC's varies between farms and seasons – in a drier season like last year we struggled to get counts high enough, so a number of FECRT's have been held over to this season.

I think in many cases if you marked your test lambs and didn't pre-wean drench them (where you do one) this would often mean the FEC's in

the lambs may peak too early, meaning as I indicated above, that some worm species may not be present, hence you haven't tested the drenches against them and therefore you really have an incomplete test.

**3. South Otago FECRT Results:** I have analysed the results of all FECRT's conducted to date by us in South Otago. I have done this at 2 pass/fail levels. Firstly the 95% level – in other words the % of farms where a particular drench failed to achieve a >95% reduction in FEC – this is the accepted national standard for determining drench resistance but, as I have said before, it is really bullshit. The second column headed <99% reduction gives a more realistic snapshot of the situation as, where there is less than 99% control, it invariably means that control of one of the individual worm species can be way less than 95%, and resistance is well and truly present and established.

Drench	Failure Level	
	<95% reduction	<99% reduction
Albendazole (White)	65.6	81.3
Levamisole (Clear)	28.1	56.3
Dual (Arrest)	6.5	22.6
Half ivermectin	36	72
Full ivermectin	6.5	32.3

In other words on 65.6% of South Otago farms white drench failed to reduce the FEC by 95% or greater and on 81.3% of farms tested by 99% or greater. Of particular concern here is the comparatively rapid escalation of "mectin" resistance. Using ineffective drenches is one of the best ways to make the situation worse so it is important to know your resistance status – hence conduct a FECRT.

**4. Recent Research Findings:** Two recent pieces of research should be of interest to you:

a) Undrenched ewes can be used to "apply the handbrake" to drench resistance. Recent research by Dr Dave Leathwick has shown that grazing undrenched ewes rotationally behind lambs slows resistance build-up **without impacting on production**. What happens is that ewes dilute the number of worms resistant to drenches that have been shed by lambs (as eggs) by shedding susceptible worm eggs onto pasture. These susceptible worms interbreed with resistant worms in the gut of animals that subsequently graze the pasture reducing the frequency of the resistant genes. This is a good example of refugia (worms in refuge from drenching) in practice.

b) Research from Australia has shown that sheep under a single moxidectin (Cydectin) drench regime are almost 3 times more likely to develop worm resistance than those treated with shorter acting drenches from the same action family e.g. abamectin (Genesis). This is because of the longer sub-lethal "tail" of moxidectin, meaning worms are exposed to declining levels of drug which kills susceptible worms but for a period allows more resistant worms to breed and therefore give them a distinct reproductive advantage. This research backs up the advice we have been giving for quite a few years now.

**5. Q Drench:** There is on the market a quad combination drench called Q Drench. Any person who tries to sell this down here is simply reinforcing their complete ignorance of parasitology. The 4<sup>th</sup> active (Closantel) is effective against Haemonchus and Liver Fluke only, neither of which even occur down here. In addition the type of Closantel used is poorly absorbed meaning it is less effective anyway. Why spend extra on something that is no use? Send any salesmen pedalling this packing.

**6. Switch Drench:** Just a follow-up reminder from the last newsletter. Switch, the new dual action combination drench containing levamisole and abamectin is available for a time with a free 5lt for every 20lt purchased – effectively a 25% discount. If Switch is the option for you this season (& if you have used a dual BZ/Lev drench like Arrest for a while it should be considered) then estimate & order your seasons requirements now to take advantage of this great deal. Delayed charges will apply. Note the withholding time on Switch has been reduced to 14 days.

### Mans Best Friend

A couple of points regarding your working dogs:

**1. Barley Grass:** This season is approaching & these seeds can get caught in the hair of dogs & find their way into every nook & cranny you can imagine – between the toes, ears, groin, nose etc. They can burrow into the skin & cause infected swellings very quickly. Get treatment for these ASAP as the seeds can travel under the skin quite a distance from the original entry point making them difficult to find. If you have a Beardie type dog that is more prone to this, getting them clipped makes it harder for the seeds to catch in their coat.

**2. Nutrition:** With the busy work schedule ahead for farm working dogs now is the time to consider the benefits of feeding a premium dog food. Eukanuba Premium Performance Dog Food has:

- High quality meat based protein for muscle building and tissue repair.
- High energy levels.
- Highly digestible so you feed less and fewer faeces are produced.
- Glucosamine and chondroitin for healthy joints and less risk of arthritis.
- Fatty acids to maintain healthy skin and coat.
- Competitive daily feeding cost.

Many farmers already routinely feed Eukanuba to their dogs – try it in the lead up to weaning and see how much better your dogs will be – both in overall condition & performance.

### Merchandise Matters

The list this month from the retail dept is as follows:

- Firstly there is delayed payment available on **all Merial Ancare** sheep drenches
- **All** drench purchases over Nov/Dec go in the draw to win a Kawasaki children's quad bike – just in time for Xmas. Exclusive to Clutha Vets.
- All **Merial Ancare** purchases between now and Christmas qualify for the "Take a mate fishing" draw to Stewart Island. Drawn pre-Xmas - trip in February.
- **Merial Ancare Sheep Drenches:** Receive a high quality Merino Wool T Shirt or the usual quality Xmas ham with selected sheep drenches - mainly combination & tape options.
- **Merial Ancare Cattle Drenches:** Purchase a qualifying pack of their cattle drench and receive a choice of a wok or kitchen blender.
- **Merial Ancare Tape Drenches:** All purchases go in the draw for a Sony 32" LCD TV.
- **Genesis Pour-on 5.5lt:** Get 10% extra free – great price.
- **Genesis Pour-on 10lt:** Receive a solid 27 piece ¾" socket set free.
- **Vetdectin Oral Drench:** 20lt plus a bonus vest for only \$509.65 nett incl GST.
- **Tux 40kg:** \$89.95 plus get a pair of rural socks.
- **Switch 20lt:** Remember a free 5lt with every 20lt, reduced withholding of 14 days and delayed charges.

### Promotion Winners

**Fort Dodge Wanaka Wine Tour** – Winners this year were Stu Cowie, Johnny Bennet, Craig Hopkins and Ashley Roy. These guys plus their partners will enjoy a weekend of wining and dining in Wanaka very shortly – sounds like pretty hard work!

John A. Smart B.V.Sc.