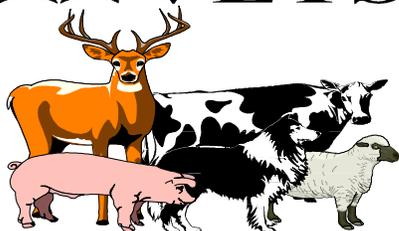


Sheep Farmer Newsletter April 2013

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Practice News

No changes to report on in the vet team at this time apart from the fact that Hamish doesn't have to look after himself now - he has a new wife, Sarah, to do that for him!

There have been a couple of changes in the admin team. Paul Bonini, who as Business Manager has been responsible for quite a diverse range of functions

(especially computer and IT type matters like the website), is off to work for Westpac Bank in the shaky city. Susan Kornyei, the main accounts person has shifted to Dunedin – her position has been taken by Debbie Mills who some of you will know from her days with the ANZ. With some adjustments here and there to hours of work, at this stage Paul's roles have been "chopped up" and distributed to other staff.

Some of you will know I was away for much of February. I was chairman of the organising committee

for the 8th International Sheep Veterinary Congress (ISVC) which was held in Rotorua. Prior to that Lois and I were tour guides for the South Island pre-congress tour. Both the congress itself and the pre-congress tour went pretty well though we did get a speeding ticket in the coach (102km/hr between Haast and Paringa for goodness sake!), and also at one stage had the coach (a 5* tour coach) bellied in a ford across the Von River at the back of Mt Nicholas Station & miles from any cell phone coverage. Some digging and jacking (plus a small amount of panel beating at the end of the trip) and an hour and a half later it was free. However apart from me rapidly going greyer while thinking about the havoc this was doing to my carefully planned tour itinerary we all survived unscathed!

Later in the newsletter I have put in some snippets from the congress programme itself that I thought you might find of some interest.

Recent Animal Health Problems

1. Internal Parasitism. There are very few newsletters when internal parasitism doesn't get a mention as being a recent problem. This is one of those times when it hasn't been an issue, primarily as it has been a bit dry. The reason I mention it however is as more of a warning. When we do get some reasonable rain you will need to be on your guard as when it is dry larval development is pretty much slowed down due to lack of moisture. While hot and dry weather does kill off a lot of the larvae on the pasture there are always plenty that manage to survive in the middle of a dried turd, by burrowing down in the soil etc. When it rains you can get kind of a synchronised larval development of those that have managed to survive, such that about a fortnight after the rain you can, very rapidly, get clinical parasitism.

2. Ryegrass Staggers. A number of farmers have rung in to ask about odd cases of "staggery stock" following movement of them. This is due to a toxin produced by endophyte fungus in the leaf and stem of ryegrass and is known as Ryegrass Staggers. In South Otago we see it in late summer – early autumn, and really only in drier years. Sheep show signs within 7 - 14 days of being put on affected pastures, usually after they are disturbed and made to move. Generally deaths only occur from misadventure – drowning etc or being attacked by gulls. Severe cases of the disease can be quite serious though as stock can be impossible to shift and mating can be disrupted. The following control options may be available:

- Avoid hard grazing of older ryegrass pastures.
- Shift stock to newer pastures – many of these will not have the endophyte that produces the "staggery toxin".
- Renew pastures with grasses with nil or endophyte that doesn't produce ryegrass staggers.

- Put stock on summer brassicas (if you have them).

Reminders

1. Salmonella Brandenburg Vaccination: – The programme is two 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 fairly uncommon. 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. Unfortunately vaccination is not close to 100% effective like most other animal health vaccines, however work has shown it does reduce the impact of the disease by two thirds to three quarters.

If I had to make a prediction from my rather murky crystal ball it would be that, following a couple of lower incidence years, we may see a bit of an increase in cases this winter.

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 needed – right back to before weaning 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 & 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. 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 example of "prevention is better than cure". A death prevented will pay for many, many years of vaccinating.

4. Brassica 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 “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 hoggets brought in for autopsy and these deaths invariably seemed to be due to an assortment of vague causes. The underlying problem resulting in these deaths though was the sudden change in diet from grass to brassicas and allowing an acclimatisation period and feeding extra fibre has helped reduce these.

5. Weigh Ewes Pre-tup. Weigh a sample (say 100) two-tooths and 100 mixed age ewes. If you do this each season then:

- 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) predict your likely scanning % from each year's pre-tup weight. 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.

Bopriva (Agreeabull) Vaccination

Bopriva is the anti-testosterone vaccine that is very effective in reducing bull's undesirable behaviour – fighting, mounting, fence wrecking etc. and hence gives you a very effective management tool. In fact once Bopriva is working you can safely mob up strange mobs of bulls which provides a saving in time & labour. It is **not** a hormone or a growth promotant; it is simply a vaccine and as such doesn't even have a withholding time.

Trials have shown no adverse impact on growth rates – while there may be a growth rate reduction from removal of testosterone this is balanced out by the fact that bulls spend more time eating and less time fighting etc so the net effect is that growth rates are not affected.

Bopriva is given twice (1ml under the skin) – the timing of the second dose can be altered depending on the length of the effect you want. Pfizer have produced a very useful slide rule calculator to enable you to plan the time of the injections in relation to the time of effect you require. These are available at the clinics.

Cost is round the \$5.60 mark. It is administered via a particular safety type vaccinator – let's just say you don't want to inject yourself!! Contact the clinic if you require more info. It is an RVM (or PAR) so you will need to speak to a vet about it if you haven't previously done so.

Pfizer/Zoetis:

While on the subject of Bopriva (Bopriva is produced by Pfizer) it has reminded me that the animal health division of Pfizer (there is a human health division that amongst other things make little blue pills!) has rebranded itself as Zoetis, so that is a name you will start to see cropping up on product packaging, adverts etc. So nothing really new as far as you are concerned, just a name change.

International Sheep Veterinary Congress Snippets

1. Schmallenberg Virus. Some of you may have heard of this new disease of sheep, cattle and goats which has emerged, seemingly from nowhere, about 2011, to become quite a widespread problem in several European countries and also England. It was the topic of several papers at the recent ISVC so I have summarised the pertinent points below.

The typical history would be that farmers would observe multiple numbers of a variety of different malformations in newborn lambs, calves and kids involving mostly the head and limbs. Often the brain and spinal cord were also not developed properly. Affected animals were mainly born dead (but not always). Also the stiff and twisted joints & limbs often caused severe obstetric problems.

The causative agent was found to be a virus (named after the town in Germany where it was first discovered) infecting pregnant animals at a certain stage of pregnancy, in the case of ewes between days 28 and 50 of pregnancy. The virus is spread by biting midges (*Culicoides* spp.). It emerged in Western Europe but has been confirmed in some of the south east counties in England likely associated with wind-borne spread of infected midges from mainland Europe. It continues to spread and a vaccine is being looked at.

It is unlikely to become a problem here (due to the lack of the vector) but just in case make sure you don't bring any creepy crawlies back from the area if you happen to visit there!

2. Other Emerging Diseases. A speaker from Liverpool University gave an account of a contagious digital dermatitis in sheep which is emerging in the UK. In dairy cattle there has been a similar condition emerging known as Mortellaro's Disease or Hairy Heel Warts and it seems to be slowly spreading worldwide, including NZ. So far the sheep version has not been recorded outside the UK.

The reason I bring this up is really to emphasise that it is a responsibility of all stock owners to observe their stock for any unusual symptoms and report them to the clinic if you do see something you think is unusual.

Basically the sooner anything new is jumped on, especially if it is contagious, the better the chances of stamping it out.

There is always the opportunity for peculiar syndromes to pop up in newborn stock due to the coming together of recessive genes at mating and some speakers, including two from New Zealand, described some of these - fragile skin in some Perendale/Texel lambs, and a nervous disorder in lambs in two different flocks sired by a single ram each, however both rams originated from the same large pedigree flock raising the possibility that further carrier rams may be present in NZ.

The moral of the story – keep your eyes peeled for anything unusual and report it to us – it could be very important.

3. *Hard Udder.* This is a disease condition I have struck occasionally and no-one has ever really got to the bottom of what causes it. One speaker presented some evidence that it may be due to nothing more complex than a real chronic mastitis and if ewes are not culled the problem will re-occur next season.

4. *Rape Scald.* A fairly topical issue recently. One speaker has raised the possibility that rather than rape scald being a primary photosensitivity (that is, caused directly by the plant itself) it could be being caused by a fungal infection on rape leaves (white leaf spot) that produces a toxin which is known to be photodynamic (causes symptoms of photosensitivity). Similar toxins are found in certain aphids so in future if you get some cases of rape scald in lambs closely examine the crop for fungal or aphid infestation.

PS – We are proud to be working alongside the new Chairman of the International Sheep Veterinary Association (ISVA) elected at the Congress – Congratulations John!

Working Dog Seminar – Wed May 15th

Peter Heslip, our head small animal clinician, and his team are putting on a seminar for farmers based around working dogs. After all, these are extremely valuable members of your staff. They have their own feed requirements, health problems etc. The seminar will cover amongst other things:

- Major injuries – treatment and (more importantly from your point of view) prevention.
- Advances in working dog nutrition. There is a recently established centre at the Massey Vet School (The Centre for Service & Working Dog Health) which has been doing research in this area and this will update you with their latest work and findings.
- Gastric Dilatation & Volvulus (GDV). This is a flash name for a twisted stomach. This life

threatening and extreme emergency problem mainly of huntaways seems to be getting more common. Find out about it and what you can do to help prevent it occurring.

This seminar will be held at the South Otago Town & Country Club in Yarmouth St, Balclutha, starting at 7.30pm on Wed May 15th. Supper will be provided at the conclusion of the evening. RSVP to the Balclutha clinic (for catering purposes) by Friday May 10th please.

I would venture to suggest that this will be a very informative evening that you should get a lot out of and if you value your dogs you should really attend it.

Merchandise Matters

This month's list is as follows:

- ***Merial Ancare Sheep Drench*** – Receive a Rapala bait knife or a Rapala fish filleting knife on qualifying products - 2 x 20lt Arrest and 1 x 20lt Switch or Matrix.
- ***Dectomax Injection*** – Receive an electric knife sharpener or a high quality sheath knife with every 2 starter packs. Being rather useless at sharpening knives myself I was impressed with how well the sharpener worked when we tried it.
- ***Merial Ancare Cattle Injection/Pour-on*** – Receive a fishing rod & reel on selected products and go in the draw for a fishing package (exclusive to Clutha Vets) plus the Ultimate Fishing Package which is a national promotion.
- ***Boss Cattle Injection*** – a new combination injection of ivermectin, eprinomectin and levamisole for cattle treatment from a new company Alleva. Also effective against lice.
- ***Meaty Bites Working Dog 20kg*** – Currently on special at \$60.70 nett incl GST.
- ***Tux 40kg*** - \$94.12 nett incl GST while stocks last.
- ***Dog Sack Bedding*** – Be kind to your best friend. Give him/her some comfortable bedding. We have some sturdy padded sacking ideal for dog kennels. From \$14.00 - \$21.00 depending on size.
- ***Cydectin Pour-on*** – Receive an extra 10% free.*
- ***Combat Topline Pour-on*** – only \$468.21 nett incl. GST or \$2.34/500kg cow.*

* Note the comments in some recent newsletters about pour-on effectiveness – in cattle & deer!

Promotion Winners

Stihl Woodboss Chainsaw – The winner of this chainsaw drawn from purchasers of Coopers drenches (Scanda, Converge & Alliance) was Opawa Farms (Ray Sutherland) down at Kuriwao.

John A. Smart BVSc.