

# Sheep Farmers Newsletter February 2009

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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.
Hanneke van Kooten	D.V.M
Hamish Moore	B.V.Sc
Nichola Hinchey	B.V.Sc

### **Milton**

Peter Kalb	B.V.Sc.
Jillian Wilson	B.V.Sc.
Roo Wijey	B.V.Sc.
Pam Doig	B.V.Sc

### **Locum**

Ali Maw	B.V.Sc
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## **Practice News**

Well one month of the New Year has gone already. Apologies for the gap since the last newsletter – I normally write one every second month. With being away at this time of the year last year, the newsletters got out of step and ended up with one being due at the end of

December, which effectively means it needed written well before Christmas. Due to work pressure this just didn't happen.

Anyway there are more comings and goings staff wise to report on:

- Alisa McDonald & Bernie Vaatstra have left as indicated in the last newsletter.

- Andrew Robinson leaves in late February to become a red & black supporter (in Ashburton). Andrew has been here for 10 years. His rendition of "Michael Row the Boat Ashore" on the button accordion (the only tune he could play) at staff social gatherings will be sadly missed.
- Catherine Copland, from the UK, started in the small animal surgery in Balclutha just before Christmas.
- Peter Heslip, from Queenstown, has been/is doing a great job in the small animal surgery for about 3 months while Suzanne is away.
- Nichola Hinchey, a new graduate from Australia, has started in Balclutha.
- Roo Wijey, also a new graduate but from the UK has just started in Milton.
- Bruce Bissett is now "semi-retired" & doing 3 days a week.
- Meredith McKenzie starts as the new CEO later in March.
- Teresa O'Riordan should be back from maternity leave some time later this month.
- We still await Sid Taylors long delayed start due to Achilles tendon injury - hopefully this should be by the end of February.
- Pam Doig is doing 3 days a week at Milton.

Where does that leave us – I have absolutely no idea - probably still short staffed. It was simpler (& dare I say better) in the old days.

### Recent Animal Health Problems

On the whole most farms seem pretty happy with the way their lambs are growing. Usually lambs do well when it is just a little on the dry side, which has been the case and just when we really needed some rain Hughie has so far been pretty obliging. The lamb schedule has been holding up (rising even) so it's all looking pretty positive really. There might (hopefully) even be a few re-conversions - I am looking for hints on how to shear sheep in a rotary shed so all thoughts are welcome!

Animal health issues lately have been:

1. **Polioencephalomalacia (P.E.) in Lambs** – This condition caused by an induced deficiency of Vit B1 has occurred several times latterly, this time in lambs. It can pop up sporadically in several classes of stock - young and older sheep and cattle. For some, as yet unknown reason we seem to be seeing more cases in recent times. Invariably the Vit B1 level in the diet is adequate but something, usually a change in feed/diet, can upset the balance of bugs in the

rumen. Some can proliferate and then destroy Vit B1 effectively creating a deficiency. This then results in degeneration & softening of areas of the brain causing an assortment of nervous signs, depending on the area(s) of the brain affected.

A post mortem is needed to diagnose these as there are other causes of nervous symptoms including a milder version of Pulpy Kidney. This is worth doing as provided affected stock are treated promptly there is quite a good recovery rate.

2. **Flystrike** – The flystrike incidence is higher than usual so keep an eye out. The odd sporadic case can be individually treated with the likes of Maggo, however if you start to get more than a few cases a dip with a chemical that does both fly and lice may be needed – one of the IGR ones would be the best. Contact the clinic for more information.
3. **Pulpy Kidney** - There have been a few cases of this. No excuse for these - there are cheap & effective vaccines (Ultravac) for example available. With the improved lamb price it makes sense not to wait until deaths occur - get in first. You only have to save about 1 lamb/600 vaccinated to pay for the vaccine.
4. **Cobalt/B12 Levels** – So far these seem to have held up not bad but I do notice overall a bit of a decline recently such that, in many cases levels are OK but only just. Ring the clinic to arrange an Optigrow check at the works next time you draft to check this.

### Reminders

1. **Abortion Vaccines** – In the case of Toxovax if you have not yet ordered it you will need to do so promptly. Ideally it needs to be given at least 6 weeks prior to the ram going out. CampyVax4 should be given twice pre-tup with a 4 - 6 week interval between the doses. It is OK to give Toxovax and the first CampyVax at the same time (but on opposite sides of the neck). Some farmers may need to do both their ewe hoggets and their two-tooths this year as due to the drought last year quite a few hoggets were not mated (& hence not vaccinated) so a catch up may be needed.
2. **Flexidine Iodine Injection** – This increasingly popular form of iodine supplementation should be given to all ewes by at least 1 month pre-tup. It should improve the scanning % (by 4 - 6% on average) & also result in a variable, but

sometimes quite large improvement in lamb survival. After many years at the current price a rise is due – about \$10/bottle. We bought 100% of last season's sales at the old price – when that goes the price rise will take effect.

**3. Androvax/Ovastim Vaccination** – There are certain instances where the use of one or other of these products to increase the number of lambs born (by 20 - 25%) can be useful. If your current scanning exceeds 160 - 165% I would not recommend their use. The programme is:

a) *Previously unvaccinated stock:*

Androvax - 1<sup>st</sup> dose 9 - 10 weeks pre-tup.

2<sup>nd</sup> dose exactly 1 month later.

Ovastim – 1<sup>st</sup> dose 6 - 9 weeks pre-tup.

2<sup>nd</sup> dose 3 weeks later at 2 - 4 weeks pre-tup.

b) *Previously vaccinated stock:*

Androvax – 1dose 5 - 6 weeks pre-tup.

Ovastim – 1 dose 2 – 4 weeks pre-tup.

**4. Teaser Rams** - Time is running out as these need done 6 weeks prior to use (which is 17 or 34 days pre-tup). A useful tool, especially over two-tooth's to increase the number mated earlier and so help increase the number of lambs drafted earlier when the schedule is higher.

**5. Uddering ewes** – This can and should be done any time from at least 1 month post-weaning. Doing it at or shortly after weaning means you:

- Miss the significant number of cases that occur at or shortly after weaning.
- Are actually likely to increase the level of mastitis occurring post-weaning.
- Have trouble feeling the udders as they are so distended.

If you are not sure what is normal or abnormal mark all your doubtful ones and we can check them for you and show you what is what.

### Ivermectin/Abamectin Toxicity in Dogs

Because of a gene mutation Collie and Collie cross type dogs are particularly sensitive to these anthelmintics & several cases of toxicity and death have been recorded after access to these actives. If the level ingested is high enough however, any dog can be affected. Symptoms include a variety of nervous signs, blindness, coma and death. There is **no** really effective antidote or treatment. Hence:

- Don't dose the dog with these drenches or pour-ons.

- Don't let them lie on or lick spilled product off their coats.
- Don't throw the pour-on container onto the back of the ute with the dogs.

### Drench Capsules in Lambs

There are "junior" (20 - 40kg) versions of some of the drench capsules available that last for 100 days (or you can use the normal capsules available if weights are >40kg). These can be quite a convenient option for ewe lamb replacements, especially if they are going to a run-off block/grazing etc, away from convenient yarding. Their use in lambs does not have all the negative resistance connotations that pre-lamb use in ewes does, mainly because:

- a) Not all lambs are being done and
- b) More importantly worm levels on the pasture (refugia) are much higher at this time of the year.

If you think these could fit your system call the clinic for more information.

### Deer Conception Rates

Some farmers struggle to achieve reasonable conception rates in their first fawners. There are several possible explanations for this including mating (stag) management, "subclinical" Leptospirosis and trace element deficiencies.

With respect to the latter there are reports from further north of improvements being achieved by supplementation in the pre-mating period with a product called Multimin. This product, designed for cattle contains 4 different trace elements in a chelated form and is given by subcutaneous injection in the side of the neck. It could be worthwhile for those of you with a problem with the first fawners to consider trying this around 1 - 2 weeks pre-mating.

If the deer have individual tag numbers and you scan I would suggest supplementing half of them and keep a track of the numbers. That way you will have a better idea if Multimin has made a difference & can either carry on and use it in the whole mob in future years, or drop it altogether.

### Post Weaning Management of Ewes & Lambs

There are several complicated decisions on what to do & when in this area. This year with the improved schedule for heavier weight lambs it has become more complex than usual. Does one finish as many lambs as possible at better

weights and possibly compromise ewe lamb replacements and/or ewe performance? Maybe take lambs to higher weights but drop ewe numbers back a bit (around 10%) to compensate? Carry on as in the past?

As far as the ewes go:

- Maintain ewe bodyweight - you don't want to compromise next seasons lamb crop.
- Draft off the lighter condition ewes and feed them preferentially. More will be gained by doing this than making fat ewes even fatter.
- Check FEC's on light ewes and two-tooths.
- As mentioned above udder them at least a month after weaning.

As far as the lambs go it all hinges around ensuring maximum growth rates:

- Providing we continue to get a bit of moisture to keep the grass growing you can take advantage of the extra return for heavier weight lambs but, It is best that this isn't done at the expense of next years lamb crop.
- Keep the lambs on high quality pasture or crop. If there is little ahead in the feed budget consider quitting them.
- Make sure Clostridial disease protection with Ultravac or Prolavax etc is current – see earlier.
- Internal Parasites – check FEC's in lambs regularly and watch out shortly after a rain following an extended dry spell. Don't use single action drench families on your lambs.
- Make sure you do a 10-12 day drench check.
- Make sure Co/B12 and Se levels are adequate.
- Coughing lambs invariably indicates a pneumonia/pleurisy problem, not lungworm. Check your pleurisy lesion scores on your works reports & discuss this with us if these are an issue.
- Autopsies on **suitably selected** cases can give valuable information.

### Merchandise Matters

A relatively short list this time:

- Firstly a reminder from the retail staff to please bring in a clean empty container for all mineral mixes that you require to be made up. We have none here.
- **Merial Ancare Sheep Drenches:** Receive a 40lt heavy duty all weather backpack on selected sheep drenches.
- **Virbamec Mineralised Sheep Drench 20lt** – Purchase 2 x 20lt and receive a Phillips metal drench gun free.

- **Switch 20lt Plain and Hi Min** – The extra free 5lt with each 20lt is about to finish. This is your last chance to effectively receive a 25% discount on this new combination drench.
- **Meaty Bites Working Dog 20 kg** – This will be on special in February while stocks last.
- **CampyVax 4** – All purchases of this Campy vaccine will go in the draw for one of several places to win a weekend away at Danseys Pass. This includes curling in Naseby, wining and dining at the Danseys Pass Coach Inn, accommodation and breakfast.
- **Extender SeCo and Maximiser Capsules** – With the purchase of 500 of these capsules receive free a 5lt of Triton and 2 Merino T-Shirts.

### Promotion Winners

#### **Take a Mate Fishing to Stewart Island 2009:**

The winners of this promotion (through their purchase of Merial Ancare products) to be held on 19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> Feb are Morris Scobie, Owaka Valley; Snow Anderson, Kuriwao; Ian McQueen, Tuapeka Flat; Paul Bridson, Chaslands; John Cochrane, Kuriwao; Stephen Dent, Waitepeka; Hamish Erwood, West Waitahuna; Craig Lawrence, Clydevale; Ian Sinclair, Cannibal Bay & Charles Macfie from Taumata.

**Danseys Pass Weekend:** The winners of this trip through their early order of Toxovax are Peter Craig, Puketū; Hugh Collie, Kuriwao and Cameron Clark from Maclennan.

**Kawasaki Quad Bike Winner:** All farmers who purchased any drench whatsoever from us in the pre-Christmas period went in the draw for this. The winner was Marcus Sutherland of Hillfoot Road, Clinton

**Sony 32" LCD TV:** Through the purchase of Merial Ancare sheep drenches Stephen and Rhonda Bamford from Warepa won this TV.

**Sony Digital Cameras:** Through their purchase of Frontline flea control product for their dogs Max Harrison from Newhaven & Andrew Begg from Pukeawa won these. Congratulations to all winners - that's a pretty impressive list!!

John A. Smart B.V.Sc.