

Sheep Farmer Newsletter April 2011

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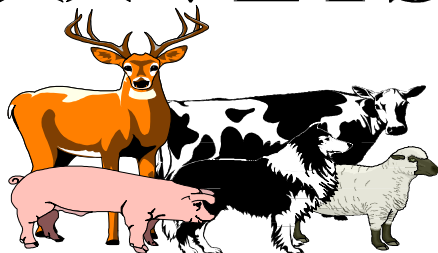
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Practice News

This is a slightly longer newsletter than usual – a lot seems to have happened in the last 2 months. As I indicated in the last newsletter in February Nathan Cornish has been promoted to retail manager at

Milton and so now works mainly out of the Milton Clinic. Replacing him in Balclutha is Jane Grant. Prior to her appointment Jane managed the Clydevale depot for PGG Wrightsons until they made the call late last year to close it down. Hence, she has plenty of experience in rural merchandising. Jane has settled

in well and is already taking her share of the sexist jokes and pranks down at the retail end that previously Willie (Wilma) had to put up with alone!

If anyone travels in (or knows of someone who does) from the Clydevale/Greenfield/Tuapeka area to Balclutha and could car pool please contact Jane. Jane has a certain amount of flexibility in her hours so hopefully can work in with someone else & share the ever increasing cost of running a vehicle.

Starting at the beginning of this month we have a new large animal vet starting - Kate Loudon. Kate is a new graduate and as you will be able to tell from her accent is Australian.

Thank you to all the farmers who called in to the Clutha Vets tent at the Lawrence Farmarama for a chat and to enjoy a sausage and refreshments. Peter Heslip from the small animal clinic in Balclutha provided us with a good orthopaedic display of two commonly encountered farm dog type injuries and their treatment.

Also thanks to Jasper Clark for supplying some ewes with various mastitis issues for farmers to get in and have a feel of the udders if they wished.

Recent Animal Health Problems

1. Internal Parasites – This has been a very “wormy” season for lambs and even in two-tooths and mixed age ewes counts have been higher than normal. Some of the reason for this goes right back to the storm during lambing when ewes had less milk and so lambs, especially multiples, had to eat more grass sooner. Also the summer/early autumn weather has been very conducive to optimum larval survival on the pasture. We have had several cases of lambs dying of parasitism as little as a month after a **fully effective** drench. The best preventative for this situation is good stockmanship – recognising that something is not quite right and initiating some investigation. In these real high challenge acute type situations FEC’s can sometimes be too late in indicating that there is a problem – remember you can have lambs dying of parasitism with zero egg counts.

2. Flystrike – This has been a problem in lambs and ewes on some properties, even quite recently but I suspect that the problem will have probably stopped by the time you get to read this. I had reports of stock getting struck on the shoulder and back which is typical of the Aussie green blowfly.

3. Scald – With the lush moist season scald has been a bit of an issue on some farms. This is not a problem you want in the ewes and rams at mating or in the

lead up to it. Mild cases may recover spontaneously if stock can be put on a drier area – easier said than done sometimes. A few affected rams can be treated individually with Tetravet Blue aerosol spray. For larger numbers treading with Zinc Sulphate followed by an hour or two standing in a dry area (woolshed for example) is the best treatment.

4. Brucellosis in Rams – We have seen a little resurgence in cases of this infectious cause of infertility after several years of very little. There has perhaps been, over the years, a slight drop off in the numbers of farmers getting their rams checked – this could turn out to be an expensive shortcut! If you have not had your rams examined for a number of years then I would urge you to get this done – there is probably time to get them examined even prior to mating this season for many of you if you act now. It is quick and cheap insurance.

5. Enteric (Gut) Salmonella – Prior to Brandenburg this is the disease we always associated with Salmonella. Vaccination against Brandenburg saw this disease disappear but as levels of vaccination have declined so has the immunity provided by the vaccine against gut Salmonella. Hence we are seeing more cases of this in the last year or two. See the article on this (written by Jillian Clark) later in the newsletter.

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 – while they can get the disease this does seem to be pretty rare. 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 tugging, or post tugging 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.

The higher value of lambs now probably makes the economics of vaccination more attractive. A reasonable compromise option (when you are uncertain as to what to do) 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.

Remember there is a 6 in 1 version of Ultravac available which is an option where you have had sudden deaths in stock that have had the correct 5 in 1 vaccination programme but the deaths still look like Clostridial/blood poisoning type deaths. Ultravac 6 in 1 covers a sixth Clostridial organism, *C. sordellii* which is a cause of sudden death we see occasionally in sheep and cattle, often when they are on "high octane rocket fuel". Ask at the clinic if you suspect this. Unfortunately proving it can be a bit problematic as any post mortem has to be done very quickly after death.

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. 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).

Internal Parasite Control Update

We had close to 150 farmers attend our recent Sheep Farmers Seminar where internal parasites were one of the topics spoken about. Incidentally I have had nothing but positive comments about the seminar. There are some copies of the handouts for the seminar available at the clinic if you didn't manage to get to it but would like to see a copy.

Speaking on internal parasites Dave Leathwick, a world expert in the area of resistance development and management made several important points which are worth reiterating here. He had three main principles for managing resistance:

- Identify & mitigate high risk practices.
- Preserve susceptibility (refugia).
- Use combination drenches.

1. High Risk Practices – These include the use of long acting products (capsules & injection), treatment

of ewes around lambing, drenching onto low contamination pasture, monocultures of young stock (lamb/calf blocks) and inadequate quarantine procedures. There are ways of mitigating the first two as sometimes you will have to drench ewes prior to lambing – if ewes are being clinically affected by worms obviously some form of treatment is the preferable course.

2. Preserving Susceptibility – Basically in South Otago the only time you need to think about this is when lambs (or calves) go onto new pasture with no, or minimal, worm larvae on the pasture i.e. low/no refugia and you intend to drench them. There are several ways to mitigate this problem – not all of these ways are conducive to good worm control but some are. I have covered this aspect in past newsletters but ask at the clinic if you're unsure.

3. Using Combinations – Dave presented some trial data to back up the assertions we have been making for years that combinations will slow the development of resistance plus maintain control where there is multiple resistance established.

As far as the use of the new (more expensive) actives, and again I have mentioned this in past newsletters, Dave showed that the strategic use of a new drench active like Zolvix given once about now towards the end of the “drenching season” could double the useful life of the older cheaper drenches. In other words one relatively expensive drench now to what should be a smallish number of lambs (as many should by now be off to the works) will mean you will be able to use the older, cheaper drenches for a lot longer. This will be far cheaper in the medium-long term than if you were forced (through resistance) into using these newer drenches all the time.

Dave's take home messages were:

- Resistance is everywhere and costing farmers money – he had figures of \$1000 – \$3000/2000 ewes.
- You will not see a resistance issue developing – you have to test.
- We do know how to deal with it through the three principles outlined in brief above.

Drenching for Cattle Farmers:

Dave presented some rather sobering information on this topic (even although it was a sheep farmer's seminar). The main points are:

- There is widespread resistance to “mectin” products by cattle in NZ – 92% of farms in the big 04/05 survey were resistant. This means you have an 11 out of 12 chance that this applies to you – yes you, numero uno!

- There is a problem with the pour-on drenches. Even under optimum conditions they do not reach as high a blood levels as the same drench given as the injectable version. Pour-ons routinely give low and variable levels of drug to the target. Apart from the vagaries of the way they are sometimes applied reasons for this include:

- Temperature may affect their efficacy – they don't work as well in cold weather.
- Some of the effectiveness of pour-ons depends on how much cattle ingest orally by licking, a highly variable factor over which you have no control. Incidentally, the more licking the better.
- Some generic “me too” products do not give as good a control as the original researched product despite to all intents and purposes appearing to contain the same active(s). In other words formulation is important. We have the ridiculous situation in NZ where the “me too's” don't have to prove their product actually works – they just piggy back on all the trial work done by the original research company and effectively say – ours must work too as it's got the same active ingredients. If you want more info in this area just ask!

What this means for cattle drenching is:

- Where feasible use an oral drench – Arrest C or Matrix C. These are the cheapest and most effective and are low dose formulations. All R1 cattle drenches should contain levamisole.
- Where practicalities preclude oral drenching then preferably use an injection over a pour-on. I will mention it in the next newsletter in full but Merial Ancare are about to release (in May) a combination injection for cattle – Eclipse E. This will contain a combination of eprinomectin (Eprinex) and levamisole. As this will be the only combination injection on the market it may well become the drench of choice for cattle drenching in NZ. A very timely development if not just a couple of months late! For most handling facilities injecting cattle is basically as straight forward as applying a pour-on.
- If you do want to/have to use a pour-on then the pour-on of choice, especially in R1 cattle is Eclipse Pour-on (a combination of abamectin and levamisole). The levamisole helps control *Cooperia*, the Achilles heel of all “mectin” pour-ons. However in light of the above information really you should probably do your best to avoid using pour-ons, especially in winter. In calves you can always do some 10 – 14 day post drench checks (like in lambs) to check on the effectiveness of your pour-on or any drench for that matter. Don't do these checks in cattle after their first winter as egg counts in adult cattle are notoriously unreliable.

- Finally get good advice from us here at Clutha Vets. The vets and retail staff keep abreast of this changing and very important, field. And don't believe all you read in the glossy brochures!

Drenching for Deer Farmers:

As I have said for a couple of years (maybe a little dramatically, but pretty true nevertheless) impending doom is just around the corner as far as anthelmintic effectiveness in deer goes. I am quite certain that we have resistance to the "mectin" pour-ons in South Otago but because of the practical difficulties associated with conducting FECRT's in deer it is hard to back this feeling up with science. These products, especially Cydectin Pour-on have been used almost exclusively in deer for a large number of years now.

Recently a colleague from the Winton area, Dave Lawrence, carried out some slaughter studies. In other words instead of relying on egg counts the test is done using actual worm counts from the animals gut – this is a superior test (& would be in lambs too) but unfortunately for the test participants it is terminal! The results of these tests back up my gut feeling (no pun intended) that there are problems with the "mectin" pour-ons in deer. OK the testing was just with Cydectin but all the pour-ons are from the same family and the moxidectin molecule in Cydectin is supposedly the most potent of the "mectins".

Drench	Ostertagia		Trichostrongylus
	Adults	Larvae	Adults
Farm 1			
- Cydectin Pour-on	71%	19%	94%
- Cydectin Injection	84%	81%	100%
Farm 2			
- Cydectin Pour-on	19%	0%	66%
- Cydectin Injection	87%	82%	100%
- Cydectin Inj+Scanda	98%	98%	100%

This shows that on these farms Cydectin Pour-on gave relatively poor results compared to the same product given as its injection version and you could argue even the injection alone is not that brilliant. This also reinforces the cattle information presented above.

As far as drenching deer goes the position is made a lot more difficult by the fact that levamisole is basically ineffective in deer – they metabolise (break it down) so quickly that it can't build up to high enough blood levels to kill worms. So our drench options in deer are more limited.

So what does all this mean and what are the practical recommendations for drenching deer?

- Where at all possible drench deer, especially fawns, orally. The ideal oral drench would be a combination of albendazole and abamectin. Such a product doesn't exist however you can use Matrix which contains albendazole, levamisole and abamectin – it's just that the levamisole won't be doing anything. Matrix is available as a 1ml/5kg or 1ml/20kg formulation.
- If and when oral drenching is not an option then an injectable "mectin" is preferable to a pour-on one, even although technically speaking none are actually licensed for deer. This gives you a choice of Cydectin, Genesis and Dectomax. Probably they will all give roughly similar results however, if I had to push for one I would recommend Dectomax. Anecdotally it seems to have been performing well in deer for a number of years on farms where Cydectin Pour-on appears to have given poor results. It is probably the most used injectable product in deer.
- To get around the problem of the oral drenches not lasting as long against lungworm as the "mectin" pour-ons or injection you could use a combination of an oral white drench (Oxfendazole or Arrest C), and an injectable "mectin" such as Dectomax. Obviously these have to be given as two separate products!
- If you feel you have no alternative but to use a pour-on then:
 - Use on warmer days.
 - Place it right down on the skin.
 - Increase the dose by 1½ - 2 times but no more. Cydectin in particular can be toxic, especially to young animals, or those in poor condition.
- For fading elk treatment specifically, contact the veterinary staff.

So there you go – some not terribly palatable info in the cattle and deer parasite scene. However it would be remiss of us not to bring this to your attention – forewarned is forearmed.

Pneumonia in Lambs

Although this doesn't seem to have been a particularly bad "pneumonia year", probably because it has been a damper, slightly cooler summer, a recent article in the veterinary literature contained some useful info on this topic so though I should mention it here.

Ovine pneumonia is a frustrating problem affecting millions of lambs and costing millions of dollars each year. Prevention is paramount. Three farm level management practices associated with farms having a higher level of pneumonia detected at slaughter were:

- Shearing lambs at weaning.
- Breeding ewe replacements on farm.
- Increased average slaughter age of lambs.

Unfortunately, for the latter two practices there are really few alternatives. Therefore the most useful recommendation is to stop shearing lambs at weaning. I don't think this is as common down here as further North, however the message is – don't do this.

Reducing heat stress has been identified as the most positive management action farmers can take to reduce the incidence and severity of pneumonia. Heat stress is recognised as open mouth breathing and panting and is caused by mustering long distances in hot conditions. This will be worsened by dust, excessive dog use, lack of shade, high endophyte grasses and dehydration. Minimising time off pasture, yard design, use of concrete, covered and portable yards, sprinkler systems all help mitigate these risks. Management strategies to prevent pneumonia must start early – it has been shown the main bacteria involved is established in more than 70% of lambs by December.

Enteric Salmonella

This is characterised by sudden deaths in good conditioned ewes in the summer/autumn period with, or without a greeny-brown khaki coloured scour. Often dead or sick ewes will be found beside water and there has usually been some predisposing stressor e.g. held off feed for shearing or going from good feed onto poorer feed.

An autopsy of dead or dying ewes will give us a pretty good idea if it's likely to be Salmonella so if you suddenly have a few trickling unexplained deaths give us a call and we can investigate.

Vaccination with Salvexin+B is highly effective in stopping deaths, usually within 7 – 10 days after vaccination. Spreading ewes out will also slow progression of the disease. Specific antibiotics (not penicillin) can be used in affected live ewes.

As with Brandenburg this is a disease you can get so take care when handling or disposing of any suspect cases.

Feeding Working Dogs

There was quite a good article on feeding working dogs in the March Countrywide which if anything showed it was quite hard to compare "apples with apples" in this area. There was one rather large error in the article though. The Eukanuba pricing they used was \$136.97 for a 15kg, more of a pet line. The Premium Farm Dog sells for \$127.98 for a 20kg which works out at over 40% cheaper (\$6.39/kg vs \$9.10/kg) than the costing Countrywide actually used. While on the subject of Eukanuba Working Dog Biscuits – if you are using about 2 x 20kg bags/month

please phone either the Balclutha or Milton clinic, or the Clydevale depot to have explained to you the Eukanuba Farmgate programme. As the loyalty card programme is coming to an end on the 20kg bags you may wish to go onto their new "Farmgate" programme as this is cheaper than buying one bag at a time. Also you get a stainless steel bowl for each dog you have and a wheelie bin for storage – many farmers have already signed up to this programme.

Ag Recovery Programme

As mentioned in an earlier newsletter the Balclutha clinic is the South Otago depot for this recycling programme for the plastic containers that accumulate on farms. The way the programme works is that the original manufacturer (say Merial Ancare, Schering Plough etc) pay a levy (about \$3/drum I think) to belong to the scheme which obviously the end user (yes, that's you!) ends up paying. So by not using the programme for which you have already paid you're helping the profits of some "city slicker" in Auckland. So bring your drums in otherwise this outfit is getting money for doing absolutely bloody nothing! I don't know about you but that grates with me. Please triple rinse the drums out before bringing them in.

Merchandise Matters

The list this month is as follows:

- **Merial Ancare Sheep Drenches** – Receive a plush towel set with 2 x 20lt Arrest or 1 x 20lt Matrix, Switch or Genesis – while stocks last.
- **Alliance & Converge Sheep Drench** – Receive a free drench gun with each 10lt.
- **Merial Ancare Sheep & Cattle Drenches** – All purchases qualify for a draw to win a 46" Samsung HD LCD TV. There are 3 TVs (draws) for Clutha Vets clients only.
- **Combat Topline Cattle Pour-on** – Super special – only \$716.83nett incl GST for 7.5lt. Will treat 300 x 500kg cows for \$2.39ea.
- **Cydectin Pour-on** – 17lt pack only \$1646.35 nett incl GST. Nil milk, nil meat withholding.
- **Dectomax Injections & Pour-on** – All purchases go in the draw to win a Yamaha Quad bike – Big Bear 400.
- **Expo Sheep Pour-on** – Buy 10lt & receive extra 1lt free – only while stocks last.
- **Eukanuba Premium Dog Biscuits 20kg** – Buy 3 bags & receive a wheelie bin for storing them in.
- **Tux Dog Biscuits** – Free pocket knife with each 40kg.

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