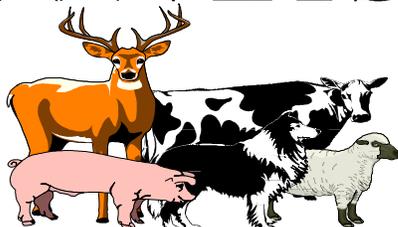


# Sheep Farmer Newsletter August 2013

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## Animal Health Centre

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Hamish Moore	BVSc.
Catherine Copland	BVM&S, MRCVS.
Steven Butler	BVSc.
Peter Heslip	BVSc, MACVSc.
Annie Jackson	BVSc.
Elsbeth Dunne	BVSc.
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### **Milton Clinic**

Peter Kalb	BVSc.
Jillian Clark	BVSc.
Sid Taylor	BVSc, MACVSc.
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### **Locums**

Felicity Keenan	BVSc.
Andrew Cobner	BVM&S

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## **Practice News**

A mixed bag weather wise so far this winter. At the time of writing there has been a patch of reasonably mild weather for this time of year and not too many frosts so as a result there has been a bit of grass growth. However, prior to that we had a real cold blast with some of you having large amounts of snow fall.

This combined with the drought earlier in the year has had repercussions as far as worm challenge and scanning results go – more on both of these below.

Staff wise, Alice Lee has gone on parental leave so we will be without her services for a while. Alice has been here for 3½ years and we wish her all the best for this new phase of her life & hope to see her back when the time is right. We have employed two new vets to cover Alice & Murray Gillies departures, however they don't start until the New Year. In the meantime we have secured the services of a couple of locums, Felicity Keenan from the North Island who started recently & Andrew Cobner from the UK, due here shortly.

The Clydevale bridge closure (for strengthening repairs) has come at a really bad time as far as the spring emergency workload goes. We will be doing our best

to work around this with vets stationed either side, but it does mean if the workload comes in 'skewed' towards one side or the other there could be a bit of additional delay at times as we attempt to re-route vets and vehicles to accommodate this. Hopefully it won't be too bad (or last too long) though.

## Recent Animal Health Problems

**1. Worms, Worms & More Worms** – This sums up the vast majority of problems latterly. I outlined in the last newsletter the background reasons for this, basically a combination of the drought followed by rain and mild weather and the tight feed conditions that resulted from the drought. I don't think I can remember in my close to 38 years here, a season that has resulted in such a high worm challenge for the stock out there.

As far as sheep go, this has resulted in:

- a) *Lambs/hoggets* - earlier on we had many cases of clinical parasitism (ill thrift and deaths). Most seasons a final drench round the end of May is usually the last one required. This season has seen the need for a drench well into June in many cases. If you are unhappy with the condition of your ewe hoggets the first thing to do is get some FECs done.
- b) *Two-tooths & Mixed Age ewes* - Since the last newsletter we have also had cases of deaths from internal parasites in ewes, especially two-tooths but also mixed age ewes. You need to be keeping a close eye on these stock looking out for the first signs of a worm burden - in other words stock just not doing as well as you think they should given the level of feeding. Possibly most years many of you don't need to worry about worms in ewes and checking FECs, but be warned - *this year is different!*

Even if you checked a month ago and they were fine, it doesn't mean they still will be now. When ewes face a worm challenge they usually can handle it but throw in a bit of under nutrition and all of a sudden you have a worm problem that needs dealt to. So keep a close eye on them and check FECs. There are free packs available to collect samples. We really need 10 individual samples (no composite short cuts please - you lose too much valuable information doing that).

All this leads to the question of pre-lamb drenching of ewes. This is covered in a separate article further on in this newsletter.

**2. Salmonella** – There is still a trickle of *S. hindmarsh* occurring and *S. brandenburg* has, just very recently, popped up as well. If you are having problems give us a call – don't just assume it is *Salmonella* or worms etc - even *Listeria* can look the same. It can be easier said than done to sort all this out.

## Reminders

**1. Clostridial Vaccinations:** The booster shot should be given to the ewe 1 - 3 weeks pre-lamb (you could stretch this to 4 weeks if necessary) apart

from Nilvax which can be given 1 - 6 weeks pre-lamb. Sometimes if bad weather hits, some people can't get their 5 in 1 vaccination done and bail out of this and give their ewes lamb vaccine (pulpy kidney vaccine and anti tetanus serum) at tailing. Be warned - due to manufacturing issues no Lamb Vaccine will be available this year so you will have to get the 5 in 1 into the ewes no matter what.

Our few regular users of lamb vaccine have all been contacted by phone or email a while ago when we first became aware of the problem as they will need to give their ewes 2 doses of 5 in 1 a month or so apart before lambing.

On the subject of 5 in 1, note that Prolavax Ewe (5 in 1 + B12) and Eweguard (5 in 1 + moxidectin) are both unavailable - yet again!!

**2. Trace Elements:** The two important ones are selenium and iodine. Selenium, if necessary can be administered with Ultravac 5 in 1. Unless Flexidine was used pre-tup (in which case further iodine supplementation should not be needed) then the only other effective form of iodine supplementation is an oral dose. The correct dose is 280mg of pot iodide (note that many so called mineral mixes containing iodine have a lot less) and the correct timing for this in severe cases of iodine deficiency is 8 and 4 weeks pre lamb. In moderate cases (which are the majority) give 1 dose 6 weeks pre lamb. This timing is important - because of convenience factors some farmers administer it at the same time as they give Ultravac etc but this is too late (and six weeks is too early for Ultravac). Note: LSD contains the correct dose of Pot Iodide.

If you want to check out whether low iodine could be an issue affecting lamb survival then there is an ideal opportunity to do this coming up. Collect up a few newborn dead lambs (around 10) & bring them in for a post mortem. Comparing the lamb's thyroid gland weight to its body weight is quite an accurate way of seeing if iodine deficiency was a factor in these lambs non-survival and hence whether iodine supplementation in the future could be beneficial on your place.

**3. Vitamin E:** A deficiency of Vit E can also result in poorer lamb vigour and survival. A deficiency of this (& also iodine) is practically guaranteed where stock (sheep, cattle and deer) have been on brassicas, but it is also likely on other winter feed as Vit E is low in stored feed (hay, baleage etc) & in mature grass.

Various factors determine the best time to administer Vitamin E making it hard to give a recipe for all. Where Flexidine has been used (so taking iodine out of the equation) the closer to lambing it can be given the better. For other situations, enquire at the clinic.

LSD liquid still represents the gold standard for quality and more importantly, stability. As I have previously warned, there are some pretty poor copycat attempts out there - including most if not all

powder products. One of these local products when tested only had 7% of the Vitamin E it claimed to have.

- 4. Lambing Kit:** Time to be thinking about this & getting it organised. Disinfectant (Vetacide) lubricant, penicillin, Glucalpos, iodine spray, mothering up aids, sleepy sickness treatments, 20% Dextrose (while you can still get it!), Sprayline, Woolovers, shepherds crook etc.

To reinforce last year's message, in the case of some of these products you should always have good supplies of them on hand at this time of year in case of sudden storms. I refer specifically to:

- *Milk Fever Treatments* – e.g. Glucalpos, Calprophos. Have 5 - 6 500ml packs per 2000 ewes on hand. Don't worry about expiry dates as the stuff doesn't go off.
- *Sleepy Sickness Treatments* - Ketol, Ketovet. As a minimum have 2 - 5lt on hand.
- *Woolovers* – If you do use these then have a number around 10% of your expected lamb numbers stored away in a rodent safe environment. We are holding an extra 10,000 of these over and above our normal stocks however, these will go nowhere if a storm hits. The manufacturer just can't respond quickly enough to sudden surges in demand.

### Calf Rearing Club – Calf Link

I mentioned this in the last newsletter, but for those who missed that, it is worth repeating. There are a number of sheep & beef farmers out there who regularly rear a few calves. A calf rearing 'club' is being started with a regular newsletter (Calf Link) being emailed out roughly every week. This will provide information to all those rearing calves - things like calf shed requirements, feeding colostrum, the nutrition behind weaning from milk as well as services offered such as a facilities inspection, painless disbudding and weighing. We welcome questions and suggestions for topics to be covered in the weekly email. If you would like to receive these emails please send your name and contact details to Elspeth - [edunne@cluthavets.co.nz](mailto:edunne@cluthavets.co.nz).

### Scanning Data

So far there seems to be a fairly mixed bag of scanning results - a few up on last year, others much the same, but unfortunately the majority are back a bit, and some quite a bit.

A lot of the drop can be explained by the tight feed conditions back at mating and the resultant lighter body weights - but can it all?

There is a lot of useful information, apart from sorting out drys, singles, twins and triplets for feeding management that can be gained from scanning. This includes:

- As alluded to above - is any change in scanning % due to a change in body weight or is some other factor(s) at play? By weighing 100 ewes pre-tup

you can obtain a scanning or fertility index (Scanning % ÷ by Average pre-tup weight = Fertility Index). In subsequent years you can, after weighing the sample of 100, predict what your likely scanning should be (Average pre-tup weight x Fertility Index = Predicted scanning %). If it turns out to be significantly less than the prediction then some other factor(s) (which need investigated) are likely at play.

- Identifying early lambers (e.g. first 10 - 14 days) can be useful. This could enable half the flock to be given their pre-lamb treatments, set-stocked, tailed & weaned earlier.
- Dry ewes should be culled. Some people give dry two-tooths a second chance but you should cull these as you have already selected out your less fertile ones.
- Identifying the low condition score twinnings gives the opportunity to introduce some early preferential treatment – special crop, capsule etc.
- Most farms now seem to run triplets with twins but some find it useful to keep them separate and spend a bit more time with them over lambing. In some instances mothering a third lamb onto a single ewe could be justified.
- Finally scanning can enable you to identify early on any problems such as abortions or mummified fetuses - if this is noticed at scanning, give us a call. There is something (not necessarily an infectious agent) causing unexplained abortions in hoggets. An investigative group throughout NZ has been put together to look at this aptly named HARD (Hogget Abortion Reabsorption Disorder) problem. If you are having problems please contact us.

### Pre-lamb Drenching

Following on from the section on the high worm challenge out there recently, the increasingly common question being asked is - 'Should I be giving my ewes a pre-tup drench?' Well, the answer to that is - it depends!

It depends on all sorts of factors, not the least your own individual attitude to pre-lamb drenching. You could:

- Do nothing. Fine unless they are suffering from parasitism.
- Drench everything with either a conventional oral drench or one of the longer acting drench options (capsules, moxidectin injection).
- Adopt a targeted approach treating the different stock classes on their merits.

It is my opinion that this last option is the correct one. You should be looking at such factors as the age groups (in-lamb hoggets vs two-tooths vs mixed age ewes), pregnancy status (1, 2 or 3), FECs & the overall body condition of the various mobs & then using all this information to make an assessment of the need for a pre-lamb drench in the various mobs.

There are three principles to abide by when thinking about control of internal parasites:

- 1) Avoid or mitigate high risk practices.
- 2) Preserve or maintain susceptibility (refugia).
- 3) Use combinations of effective anthelmintics.

Pre-lamb drenching of ewes is a higher risk practice, especially the use of moxidectin injection (Cydectin, Eweguard, Exodus). The main mitigating factor here is not to use these products in all sheep, especially year after year. You could:

- Use Bionic capsules in your in-lamb hoggets and triplet bearing ewes, possibly every year as they probably need all the help they can get. That represents quite responsible use of capsules.
- Hopefully the single bearing ewes, even this year won't need the crutch of even an oral drench.
- Twin bearing ewes - this year, more than usual of these could well require a drench, especially the two-tooths. You might decide the bottom half will get an oral drench, capsule or injection, while the best condition ones will be fine; or the bottom half get a capsule and the top half an oral drench. There are no right or wrong answers here - it will vary from farm to farm. Given the circumstances this year it is likely on some farms that earlier than usual drenching of some ewe classes may be desirable. Feel free to contact the veterinary staff for help in this area - parasitology is our forte and what we are here for.

### Pre-lamb Vaccinating – a Tip

You may have noticed after vaccinating stock with Salvexin+B or CampyVax4 that some ewes may be a bit slow and lethargic, or they may appear to be lame in a front leg for a 2 – 3 days post vaccination. This is a reaction to the vaccine, much like the sore arm you may have experienced after a tetanus booster. This is an uncommon sequel to these types of what are known as Gram negative vaccines.

Even less frequently this can happen after you have given your Clostridial 5 in 1 vaccine (not a Gram negative vaccine). In late pregnancy this can predispose ewes to metabolic disease (milk fever or sleepy sickness) - even just the yarding to do the job can do this. If they are on a nutritional knife edge because they feel off colour and don't graze as actively as they would normally then that added to the deprivation of feed through the yarding can result in metabolic disease.

Jillian Clark's tip to help circumvent this, apart from minimising the yarding time, is to ensure the ewes are extra well fed the day before and for the next few days post vaccination with access to fresh water. Then if they do feel off colour they will still have a chance to graze slowly over an extended period of time to get a bellyful of grass/supplement.

### Working Dog Corner - Hip Dislocations

Working dogs have a reasonably high incidence of hip dislocations. The orthopaedic text books tend to be written by specialist vets in large centres and the way injuries occur there is often quite different from what happens on farms. The text books state that hip dislocations are usually caused by being hit by a vehicle, are commonly associated with other major injuries and over half the dogs need to have surgery to

replace the hip. Local experience here suggests that working dog hip dislocations are not commonly associated with other major injuries and most can be replaced without surgery. We think dogs with hip dislocations that are replaced go on to do well, but there is not a lot of evidence to support this.

Peter Heslip, (our orthopaedic guru) is doing a study in working farm (and pet farm) dogs to clarify the causes, rate of success of hip replacement and how these dogs do in the long term. He has retrieved the records of dogs with hip dislocations seen at Balclutha in the last 4½ years for which we have good x-rays and will be trying to trace all these owners to see how the dogs have done. So if Peter does happen to ring, he would appreciate a little of your time to help in this research. If you have a case but Peter doesn't ring (maybe it was treated at Milton) then feel free to contact him with your 'story'. The more we know about how previous cases have gone the better we will be able to deal with new ones.

### Merchandise Matters

This month's list is as follows:

- **Bionic Capsules** – Purchase 2500 Bionic capsules and receive a top quality Amphibian jacket. This is also available with the same number of doses of Exodus Long Acting Injection.
- **Merial Ancare Anthelmintics** – Purchases of selected Merial Ancare sheep & cattle anthelmintics between now and September will go in the draw for a spot on Clutha Vets Wanaka Wine Tour. Be wined and dined as you visit some of Central's best wineries, escorted by our resident pisshead (sorry, I mean wine connoisseur) Pihī.
- **Eclipse E Injection & Eclipse Pour-on** – With 4 x 500ml injection & 2.5 or 5lt pour-on, receive 'The Angus Book', a glossy colour book celebrating 150 years of the Angus breed in New Zealand.
- **Eprinex Pour-on** – Buy 3 x 5lt and get another 5lt free.
- **Genesis Pour-on** – Purchase 2 x 2.5lt and get a third 2.5lt free.
- **Dectomax Injection** – Receive a G Shock watch or Outback hat with every 2 starter packs.
- **Boss Cattle Injection** – A new combination injection of ivermectin, eprinomectin and levamisole for cattle from Alleva. Also effective against lice.
- **Magnum Pour-on 20lt** – All purchases go in the draw for a 1 in 10 chance to win a 10pack of wool fadges/bales.
- **Cydectin Pour-on** – Receive an extra 10% free.
- **Combat Topline Pour-on** – Only \$418.21 nett inc GST / 5lt or \$2.34 / 500kg cow.
- **Meaty Bites Working Dog 20kg** – Currently on special at \$60.70 nett inc GST (while stocks last).
- **Milligans Calf Milk Powder** – Our price for this season will be \$92.67 nett inc GST for a 20kg bag. Get your order into retail now to secure supplies at this price.

John A. Smart BVSc.