

Important message regarding Toxovax orders

We have discovered that we had a fault in the phone line cable supplying the fax machine meaning that the reception of faxes between the 5th December and the 18th January was intermittent at best.

So, if you faxed your Toxovax order, and/or ram run form, back to the clinic this season at any time prior to Friday 18th January we would be grateful if could you phone the clinic please, to make sure we received it.

We apologise for the inconvenience, but please take the time to give us a quick call to avoid the risk of missing out on this important vaccine

Clinton farmers soon to be our latest TV celebs!

Be sure to watch Country Calendar on TV 1, when the new season gets underway on Sunday 24th February.

The episode will feature local farmers David and Robyn Shaw and family, who farm sheep, finishing cattle and goats not far from Clinton.

Particular focus will be given to the great returns the Shaws are getting from their growing Cashmere goat flock as well as the sterling work they have done to help reinvigorate New Zealand's cashmere industry.

Retail Ramblings - Alpheus Anti-Parasitic Capsules for Young Cattle

Since they arrived on the scene three years ago Alpheus capsules, the New Zealand developed "drench capsule" have helped numerous farmers overcome the challenges involved with achieving optimal autumn weight gains in their R1 cattle. Monthly oral drenching is effective in suppressing adult worm numbers in the animals' gut. But in the autumn, when pasture worm larval levels are typically at peak levels, the worm larva that accumulate between drenches are known to have a detrimental effect on young cattle. That's where Alpheus comes in. The capsules include a double combination drench "primer" tablet which wipes out any adult worms present, and then provides a continuous release of abamectin to eliminate incoming larva for the following 125 days. Designed for all cattle between 120 and 300kg Alpheus offers the dual advantages of improved growth rates and fewer yardings. Interested? Pop in to the clinic for more info.

RVM Consultation Reminder

We would like to thank all of our clients who have responded to earlier reminders and booked in their annual Restricted Veterinary Medicine (RVM) consults in recent months. However, there are still a number of sheep, beef and deer farmers whose prescriptions have expired and have yet to organise a catch-up with one of the vets.

As you will be aware it is a legal requirement for us to conduct a consultation before we prescribe or sell RVMs. These rules apply to all antibiotics (whether they be injectable, oral, intra-mammary or topical), nearly all livestock vaccines and a few trace element products.

Thankfully, rather than having to speak with a vet every time you require an RVM, the rules allow us to plan all of your anticipated RVM requirements at a single consultation and "forward authorise" these for the following twelve months.

If you have been notified that you are due/overdue for a consultation please give us a call and tee up a time for a catch-up. Waiting till you actually need to come in to pick up an RVM product (either from our Balclutha or Milton branches, or from one of the depots) is not recommended, as we cannot guarantee there will be a vet available to authorise the purchase when you call.

Your Vets

Balclutha Clinic

John Smart	BVSc
Jason Darwin	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
Sam Howarth	BVSc
David Exton	BVSc
Olivia Hickman	BVSc

Milton Clinic

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

CLUTHA VETS SHEEP & BEEF FARMER NEWSLETTER



Issue 205

February 2019



Clinic News

By Andrew Roe

Welcome to our first newsletter for 2019. We hope you have managed to fit in some valuable rest and relaxation over the holiday season, despite this time of year typically being a pretty busy period for sheep and beef farmers.

The summer months tend to be an enjoyable time of year for us too, as it is a time when we tend to have a lot of contact with our sheep clients. We've been particularly busy lately with ram vasectomies and setting up faecal egg count reduction tests, not to mention our ram palpation runs which are just getting into full swing now.

The general consensus seems to be that the last few months have been pretty favourable as far as pasture growth is concerned, but that this has not been translated into good lamb growth on many farms, largely thanks to a struggle to maintain pasture quality. Hopefully this will improve as we move into late summer/autumn

Staff Comings and Goings

January 25th was a sad day for us, with Gary Beaumont manning our Clydevale store for the last time. It is over 20 years since Clutha Vets set up our base in Clydevale and Gary, and his wife Sue, have been in charge since day one! Sue managed the store initially, before sharing the role with Gary, who later took over full time in 2004.

Gary's warm personality, cheerful smile and his extensive knowledge and expertise have been greatly appreciated by all of our clients in the wider Clydevale area, as evidenced by the large number of people who called in for a chat during the BBQ on Gary's last day. Thanks to all those of you who took the time to stop by.

In his "retirement" Gary plans to join Sue full time on the farm. But he does have a Plan B, should he not make it beyond the 90 trial period.... apparently it involves a boat!!
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Clinic News (continued)

In our next newsletter we hope to introduce our new Clydevale manager. In the interim the store will be looked after by staff from our main branches.

On the arrivals front we are very pleased to introduce two new vets, Dave Exton and Olivia Hickman, who have just joined the team and will be based at the Balclutha clinic.

Olivia is from a farming family in Central Southland, while Dave comes to us from Matamata. Both completed their veterinary degree at Massey University last year, having spent time with us as students. We must have done something right as they decided to return to start their veterinary careers in this beautiful part of the world.

We are sure that you will make both Olivia and Dave feel very welcome as they look forward to getting to know you.

Recent Cases of a Neurological Disorder in Calves and Hoggets

Our October newsletter featured an article on Vitamin B1 (thiamine) deficiency, a condition we occasionally see in young cattle, sheep and deer. It turned out to be a very timely reminder as we have gone on to see quite a few cases this summer, mainly in calves and hoggets.

You can check out the full article in the newsletter section of our website (www.cluthavets.co.nz), but in summary, the disorder, technically known as polioencephalomalacia (“polio” for short) is characterised by a range of neurological signs, from “star gazing” and blindness to inability to stand and, eventually, seizures and death. These signs are the result of changes in the brain brought about by a shortage of vitamin B1. However it is not a dietary deficiency as the vitamin is normally produced by the micro-organisms in the animal’s rumen. The deficiency arises due to a disruption to this process due to such factors as a sudden change in feed or a high quality, carbohydrate rich, low fibre diet.

Affected animals can be successfully treated with injectable vitamin B1 if detected early enough, while prevention involves addressing the underlying causes; in most cases providing a source of fibre such as a bale of hay, does the trick. Occasionally, especially in calves, we recommend dosing the whole mob with an oral thiamine solution.

Low Vitamin B12 Levels this Summer

By Andrew Roe

Preventing cobalt/Vitamin B12 deficiency in lambs can be one of the more frustrating animal health challenges we deal with. The main problem is that it can be very hard to predict when and where a deficiency may occur. No two years are the same, with pasture cobalt levels varying from year to year, farm to farm, even between different parts of the farm.

One thing that we do know, however, is that for any given property, pasture cobalt availability tends to be at its lowest level during the late spring and summer periods. As soil moisture levels fall, the cobalt in the soil becomes increasingly bound to other soil components, particularly manganese. What compounds the problem is that this is exactly the time of year when lambs have their greatest demand for cobalt. The faster an animal is growing, the more Vitamin B12 it requires, with dietary cobalt being essential for B12 production in the rumen

Other factors that influence pasture cobalt levels include clover content (as clover contains a lot more cobalt than grasses) and soil pH, with cobalt availability falling as pH goes up (one of the few negative effects of lime application).

A very simple way of assessing your lamb flock’s Vitamin B12 status is to arrange a **Mineral Check** on your next line of lambs going to the works. A number of clients have already taken this step, with most of the results showing B12 to be in the marginal category this summer.

Give us a call to arrange a **Mineral Check** on your lambs and avoid lost production due to cobalt/Vitamin B12 deficiency.



Farm Data Recording

In order to improve you need to know where you are now

By Erin Riley

If you have a goal that you are wanting to reach with your farm, whether it be increased scanning percentage, reduced lamb mortality or improved growth rates, if you don’t know where you are now it’s hard to figure out how you are going to reach that goal. That’s why data collecting is vital to help create plans and figure out where the best time and effort should be spent to reach your goals.

If you want more lambs at weaning time, how many lambs are you losing and when? Is it via abortions? Are they dying at birth or is it when they are several weeks old? Knowing this kind of information can help you narrow down where the issues might be, then a constructive plan can be made to overcome these issues.

What about growth rates? Knowing your average growth rates between two points (birth and tailing, tailing and weaning) may highlight a time when the growth rates are not where you expected them to be. Is there something you can do that may improve the growth rates at that point in time?

So collecting and recoding data is vital to help you make informed management decisions. How you collect and record this data is up to you, but there are several programs/apps that can help if you feel pen and paper is not your thing. We have some great tools if you would like a hand.

Maybe start by making a tally chart in your diary – how many dead lambs did you pick up today? It doesn’t need to be detailed, just a count. Once things calm down you can look back and narrow down the period when more losses occurred, which in turn can be helpful to pinpointing the cause(s).

Make it your goal this season to collect more information and see how it can help improve your bottom line.



Selenium: Too important to make assumptions

By Andrew Roe

The essential role that selenium plays in a number of the body’s functions is well known. Reproductive performance, neonatal survival, growth of young stock and a healthy immune system all require adequate levels of selenium in the diet.

Also well recognised is the fact that, for most of the South Island including South Otago, our soils are selenium deficient. This has been successfully addressed in recent times by the yearly application of selenium prills to our pastures. Selenised drenches vaccines and stock drinking water have also played a role.

Consequently it is rare to see the reproductive disasters or outbreaks of white muscle disease that used to be a feature of selenium deficiency in our sheep and cattle. However, we still quite frequently come across cases of “subclinical deficiency” where low to marginal blood and/or liver selenium levels in our livestock may be preventing us achieving our potential when it comes to parameters such as scanning percentage and new-born lamb survival .

One possible reason for such subclinical selenium deficiency is the timing of the selenium prills in relation to ewe mating time. It is common practice for selenium prills to be applied in the autumn, often in conjunction with capital fertiliser applications. The problem here can be that, by the time these are dissolved, washed into the soil and uptaken by the roots of the pasture, mating is underway, meaning that the ewes’ selenium reserves are at their lowest level of the year right at a time when they need to be high.

Our Advice

Even if you do supplement with selenium fertilisers, it is a good idea to check the selenium status of your flock from time to time.

Blood tests are an easy and reliable way to assess your ewes’ selenium levels

The best time to check depends on when selenium levels are likely to be at their low point; if you normally apply prills in the autumn do a pre-mating blood test (why not get us to blood sample a few ewes when out palpating your rams?). If you apply the prills in the spring, a pre-lambing test can be helpful.

Oral and injectable selenium supplements are a cheap and effective way to top up your flocks selenium reserves if they are found to be low.

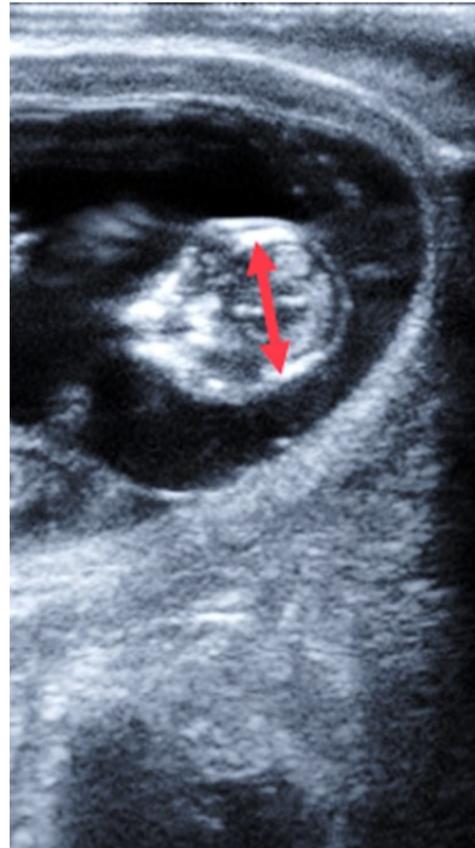
Beef cow pregnancy testing - it's time to book in your beef herd

By Tom Wallbank

Pregnancy scanning is a very cost effective exercise allowing you to **cull dry cows at weaning**.

In addition to 'wet/dry' testing, **fetal aging** provides added information, giving you options to:

1. Remove late calving cows to create a more **compact calving** group – this is essential where the bulls have been left to run with the herd for longer than the intended mating period. Farmers aiming for compact calving periods, but are concerned of getting high empty rates, can start by removing late calving cows at scanning time. It is then easier to condense the mating period in subsequent seasons using earlier calved cows. This allows a sort of 'insurance policy' against getting a high empty rate when initially reducing mating period. *Target mating periods for most herds would be 63 days (i.e. x 3 cycles) for mixed age cows, and 42 days (i.e. x 2 cycles) for heifers.*
2. Split the herd into **early and late calving groups for feed management** – putting later calving cows onto good quality pasture designated for calved cows is wasteful and may result in more calving problems in those late calving cows. *Beef cows should not be greater than body condition score 6 at calving (Target BCS 5-6)*



Skull diameter in an 80 day old embryo

The best time to scan is 42 days (6 weeks) after the bull was withdrawn. Fetal aging can be done accurately up to 100 days/14 weeks of pregnancy measuring absolute fetal length or fetal skull diameter, using ultrasound imaging.

At Clutha Vets we are trained and calibrated every year to perform these tasks accurately, and a lot of care is taken to confirm empty cows. This is done by ultrasound, providing the bull has been removed for a minimum of 35 days. Empty cows can also be further confirmed by manual palpation, providing there are safe and adequate facilities for the vet to do so.

Now is the time to check over your yards and make sure they are safe to do the job. Some bird netting on the catwalk will help if it is wet, as well as fixing any broken/rotten boards.

Book in your beef pregnancy testing with reception and inform them whether you require fetal aging. Twins can also be identified but this service must be requested prior to your visit.

Please feel free to call and talk to a vet to discuss how is best to utilise your pregnancy test visit this year.



Trunk length in a 40 day old embryo; upper left corner, surrounded by uterine fluid (black)

The Value of Uddering Your Ewes

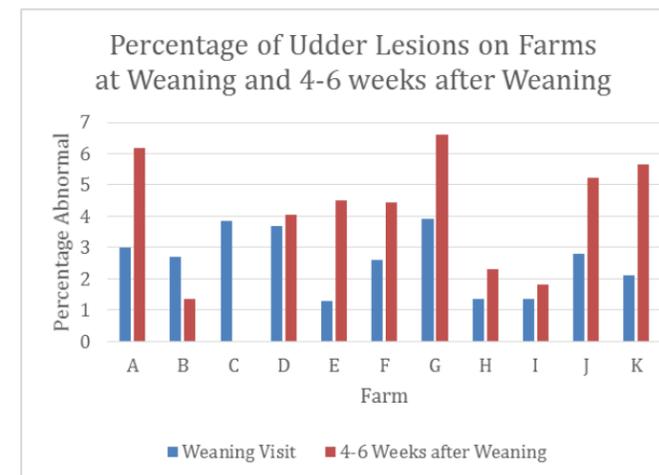
By Jillian Clark

Sometime in the next few weeks you will hopefully be uddering all of your ewes. As we have said in previous newsletters, the optimal time to do a single flock uddering is at least 4 weeks post-weaning. This is because:

- a) It's easier to distinguish the normal from the abnormal as the udder has had time to shrink back to a non-lactating state.
- b) At least 50% of udder issues develop in the early post-weaning period.

This year I can back this up with results from two vet student case reports investigating ewe udder defects in NZ, carried out over the 2017-18 summer.

The graph below shows results from 11 farms in the lower North Island where 500 ewes from each flock were examined in the first week after weaning, and then again 4-6 weeks later. Those ewes with the most obvious lesions at weaning (about one third of the total abnormalities) were then culled and the rest were retained and re-checked in 4-6 weeks, along with all those with "normal udders" at weaning.



The graph shows that for nearly all farms the number of abnormal udders was greater at the second examination than at the first. On average, 58% of the abnormalities had arisen since the first visit at weaning. These consisted mainly of a hard udder on one side, or of a soft udder with a >2cm lump on one side.

Exceptions were Farmer B who culled all his ewes with udder issues at weaning (and therefore all those found at the second visit were newly developed lesions), and Farm C where there was no follow-up visit.

Of note was the finding that black mastitis and burst udder abscesses accounted for fewer than 20% of udder faults found. This is significant if you are using the shearers as your udder problem detectors because, unless trained, these are the only faults

they are likely to pick up.

The study also compared the changes in udder lesions from when they were detected at weaning to the second visit 4-6 weeks later. Of most note in these results is the fact that only 10% of lesions had fully resolved by the second visit, and in 25% of cases a fault was now present in the previously "normal" side.

So, what are we checking for?

- ◆ Black mastitis
- ◆ Udder abscesses
- ◆ Hard sides.
- ◆ A hard lumpy scarred side.
- ◆ Single lumps in the udder tissue. Size and placement become important when deciding whether she is a cull. Any lump at the base of the teat should make her a cull as milk won't flow into the teat, otherwise a lump that is 2cm or greater, anywhere in the udder has been suggested as a cull.
- ◆ A hard core down the middle of the teat. This means there has been scarring in the teat canal and often the teat canal is totally closed preventing milk flow.
- ◆ Teat damage such as shearing cuts or extreme scarring from sores on the teats which mean it may be difficult for the lamb to suckle the teat

Summary.

- **The level of udder faults on a farm varies from 1.5 - 6.5%.**
- **If doing a single uddering it is best done at least 4-6 weeks post-weaning. This way you will maximise your "hit-rate" of picking up udder faults, and minimise the risk of culling ewes which self-cure or have a more fleshy type normal udder.**
- **No milk on a side at weaning doesn't necessarily mean there is an issue; she just may not have been suckled on that side so it has dried off. DO however, check the teat carefully for a hard core - such a fault requires culling.**
- **Obvious faults such as black udder and udder abscesses are just the tip of the iceberg.**
- **If unsure of any cases get us out for a second opinion as to whether culling is recommended or not.**