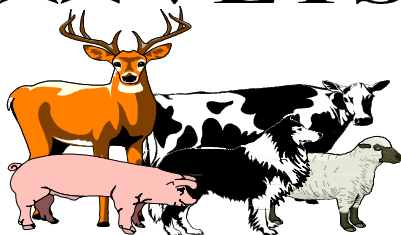


# Sheep Farmer Newsletter April 2014

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## Animal Health Centre

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## Practice News

This season seems to have been a bit variable as far as lamb growth rates go. Some of you have had quite good growth rates while others have struggled a bit at times. On some farms the clover root weevil has made its presence felt resulting in very little clover which will impact on lamb growth. I hope you have managed to take advantage of the free parasitoid wasps that Beef and Lamb and AgResearch have been making available. This appears to be one of the few practical examples of a pretty successful bio-control agent.

Staff wise at the clinic it has been steady as she goes. We have had a locum, Ruth Andrews start just recently while Alisa McDonald finishes a stint as a locum (again). This has been helpful to take up the slack from when Steve Butler left on his O.E.

In the next month or two you may see a bit of construction activity out the back of the Balclutha Clinic. We are retaining and levelling some land at the back of the clinic and putting up some garages/carports and also converting the end bay of the bulk store into a room for holding all the various

bits of large animal veterinary gear that we use which is currently stored in about 3 different locations round the clinic. This should improve efficiency a bit and also help relieve some of the parking congestion that can occur at the retail end of the building. It will also mean that the clinic utes can be parked under cover. It has concerned me for some years now just what the hot temperatures that the inside of a vehicle can get to on sunny days might be doing to some of the various drugs we carry.

This redevelopment is part of the bigger clinic redevelopment project which is quietly tracking along - we are getting closer to a final floor plan for the clinic. I have to say though the red tape around fire regulations is proving quite costly and dare I say it, a bit ridiculous in places!

### Recent Animal Health Problems

**1. Salmonella Hindmarsh in Ewes:** - I mentioned this in the last newsletter. Since then we have had several more cases although none more recently. This is a rather unusual pattern as it is usually round about now when we would be seeing cases, not back in January and February. Hopefully we don't see anymore but keep an eye out for sudden deaths in good condition two-tooth or older ewes. These ewes may have evidence of a khaki coloured diarrhoea round the back end. If you see this, give us a call immediately. There is a more detailed account of this disease in the last newsletter.

**2. Pneumonia in Lambs:** - We have had a few cases of viral (or enzootic) pneumonia in lambs at both the Balclutha and Milton ends of the practice. This results in coughing, especially when moved, varying degrees of growth rate loss and can result in lamb deaths. While it is virtually impossible to eliminate viral pneumonia entirely, there are things you can do to reduce its severity. These have been mentioned in detail in previous newsletters. The March 2008 newsletter had quite a lot of detail on the condition.

If you don't keep a paper file of our newsletters but wish to refer back to an earlier newsletter you can log onto our website [www.cluthavets.co.nz](http://www.cluthavets.co.nz), click on the newsletters tab towards the top right of the homepage and then select the particular newsletter you want (Sheep, then March 08 etc). Copies of all sheep newsletters back to the beginning of 2007 are on the website.

As far as pneumonia goes I will just emphasise that ensuring good control of parasites, B12 levels and good feeding etc., as well as attention to the factors listed in the earlier article, can help keep this problem under control. Some LSD added to a routine drench will also help control it by helping boost the animal's immune system.

### 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 cloudy crystal ball it would be that, following a couple of lower incidence years and then a slight increase last year, we may see a further increase in cases this winter.

**2. Ultravac Vaccination of Hoggets:** – Shortly the hoggets 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.

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.

While on this subject I feel obliged to apologise for yet another price increase in the cost of 5 in 1 vaccine. We bought as much as the chiller could hold later last year to stave off the latest price rise but these supplies have finally run out. There are two suppliers of 5 in 1 in New Zealand. We stock Ultravac as even with the price rise this is still cheaper than the alternative Multine and also, being a 1ml dose we can hold more doses of product in the chiller than of a 2ml dose product. Both have risen in price over the last nine years by over 300%. We have indulged in a certain amount of "complaining" on your behalf about the extent of these increases but to no avail obviously. Despite

these increases, the alternative (not vaccinating) is likely to be way more costly.

**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 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. This is the classic example of “prevention is better than cure”. One 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 causing a resultant acidosis which damaged the rumen wall and allowed a vague assortment of “bugs” to enter the bloodstream. Allowing an acclimatisation period and feeding extra fibre helps reduce this occurrence.

Fodder beet is not a brassica however the same rules apply; only they are even more important. Fodder beet is much more prone to causing an acidosis (like when sheep eat too much grain) when it is first grazed. Stock need to be transitioned onto it **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. 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.

### Iodine Blood Testing

There has been a new blood test for iodine under development for the last 2 - 3 years. You may recall the previous test (T4) which measured the level of thyroid hormone (where iodine is required) turned out to be not much use in determining whether iodine was low or not. For example levels of T4

could vary depending on the ambient temperature of the day when the samples were taken.

Once bitten, twice shy - I have held off mentioning anything about the new test until I gained some confidence in it, and that the levels determined for the various ranges - deficient, marginal and adequate - were well established. I am now satisfied that that point has been reached – the test appears to give a fairly accurate indication of whether iodine intake is low or not. The test is known as Serum Inorganic Iodine or SII for short.

It is not the cheapest test in the world at just over \$50/sample however results to date indicate that, due to fairly consistent levels being found, only 3 – 4 blood samples are needed to get a picture of the iodine status for any given farm so the overall cost is much the same as for the usual 10 bloods that are needed for B12, Copper etc. So, if you want to check your iodine levels, say to see if you need to give iodine through winter to improve lamb or calf survival, give us a call to arrange this.

### 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 and 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 calming effect you want which ranges out to around 20 weeks. 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.

The dose cost is round the \$6 mark. It is administered via a particular safety type vaccinator – let's just say you wouldn't want to inject yourself with it!! 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.

### Useful Electronic Aids and Websites

Beef and Lamb have a weekly e-diary that they email, usually on a Friday. It contains information on upcoming events in the Otago/Southland area. We sometimes use it to publicise upcoming meetings,

field days etc of our own. If you want to go on the receiving list for this e-diary send an email to [Paul.McCauley@beefandlambnz.com](mailto:Paul.McCauley@beefandlambnz.com) with your details.

A useful tool, "Pasture Growth Forecaster" has become available which can email you regular pasture growth updates for the region and/or can be customised to your property – there is no cost for this. Copy the following website address <http://www.pasturegrowthforecaster.co.nz/> into your browser and then follow the simple instructions.

### Deer Snippets

Just a reminder to those farmers enrolled in the velvetting scheme. By now you should have returned your record book, all filled in and signed, plus all unused drugs.

We had a case recently of ill thrift or fading in some hinds. This turned out to be due to a chronic parasitism - these hinds had been treated with Cydectin Pour-on on more than one occasion. As I have said for more than 3 - 4 years now, pour-on anthelmintics in deer have to be regarded as pretty much ineffective now. Excuse the language, but really, you might kill more worms by pissing on the deer than by using a pour-on!

Finally, it's not too late to be vaccinating your fawns with Yersiniavax - it is later than ideal but better late than never. Every year we strike cases of deaths due to Yersiniosis in unvaccinated animals. Once cases start occurring vaccination can struggle to achieve control.

### Knockout Drenching

As mentioned in previous newsletters, the one off use of a unique new active towards the end of the drench season has been shown to extend the life of the existing cheaper anthelmintics. The term knockout drench has been coined for this concept and the time to do this is now, **right now!** Zolvix and Startect are the only two products you can use for this.

It is better to have a voluntary one off yearly use of one of these more expensive anthelmintics around now when there are fewer lambs on board than be forced into having to use these products routinely all the time because the existing cheaper anthelmintics have, earlier than they otherwise needed to, had a resistance develop to them.

### New Product

**Nexeprix Microject:** This is basically an injectable version of Eprinex for cattle. With its nil milk with-hold, it's probably of more interest to dairy farmers but thought I would, for the sake of completeness, mention it anyway. It has a low dose - 1ml/100kg and a fairly short (14 day) meat with-hold. There is a

free Morphy Richards 4 slice toaster or kettle with every two packets purchased.

### Merchandise Matters

The list of specials etc this month is as follows:

- **Merial Ancare Sheep Drench** – Supplies of the Swannndri shirts that go with qualifying 20lt packs are getting limited - just some of the bigger sizes left now.
- **Merial Ancare Cattle Pour-on/Injection** – Receive a Swannndri oilskin vest on qualifying products.
- **Eprinex Pour-on 5lt** - Buy 3 x 5lt, get the 4<sup>th</sup> one free.
- **Startect Knockout Drench Pack** - Includes a 20lt of Startect, a drench gun and a backpack for the drench pack.
- **Boss Combination Cattle Pour-on Injection** - Great price plus receive either a Morphy Richards 4 slice toaster or kettle with each 5lt of pour-on or 2 x 500ml of injection.
- **Dectomax Injection** - With every starter pack of 2 x 500ml you get a free 200ml. With every two starter packs or a herd pack of pour-on you get an embarrassingly flimsy 100lt plastic storage bin - sorry, we didn't come up with this promo!
- **Cydectin Pour-on Packs** - Receive an extra 10% free.
- **Combat Topline Abamectin Pour-on 5lt** – Only \$2.34/500kg cow nett incl GST.
- **Meaty Bites Working Dog 20kg** – Only \$66.77/bag nett including GST.
- **Tux** - For the month of April Tux biscuits will, while stocks last, be on special. Enquire about the Tux farmer pallet deals.

### Message for the Day

A little bird was flying north for the winter. It was so cold the bird froze & fell to the ground into a large field. While he was lying there a cow came by and dropped some dung on him.

As the frozen bird lay there in the pile of cow dung, he began to realise how warm he was. The dung was actually thawing him out! He lay there all warm and happy and soon began to sing for joy.

A passing cat heard the bird singing and came to investigate. Following the sound, the cat discovered the bird under the pile of cow dung and promptly dug him out and ate him.

Morals of the story:

1. Not everyone who dumps on you is your enemy.
2. Not everyone who gets you out of the shit is your friend.
3. And when you're in deep shit, it's best to keep your mouth shut!

John A. Smart BVSc.