

# CLUTHA VETS SHEEP & BEEF FARMER NEWSLETTER



Startect has been taken off the market in NZ (proving the concept "if you don't use it you lose it"), however we still have some and after an outcry from some of us sheepy type vets, Zoetis has undertaken to bring some into the country from Australia (where it is still on the market) once a year. Obviously this could make supply an issue at times so if you want some, pre-ordering could be a good idea.

## New Products

1. **Eclipse E + B12 + Se:** A disadvantage of the injectable and pour-on mectin products for many years now is that unlike the oral drenches they have not had selenium included which means unless your cattle were grazing Se prill treated pasture at the correct time post prill supplementation then they were at risk of Se deficiency. Eclipse E, a combination of eprinomectin and levamisole, is now available with B12 & Se included and so gets around the Se problem where injections and pour-on are being used. Remember if oral combinations aren't able to be used in cattle then combination injections like this are the way to go and should be used in preference to a combination pour-on & definitely in preference to a single active pour-on.
2. **Duomax B12 + Se:** This is a concentrated form of B12 (4000ug/ml) as opposed to the usual 1000 or 2000ug/ml) for use in cattle meaning a smaller more convenient dose. It shouldn't be used in lambs as the dose would be a bit small to accurately administer. An opening promotion of a free Morphy Richards toaster or kettle is available with qualifying purchases.

## Promotion Winners

1. **Elanco Cyrex Weber Barbeque Promo:** The winner of the Weber BBQ through his purchase of Cyrex for fly control was Andrew Begg from Benhar.
2. **Coopers Te Pari Auto Drencher Promo:** The winner of this fancy Te Pari Auto Drencher was David Vollweiler of Circle Hill, Milton.

## Retail Ramblings

The list of specials & promotions this month is as follows:

- **Boehringer Ingelheim Sheep Drenches** - Receive a grey checked Horizon shirt with each qualifying purchase.
- **Dectomax Injection** - With 2 starter packs you get a Rugby Top (as well as 2 FREE 200mls)
- **Boehringer Ingelheim Cattle Drenches** - These include orals, injections and pour-ons. Depending on the products purchased receive an R. M. Williams belt, bag or boots.
- **Coppermax Injection** - Receive a free thermos mug.
- **Boss Pour-on 5lt** - Receive a Nescafe Dolce Gusto Coffee machine.
- **Boss Pour-on 7.5lt pack** - Receive a free Breville Scraper Cake Mixer.
- **Nexeptrin Cattle Injection** - 1ml/100kg - small dose rate and a great price.
- **Kaiwaka Children's Wet Weather Range** - Great prices in store now.
- **Ridgeline Outdoor Clothing** - Specials for adults & children in store.
- **Tux Dog Biscuits** - are on a special - see in store now.
- **Dog Coats** - For your working dog (& pot licker too!). We have Blizzard waterproof coats, Outback oilskin ones & Swannndri woollen coats in stock - all at fantastic prices, and for the month of April only get 20% off.

John A. Smart BVSc

## Your Vets

### Balclutha Clinic

John Smart	BVSc
Jason Darwen	BVSc
Rob Mills	BVSc
Hamish Moore	BVSc
Catherine Copland	BVM&S
Peter Heslip	BVSc., MVM
Annie Jackson	BVSc
Steven Butler	BVSc
Ruth Andrews	BVSc
Anna Burrell	BVSc
Erin Caswell	BVetMed
Andrew Comerford	MVB
Andrew Roe	BVSc, MACVSc

### Milton Clinic

Peter Kalb	BVSc
Jillian Clark	BVSc
Sid Taylor	BVSc, MACVSc
Barbara Christensen	BVSc, MACVSc
Tom Wallbank	BVM&S
Martha O'Connor	MVB
Dario Mendoza	BVSc

## Issue 200

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## Clinic News

Since the last newsletter we have had some reasonable rain such that now pasture conditions are more like what they would normally be in spring - rather lush, no "guts" in the grass and shit everywhere to use quite technical terms. With quite a lot of lambs gone out of the district as stores I would think most of you should have plenty of feed for flushing the ewes so leading on (hopefully) to a good scanning.

We have a couple of new staff starting. Dario Mendoza who hails originally from Chile has started with us based out of the Milton clinic and will mainly be doing dairy work. Andrew Roe, who has been based in Winton for the last close to 30 years has made the move to Clutha to take over from me as in charge of the sheep veterinary services we provide. After over 42 years here, the time has come for me to throttle back a bit. At the end of June I will "semi-retire" and reduce my hours. So we were looking for someone with an interest in sheep production to:

- Make sure Clutha Vets didn't lose its sheep focus by getting overwhelmed by the dairy "vortex".
- Continue the work in the sheep field that myself and Jillian at Milton have nurtured over time.
- Hopefully, with a new approach and set of ideas, take Clutha Vets sheep services to a new level.

I have known Andrew for most of his 30 odd years at Winton where he headed their sheep veterinary service. For quite a number of those years he and I were on the NZVA Sheep & Beef Cattle Veterinarians Committee together. We are lucky to have secured Andrew's services - vets with his level of experience don't come along everyday and I'm confident the needs of South Otago sheep farmers will be in good hands for the foreseeable future.

## Recent Animal Health Issues

1. **Flystrike** - This has been either the worst, or equal worst, flystrike season that we have experienced in South Otago. I have gone back through my files and 1998/99 was a particularly bad year for flystrike - it coincided with the arrival in the south of the Australian Green Blowfly. Up until this

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season there has been an overall trend towards increasing cases of flystrike, but this year really outdid itself. The incidence of flystrike in South Otago will always be pretty dependent on the climatic conditions starting in mid-spring but if we experience more seasons like the one just past then flystrike prevention will have to become a regular occurrence on farms here (like farms further north). See the last newsletter (Feb 18) for more info on flystrike control and a chart comparing the various dip products available.

2. **Internal Parasites** - Congratulations - as far as I am aware no one has been caught out by the recent burst in larval challenge on the pasture. As you are all obviously well aware, when the drought breaks after a long dry spell, about 2 weeks or so later you get a massive increase in larval challenge which can result in diarrhoea and death in lambs. Most farmers have been aware of this and very diligent re their lamb drenching.

Given the drought earlier and the resultant shortage in feed, more ewes seem to have higher than usual FEC's, meaning more of them, especially two-tooths, are requiring drenching than is usual.

## Reminders

1. **Salmonella Brandenburg Vaccination** – The vaccination programme is two doses to the two-tooths (or previously unvaccinated stock) 4 - 6 weeks apart. In previously vaccinated stock one booster dose is required. This booster dose and the second booster dose in two-tooths is best given around the end of June or mid July at the latest. In the two-tooths the first dose can be given prior to mating or post mating as suits, taking into account timing of mating and the vaccine programme timing. In many instances I suspect giving the first dose post mating will work best for most people.

Unfortunately vaccination against *S. Brandenburg* is not even close to 100% effective like most/all other animal health vaccines. However trial work has shown it does reduce the impact of the disease by around two thirds.

Those of you who had cases in the mixed age ewes last year should consider vaccinating this year's two-tooths as we know those are more at risk of contracting the disease in the year following an outbreak. My advice would be to not bother vaccinating in-lamb hoggets - while they can get the disease it does seem to be pretty uncommon for that to happen.

2. **Ultravac Vaccination of Hoggets** – Shortly the hoggets (if they haven't already) should have received their two 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 needed – right back to before weaning if necessary. If going onto fodder beet Ultravac vaccination is even more critical than usual.

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 autopsy has to be done very quickly after death.

3. **Ultravac 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 5 in 1 vaccination. In a few instances these deaths are due to a strain of Clostridia not in the 5 in 1 vaccine and in those cases we prescribe the 10 strain Covexin10 vaccine. This is the classic example of "prevention is better than cure". One death prevented will pay for many, many years of vaccinating.

4. **Brassica & Fodder Beet Grazing** – I won't repeat the brassica grazing "rules" here. These have been written on several occasions – see April 2011 newsletter for the list of these rules. Suffice it to say I have noticed a reduction in the number of deaths we used to see 5 – 10 days after the start of grazing brassicas since I started publishing these rules. Previously we would have had dead hoggets brought in for autopsy and these deaths invariably seemed to be due to an assortment of vague causes.

The basic underlying problem causing these deaths though, is the sudden change in diet from grass to brassicas causing a resultant acidosis which damages the rumen wall and allows a vague assortment of various "bugs" to enter the bloodstream which can then result in the death of affected animals. Allowing an acclimatisation period and feeding extra fibre (baleage, hay, straw) helps reduce the likelihood of this occurring.

Fodder beet is not a brassica however the same rules apply, only an acclimatisation period is even more important. Fodder beet is much more prone to causing an acidosis when it is first grazed. Stock, **especially cattle** need to be transitioned onto it **very, very** carefully over at least a 10 - 14 day period. More information is available at the clinics.

5. **Weigh Ewes Pre-tup** – Weigh a sample of around 100 two-tooths and 100 mixed age ewes just prior to the start of mating. If you do this each season then:

- You will know exactly where the ewes are at compared to other years and it will help you

- appreciate the influence of bodyweight at mating.
- You will be able to, once you know your scanning or fertility index (which is scanning % ÷ average pre-tup weight), reasonably accurately predict your likely scanning % from each year's pre-tup weight (av. pre-tup weight × fertility index = scanning %). If there is a significant departure from the predicted % then this is an indication that something else isn't quite right and maybe you should be giving us a call.

## Ergot Poisoning (Ergotism)

This is a fungal infection of the seed head of various grasses and grains. Given the right conditions of warmth and moisture over the summer/autumn this fungus can infect the seed head. Infected seed heads have distinctive sooty purple/black ergots which look a bit like mouse poo in them - see picture below. They are quite visible to the naked eye. These ergots contain toxins which cause constriction of the walls of small arteries and can result in dry gangrene similar to that which occurs in frostbite.



Obviously climatic conditions this season have suited the development of ergots as we have had quite a few observant farmers who have noticed these ergots on dried ryegrass seed heads lately and have rung up about them.

The problem is how much is too much? The safe answer is to say if you see ergots on the seed head in the pasture don't feed it, either as standing pasture or hay, baleage or silage etc as apparently you don't need many ergots to cause a problem. However, this is hardly a practical solution. Obviously avoid any heavily ergotised pasture, baleage etc, but in the case of light infestations feed the pasture/baleage out but keep an eagle eye out for clinical signs and remove stock from the feed at the first sign of any as early cases should come right. The clinical signs present initially as lower limb swelling and lameness, and if spotted at this stage and removed from the suspect feed the majority should come right. If not removed from the affected feed the condition progresses to skin

sloughing and loss of the hoof/foot where tissue has died. Less commonly the tail and ears can be affected.

So if you have saved pasture that you are going to make into hay/baleage/silage go and have a close look at the dead stalky ryegrass seed heads and see if you can find any "mouse poo" in the ears of the seed. If you've already made the baleage or silage have a good look at the seed heads for presence of ergots before you feed out.

## Pregnancy Testing - Last Call

See article in the last newsletter. It is not too late to get your herd pregnancy tested. Getting dries off to the works earlier while the schedule is good and saving on winter feed makes testing a very worthwhile exercise. For pregnancy aging and detecting twins scanning is best done 42 days following bull removal, but for a simple pregnant/dry answer pretty much anytime after 42 days is fine. Remember while you have us on farm there is also the opportunity to monitor BVD &/or trace elements, specifically copper and selenium.

## Unwanted Pregnancies in Calves/Heifers

Mis-mated heifers, even calves can be quite common round this time of the year. Some breeds of calves can come on heat at as little as 3 - 4 months of age. These under-age pregnancies can be a very costly mistake rendering some animals worthless. If you suspect this could have happened then the simple and most reliable option is to get us to inject them with the drug prostaglandin 1 week to 5 months after the bull has been with them. If you leave it longer than 5 months a prostaglandin injection won't work, but other less reliable options involving more work are available.

If you are buying calves at a sale remember that unless the vendor has had them injected with prostaglandin (as some now do) a guarantee of not in calf is invariably not worth the paper it's written on.

## Knockout Drenching

As has been mentioned in several previous newsletters inserting a drench of one of the new actives (Zolvix Plus or Startect) to the lambs later in the season has been shown to prolong the life of the existing cheaper drench actives. Zolvix Plus and Startect are more expensive but look on this as insurance. Spend a bit more **once** a year now on a relatively small number of lambs to enable you to continue to use the existing cheaper anthelmintics for much longer. Otherwise sooner or later you will end up having to use these more expensive ones routinely. The term knockout drench has been coined for this and the reason I have mentioned it now is that early - mid April is the time to be doing this.