

Sheep Farmers Newsletter April 2009

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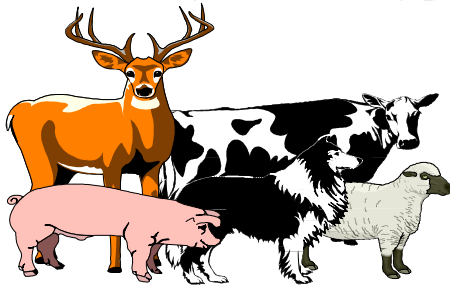
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Practice News

Some of you may have seen an article in the ODT 2 – 3 weeks back where I was whingeing about the recently announced vet bonding scheme. The idea of the scheme - where new graduates effectively get paid

an extra \$11,000 per year for 3 years if they work in certain rural areas is fine – it is just that South Otago wasn't included in the areas while Southland was. As we are often competing with the southern practices for vets this has just made it difficult, if not impossible, for us to compete. Hopefully this anomaly will be

rapidly sorted as we are currently looking for at least 2 more vets.

The long list of staff changes intimated last time have mostly happened. The mythical Sid has yet to start though. Unfortunately he has had ongoing problems with his ruptured Achilles tendon and as yet we do not have a start time for him – hopefully I will have better news by the time of the next newsletter.

A few of you were adamant that you didn't receive a Toxo/Ram Run order form which I thought couldn't happen as these are sent out with the December newsletter. However, I have tracked down the problem. It lies with those people who had a nil balance and hence didn't receive an account, so no newsletter, Toxo form etc. was sent out. Originally (with an earlier computer system) we simply printed out a list of sheep clients with nil balances and sent out the newsletter by itself. With a change of computer software the ability to do this ceased. I had recognised this at the time but understood the problem had been fixed and that newsletters etc. were being sent out to clients whose accounts happened to have a nil balance at the time. However, it seems I was mistaken – the problem had not been fixed and so for the last 2 or so years if your account happened to have a nil balance in a month when a newsletter was due you didn't receive the newsletter and any associated order forms, info etc. I do apologise for this – we rely a lot on the newsletters as a means of conveying information on animal health issues and this recent state of affairs is hardly good enough.

I have been assured this particular problem is now sorted so every second month (nearly! – very occasionally I miss a deadline and there is an extra month's gap) you should receive a newsletter from us, plus whatever order form, flyer etc is appropriate at the time.

Recent Animal Health Problems

1. Internal Parasites: – Since the rain over the last 3 weeks or so there has been a bit of an explosion in worm burdens in lambs, so keep a close eye on them as their worm status can change very rapidly at this time of the year. This is a good chance to do a 10 day post drench check to see whether the drench you are using is effective or not. In all the reduction tests I have done to check on drenches, on the dozen of farms that have been checked, there is not 1 farm that has had all drenches working effectively! While on the subject of internal parasites, rather than just drench the ewes pre-tup “just in case”, why not do an egg count and check to see whether they actually need one or not. The research done on the effect of pre-tup drenching on ovulation rate, as is often the case, gives us more questions than answers. Where the outcome

was the number of lambs produced results have varied from -11% to +20% in the drenched group.

Often counts are very low and no drench is needed at all, or there are 1 or 2 high counts and the rest zero/low and in these situations we will often recommend just drenching the bottom x% of the mob. This saves you time and money, and is better as far as drench resistance development goes. Obviously doing one bulk composite count is of limited value in these situations.

2. Pneumonia in Lambs: - There have been a steady trickle of these occurring with a number of deaths in some cases. See the March 08 newsletter for more detailed info on helping prevent this common annoying issue. Incidentally if you don't file your back copies of the newsletter you can log onto our website www.cluthavets.co.nz; click on the 'Newsletters' tab on the top right of the Home page and then select the particular newsletter you might want – they go back to 2007 on the website.

3. Ryegrass Staggers: - There has been a steady trickle of these cases as well, although they are settling down now. It is caused by toxins produced by endophyte fungus in ryegrass that result in incoordination when stock are shifted. The main preventative measure is to regrass with cultivars that don't contain such endophytes.

Reminders

1. Salmonella Brandenburg Vaccination: - To do or not to do – that is the \$64,000 question! The full programme is 2 doses to the two-tooths (or previously unvaccinated stock) 3 – 6 weeks apart. Don't bother doing in-lamb hoggets – they very rarely get the disease. The second dose is best given around the end of June, or early July, at the latest. The first dose can be given just before tupping, or post tupping as suits, taking into account timing of mating and the vaccine programme timing. In previously vaccinated ewes the sole booster dose should be given late June/early July. A reasonable compromise (when you are uncertain as to what to do) option is to just do the two-tooths each year. History tells us that these are the most susceptible class of stock. If you had the disease last season you should, at the very least, do the two-tooths this year as history (again) tells us that there is often a high infection rate in the following years two-tooths. Vaccination against S. Brandenburg does not (unfortunately) give 99.9% protection as most other vaccines do, however much survey work tells us it reduces the impact of the disease by two thirds to three quarters.

2. Ultravac Vaccination of Hoggets: - Shortly the hoggets should have received their 2 doses of Ultravac 3 - 6 weeks apart so that they will be fully protected

against blackleg etc. prior to going onto winter crop, as well as being correctly set up for their lifetime programme of annual boosters pre-lamb. Note that depending on your incidence of Pulpy Kidney these doses can be given much earlier if necessary.

3. Clostridial Vaccination of Calves: - It is not uncommon to have the odd sudden death in young cattle, especially through the winter period due to Clostridial disease – pulpy kidney, blackleg etc. Most of these can be prevented by Ultravac vaccination. In a few instances these deaths are due to a strain of Clostridia not in the 5-in-1 vaccine & in those cases we prescribe the 10-strain Covexin10. This is the classic “prevention is better than cure”. A death prevented will pay for many, many years of vaccinating.

4. Prescription Animal Remedy (PAR) Return: Later on this month you should receive the annual PAR renewal form. Please return this form ASAP which will enable us to complete the legal niceties so that you can purchase specified PAR's from the retail staff. Failure to return this means they cannot legally supply you your PAR's. Apparently “Wellington” is fiddling and the term PAR might be replaced by something else – I suppose it's good for unemployment levels! Don't grizzle to us/me – we're just the messengers.

5. Brassica Grazing: Following, for your information, is a repeat of the “brassica grazing rules” to help get the best performance out of stock grazing them and to avoid the potential health problems that can occur.

- *Minimise exposure to toxic sulphur compounds.* These 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 the worst for this. To help avoid this use low sulphur fertilisers e.g. DAP prior to sowing.
- *Allow stock to acclimatise to the crop.* Initially run animals on crop 2 hours/day (about 20% of diet) building up to 100% of the diet by 7-10 days. Alternatively continue to provide a runoff block of older pasture. At the very least this will reduce the check that occurs when stock go onto brassicas and allow them to reach maximum growth rates sooner, but it could prevent deaths as well.
- *Feed extra fibre.* Always feed supplementary fibre such as straw, hay, etc. as this slows down the flow of feed through the rumen and gut, and allows 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.
- *Ensure stock's trace element/vitamin status is OK.* Studies have shown that applying mineral mixes containing selenium, cobalt, iodine and copper to

soils that are low does not lift the levels in brassicas. Of main concern are iodine, Vit E and selenium levels in all stock, and copper levels in cattle and deer. The first 3 can be corrected by administration of LSD - again a warning to beware of rubbish LSD copycat attempts. The exact timing of administration of LSD depends on a number of factors - length of time on brassicas, pregnancy status, Flexidine use etc - ask at the clinic for advice for your particular circumstances.

- *Break feed to allow better growth & utilisation.* Studies have shown that cattle grazing turnips had significantly higher weight gains when shifted daily onto a fresh break than those given a new break weekly.
- *Removal from brassicas.* Brassicas contain high levels of calcium and 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 several 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).

New Developments with Anthelmintics

The big news is the launch of a brand new drench active i.e. – a totally new drench family. This is the first in over 25 years and comes at a time when some farmer's options (because of resistance issues) are becoming a little more limited. Certainly we are nowhere near as limited as our neighbours across the Tasman where there is a high % of farms where none of the current three drench families are fully effective. More about the new product, Zolvix, later. Firstly some other recent developments:

1. **Shorter Withholding Time for Matrix:** As you are probably aware Matrix is the top triple combination drench available for sheep and is the only product you should consider for quarantine drenching sheep, such as store lambs, onto a new property. After some agitation from yours truly, and quite a long delay, at long last the withholding time has reduced from 21 to 14 days. This will fit better with those people who have a fortnightly drafting schedule.
2. **New Matrix Formulations:** Merial Ancare have recently released two new formulations:
 - a) **Matrix Minidose:** Instead of the usual 1ml/5kg dose rate the dose rate for Matrix Minidose is 1ml/10kg so is ideal for ewes and calves. Note that the withhold for this in sheep is 21 days (14 for cattle).
 - b) **Matrix C:** Again, the usual triple combination but this time in a more concentrated form for cattle

drenching. The dose rate is 1ml/20kg. Consider the fact that the 2005 Drench Resistance Survey indicated that on 92% of beef farms there was a resistance to ivermectin. This means there is a **very** high chance that on **your** farm most of the mectin type drenches & especially the pour-on versions will be less than fully effective. That is one reason we have been advocating Eclipse (a dual combination) for those who want to use a pour-on and oral alternatives in calves at a younger age. With the development of Matrix C this would now represent the best oral option in terms of effectiveness and delaying the development of drench resistance. I know arguing with calves heads is not as easy as putting a pour-on on their backs, but where at all possible I would encourage you to at least make the first calf drench an oral one of Matrix – this will help take some of the resistance pressure off particularly the mectin only pour-ons!

3. **Zolvix.** As indicated above this is the new class of drench from Novartis. I have just come back from the world launch of this (in Queenstown). It won't mean anything to most of you but the active ingredient is monepantel, which is one of a group of actives known as Amino-Acetonitrile Derivatives, or AAD's so the drench family will be known as the AAD's. Monepantel acts on a specific part of the worms' nervous system and will kill worms resistant to the other drench actives. As I said above this is the first new drench family for over 25 years (27 – 28 actually). Ivomec was the last and since it was released we have learnt an awful lot about parasite & drench resistance management. It is of critical importance that the introduction and use of Zolvix is handled correctly taking heed of lessons learnt from the past so that this chemical will be able to be used effectively for as long as possible. Any misuse will simply mean that resistance will develop sooner rather than later. We have one chance to get it right and that chance is **now**. By the time we get some stock the season will effectively be over so I will go into more detail on how to best use it prior to next season. In the meantime some of the essential details are:

- For sheep only (at this stage)
- Dose rate is 1ml/10kg
- Withholding time - 7 days
- Oily suspension – no shaking needed.
- Very wide safety margin for all concerned (sheep & farmers)
- Just as revolutionary as the new drench active is the drenching system developed to go with it. An enormous amount of time, effort & thought has gone into the drench gun & backpack system that has been developed. The gun is unlike any

other you will have ever seen and the ergonomics of its use mean faster more comfortable drenching with less stresses & strains on the arms & back.

- The bit you're all waiting for – price. Unknown at the time of writing but it will not be cheap – somewhere between \$US 150 – 300 million has been spent getting to this stage.

Merchandise Matters

The list this month is as follows –

- **New Mineral Mix Drench for Sheep Pre-Tup:-** To get around the continual problem of a lack of empty 20lt containers and also the fact that once made up the mineral mix we make up here doesn't have a long shelf life (because the iodine vaporises off) we have sourced a product with basically exactly the same recipe, but which comes in a 1lt concentrate with the right amounts of Se and iodine plus other trace elements, and which you can dilute down when ready to use. Cost is ½ a cent/dose more than our one so that shouldn't break the bank. For those few farms where I have recommended a 7mg rather than a 5mg dose of Se we can supply the extra Se. 1lt makes up 1600 75kg ewe doses.
- **Merial Ancare Sheep Drenches:** - Receive a 40lt heavy duty all weather backpack on selected sheep drenches.
- **Merial Ancare Cattle Pour-ons:** - You've probably seen the TV ads. Depending on how much of either Eclipse, Eprinex or Genesis there are various Powerbuilt Toolsets to choose from.
- **CampyVax 4:** - All purchases of this Campy vaccine will go in the draw for one of several places to win a weekend away at Dansey's Pass. This includes curling in Naseby, wining and dining at the Dansey's Pass Coach Inn, accommodation and breakfast.
- **Tempor Lice Pour-on:** - Free 1lt with every 5lt – limited stock.
- **Cydectin Pour-on:** - Bonus 10% extra packs available – i.e. 2.2lt for the price of a 2lt, 5.5lt for 5lt plus on the 15lt there is a choice of several different promos including an air tool kit and George Foreman Grill & Steamer.
- **Virbamec Hi-Min Sheep Drench 20lt:** - Purchase 2 x 20lt and receive a metal Phillips drench gun free.
- **Eukanuba Premium Large Breed Biscuits 20kg:** - \$10 off while stocks last – now just \$115/bag.
- **Matrix Hi-Min 20lt:** - Receive an extra 5lt free with each 20lt drum – remember it now has a 14 day withhold.

John Smart B.V.Sc.