

Sheep Farmer Newsletter December 2010

Clutha Vets Animal Health Centre

Balclutha Clinic

Phone (03) 418-1280

Fax (03) 418-1282

Merchandise Direct (03) 418-1281

Milton Clinic

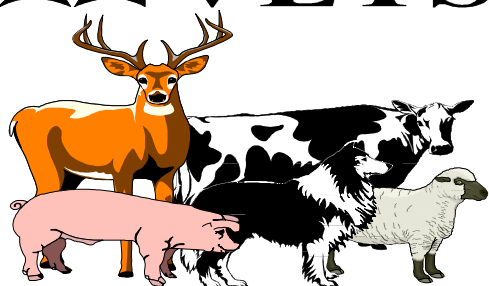
Phone (03) 417-8032

Fax (03) 417-8031

Clydevale Store

(03) 415-9121

clutha
VETS



Animal Health Centre

Balclutha

Bruce Bissett*	B.Ag, BVSc.
John Smart	BVSc.
Jason Darwen	BVSc.
Suzanne Craig*	BVSc.
Rob Mills	BVSc.
Teresa O'Riordan*	BVM&S.
Hanneke van Kooten	DVM.
Hamish Moore	BVSc.
Catherine Copland*	BVM&S, MRCVS
Steven Butler	BVSc.
Alice Lee	BVSc.
Peter Heslip	BVSc. MACVSc.

Milton

Peter Kalb	BVSc.
Jillian Clark*	BVSc.
Roo Wijey	BVSc.
Sid Taylor	BVSc. MACVSc.
Barbara Christensen	BVSc. MACVSc.

(*Part time)

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Practice News

With the rather warm weather through later October and much of November the grass growth has been pretty good. Combined with the fact that there are (unfortunately) fewer mouths to eat the grass on many farms then the main issue is going to be trying to keep

on top of pasture quality so that lamb growth isn't adversely affected. Along with worms & cobalt this is a very important determinant of lamb growth rates.

The extensions/alterations to the Milton clinic have been completed and the clinic was officially opened recently by Bill English. That afternoon around 120

people took the opportunity to look through the clinic, attend the opening and have a sausage and a drink.

This is the last newsletter for 2010, a year that could be described as trying at times I guess. It just remains for me to wish you all a Happy Christmas & hopefully improving fortunes for 2011. At least wool prices are heading in the right direction & lamb prices look as though they will be much improved too.

Recent Animal Health Problems

1. Internal Parasites. Parasite problems have, on many farms, cropped up a bit earlier than usual. The reasons for this can be traced right back to the September storm. The stress from the storm lowered the worm resistance of ewes. When this happens, what worms they do have produce more eggs. Also the ewes had less milk so lambs, especially the multiples, ate more grass earlier. This combined with the fact that feed was short so they were grazing lower meant they were picking up more worm larvae. Many of you recognised this & drenched earlier than normal but a few got caught out & lambs had lost ground before the problem was picked up.

2. Pulpy Kidney. There has been the odd case of this occurring already & with the amount of feed about now there may well be more. This year in particular you need all lambs alive so don't hesitate to vaccinate if you get a case. Better still, vaccinate before you lose any! If you vaccinate all lambs with Ultravac say at weaning, then 4 - 8 weeks later vaccinate those ewe lambs that could be retained as ewe replacements & that way you have set them up correctly for their lifetime vaccination programme.

Reminders

1. Teaser Rams: Many farmers have found the use of teaser rams an inexpensive tool to achieve better performance, especially over the two-tooths. They can advance what would be ewes being mated later in the cycle, thus advancing the mean lambing date which should mean more lambs away early plus each cycle a ewe has before being put with the ram increases the likelihood of twinning.

Teasers need to be operated on by 9 weeks prior to the start of mating so they need done over the next 2 or so months. They should be put out with the ewes 17 days before the "real" rams are put out at a ratio of 1:300 - 1:500. The timing is important - a 20 - 21 day period with the teasers would mean many ewes will have cycled just before the flock rams are put out meaning the actual mating date could be delayed.

2. Ram Runs: *Brucella ovis*, an important cause of infertility, is under very good control in South Otago. As a result some farmers have neglected to get their rams checked. There are, however, other causes of infertility & we regularly come across these when

checking rams - examples would be other causes of epididymitis, testicular atrophy (small balls), scrotal mange and hernias. An infertile dominant ram can have quite an impact on your flock scanning so get your rams checked - fill out the enclosed form and return it promptly which will enable us to organise the runs more efficiently saving on time and mileage.

3. Toxovax Order Form: This is also included in the newsletter with the ram run form. As you are aware we have been doing some blood testing of wet & dry ewes for Toxo (& Campy) serology over the last few years. From across the country there is not one farm yet where Toxo has not been present at some point. Just 1 gm of faeces from a cat that is shedding the bug contains enough *Toxoplasma* organisms to cause 2000 ewe abortions!

The single life time dose of Toxovax should be given at the latest 6 weeks (preferably 8 weeks) prior to the first mating. As it has about a 10 day shelf life from the time of arrival in the clinic, pre-ordering is essential and this should be done at least 4 weeks ahead of when you require it. As an incentive to order early (which helps the manufacturer with production scheduling) all orders placed prior to Christmas will go in the draw for a trip for two at the Dansey Pass Hotel.

Incidentally, figures provided by Vet Services Hawkes Bay (who scan hundreds of thousands of ewes every year) have shown an increase in scanning over the last 5 years ranging from:

- 4.3 - 11.3% in MA ewes where Toxovax is used (as a 2th).
- 3.1 - 12.5% in 2th ewes where Toxovax is used.
- 6.8 - 11.4% in MA ewes where CampyVax vaccine is used (as a 2th).
- 6.9 - 14% in 2th ewes where CampyVax is used.

4. Optigrow Checks: Telephone either clinic to arrange this prior to dispatch of the stock to any works. In lambs selenium and cobalt should be checked & in cattle and deer, selenium and copper. Prior to the first draft blood tests in lambs can provide useful information on cobalt and selenium status.

5. Drench Checks: Irrespective of which drench is being used you should check on its effectiveness at least once a season, preferably after one of the earlier lamb drenches of 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 will be needed to sort this out.

6. Voyeurism - Check the Bulls! You should spend some time watching the bulls when they are first put out with the cows. Things to watch for are mounting

but not obviously serving and a number of frustrated cows hanging around an inactive bull.

AgRecovery Collection

Clutha Vets Balclutha is now the South Otago depot for recycling of qualifying plastic containers. Ensure these are cleaned (triple rinsed) & bring them to the retail end of the building.

Cud Staining in Lambs

This problem (a green stain down one or both sides of the lower jaw) occurs in a small proportion of lambs but in many flocks. It is a small annoying problem that we occasionally get asked the reasons for.

A recent investigation in the North Island on a farm that had 10 – 20 of these lambs each year found that a significant number of these lambs had grass awns or leaf matter impacted around the tonsils or deeper in the throat area. It is not clear exactly how these lesions developed but the association with grass seeds and leaves in some of the lambs suggest there could be a causal relationship. Drench gun injuries and snappy dogs could, on occasions, be a cause as well. Other lambs had small abscesses in the soft tissues of the mouth (cheeks).

While there is probably very little you can do about these at least understanding some of the background reasons may help a bit. Doing your best with barley grass control could conceivably help a bit as these seeds, as you are well aware are very “penetrative”.

Cattle Drenching – Pour-ons vs Injections

Back in 2005 when the national survey on a drench resistance was carried out, on 92% of beef farms there was a resistance identified to ivermectin. Despite this there is still extensive use of the “mectin” family of anthelmintics, principally as pour-on’s because they are so convenient and easy to use.

Recent work has shown that the blood levels of the mectins achieved by the injection version a lot higher than the same active given as a pour-on. In other words Dectomax injection achieves 3 – 4 times the blood level of Dectomax Pour-on etc etc. Many of you will be aware that for years I have said that the injection version gives superior results to the pour-on version & this data backs that up. Pour-ons have a greater between animal variability than injection and oral compounds.

Hence I would recommend for cattle drenching:

- Where facilities permit use an injectible version of a mectin rather than the pour-on version. Using an injection will usually be almost as easy as using a pour-on and should, in the short – medium term anyway give superior results.

- If a pour-on is going to be used then use Eclipse. This is a combination pour-on (combination of abamectin & levamisole) & this should overcome “mectin” resistance issues. This would especially apply in cattle <15 months or so of age.
- Where oral drenching (of younger calves for example) is feasible use Arrest C or Matrix C just to give the mectin part of things a bit of a spell.

Ram Selection

The time of the year is approaching when the very important subject of ram purchase raises its head. After all this is where most of your genetic progress is going to come from. See the December 09 newsletter for more on this topic. If you don’t keep back copies then you can access these on our website.

Also there is a new development to aid flock and ram selection on the Sheep Improvement Ltd website. Go to www.sil.co.nz and look for ‘Flock Finder’. This is an easy programme to find the breeders who are breeding the sorts of rams you are after. For ram breeders who want to select a particular ram go to ‘Ram Finder’.

Sheep Farmer Seminar

On Thursday Feb 17th we are putting on what should be a very informative seminar for sheep farmers. Not all the details are finalised but so far I have organised:

- Dave Leathwick – Latest advances in the control of internal parasites & anthelmintic resistance.
- Murray Rohloff – Practical aspects of mating hoggets & using ram hoggets for mating.

Many of you will have heard of Dave Leathwick – I have referred to his work quite a few times over the years in this newsletter & in one to one conversations. I have been kind of “saving” him up for an opportune time to speak to South Otago sheep farmers. With the recent development of the two new drench families I think that time has come. I am not exaggerating when I say that Dave is a world authority in this area and has carried out some really ground breaking research round anthelmintic resistance issues. I consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity to listen to Dave on many occasions now (both in the lecture theatre & over a whiskey in the bar) so I am quite excited that he has agreed to come to Balclutha & that you will also have the opportunity to hear him.

I suspect many of you will also have heard of Murray Rohloff as well. Murray used to work at the Invermay Research Centre – he left there and went farming in Tuturau where he established a very successful Romney stud. Quite a few farmers in this area have benefited from the superior genetics of his rams. Murray will give a very practically based talk on aspects of mating hoggets.

There will probably be another one or two speakers as well but Dave & Murray will be the key note ones. As I said above the exact details of where & when on Feb 17th have not been finalised yet but mark the day in your diary anyway. It will be a fair while before you will have the opportunity again to hear such high calibre speakers so close to home on subjects so pertinent to sheep farming. More details to follow.

Replacing Storm Losses

With the cost of replacing capital stock that were lost in the September storm looking rather expensive, a short term option in the meantime to boost lamb numbers that could be worth considering is the use of Androvax or Ovastim vaccination to increase the lamb drop. Normally I am reluctant to even mention these products as most people's scanning is now at levels (above 165) where the use of these products is not recommended. However it is another possible "tool in the toolbox" to help get around any anticipated shortage of lambs due to fewer ewe numbers next year. The products differ slightly in their recommended timing:

- Androvax – sensitiser 9 – 10 weeks pre-tup, booster 4 weeks later.
- Ovastim – sensitiser 6 – 9 weeks pre-tup, booster 3 weeks later.

Upcoming Internal Parasite Issues

1. New Drench Families: In other words, Zolvix & Startect. Where and how should you be using these drenches? Firstly Zolvix – this is a new single active & as such needs to be used responsibly in order to maintain it's effectiveness for as long as possible. Computer modelling work by Dave Leathwick (there's that name again!) has indicated that substituting one of the later lamb drenches in the season with Zolvix should slow the rate of resistance development to the regular drench(s) used. As such a single annual treatment with Zolvix towards the end of a preventative regime of treatments to lambs is worthy of consideration. In South Otago round the beginning of April would be a good time.

Secondly Startect. This is a combination product (abamectin & derquantel). No relation to monepantel (Zolvix). Because it's a dual combination it can be used in a similar manner to Arrest & Switch (dual combinations) – in other words you could use it for a season & then move to another dual combo product.

Both Zolvix & Startect can be used as quarantine drenches as well, along with Matrix.

2. Preparation for FECRT Testing: This is the test used to determine the effectiveness (or lack of) of the drenches on your farm. We have carried out close to 70 of these now & on only one of these 70 farms were

all drenches fully effective. So statistically there is a very high chance that drench resistance is present on your farm. If you are interested in doing a FECRT, then to get the most from the test results we need:

- All worm species present so timing is important. In South Otago the best time is from the end of December to the end of March.
- FEC's in the test lambs to be at least an average of 500 but preferably nearer 1000.

In other words, you want your group of test lambs to hit counts of 500-1000 between late December and late March. The exact way to achieve this depends on your weaning date & any pre-weaning drenches but in most cases the best procedure would be to give a pre-weaning drench & then at weaning mark 80-100 ewe lambs & don't drench them. They can be run separately or with the rest of the mob – it doesn't matter. Starting 6-8 weeks after their pre-weaning drench do the occasional FEC to see how counts are going & when they reach the required level we can conduct the test. The length of time it takes these lambs to reach the required level varies between farms & seasons – in a drier season it will take longer.

Merchandise Matters

- **Merial Ancare Sheep Drenches** – Receive the usual top quality Christmas Ham on all qualifying products. Also go into the draw for a place on the "Take-A-Mate Fishing" to Stewart Island trip in March. In a departure from normal these places are being drawn on a weekly basis. Winners so far are Week 1 Gordon Steel, Clinton; Week 2 Peter Jopp, Lawrence; Week 3 Malcolm Wilson, Hillend. There are another seven draws to go. Each winner gets to take a 'mate' with them.
- **Merial Ancare Cattle Drenches** – As with the above sheep drenches the purchase of qualifying packs of pour-on or injection receive a Christmas ham & go in the draw for the fishing trip.
- **Dectomax Pour-on Herd Packs** – Purchase 15lt of pour-on or two Dectomax injection starter packs (2 x 500ml & a free 200ml) & receive a Ridgeline Clothing Pack or Jacket.
- **Cydectin Sheep Drench** – Receive a \$30 New World voucher with each drum.
- **Cydectin Pour-on 15lt** – Your choice of great price or assorted promos.
- **Tux Energy Dog Biscuits** – Only \$89.96 nett incl GST while stocks last.

Promotion Winners

Cydectin Wanaka Wine Tour: Winners this year were Murray & Dianne Grant, Clifton; John & Tracey Cochrane, Kuriwao; Andrew & Angela Botting, Te Houka and Bill & Judy Everett, Waiholo. This took place a few weekends ago & apparently was a great

success but as the “what happens on tour stays on tour” rule applies details are very sketchy!

John A. Smart B.V.Sc.