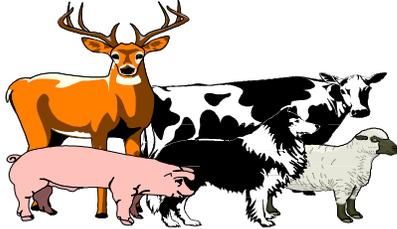


# Sheep Farmer Newsletter February 2013

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## **Practice News**

Well its back on the treadmill again - 2013 is well and truly underway. Been a bit patchy weather wise - very hot one day then cool and rainy the next, however it has rained (probably more than enough) such that it doesn't look like things will get too dry this summer.

We have employed a new Massey graduate, Lewis Sparrow, who started here mid-January. Lewis hails

from Ashburton which means, being from Mid-Canterbury he can't be too bad a bloke! Apart from that it's all steady on the staff front.

The upgrade to our Clydevale premises on time and on budget is now complete and looks quite good if I do say so myself. Now fully insulated and double glazed it will be more comfortable in the winter. Thanks to the contractors and CVA staff involved (mainly Paul and Gary) for their assistance in this project.

As I mentioned in the last newsletter we are now in the initial planning stages for a major upgrade of the Balclutha clinic. In the 20 years since the last major upgrade staff numbers have expanded somewhat and we are bursting at the seams. This will probably be an ongoing process over the next 2 - 3 years.

### Recent Animal Health Problems

**1. Flystrike.** The weather has been conducive to a bit of flystrike occurring - warm and damp. We are in an area where most farmers in most years don't have too much of a problem, and spot treatment of odd affected cases as they pop up with the likes of Maggo or Cyrex is all that is often needed. However it is my opinion that this somewhat "comfortable" state of affairs is going to gradually worsen and we will gradually see more cases of flystrike occurring. I base this opinion on the fact we now have the Australian Green blowfly down here - it is more aggressive and if you are a climate change believer then this can only help make things more conducive for flystrike. Once cases progress past the odd spot treatment being a practical option then you may well have to institute a specific dip treatment to prevent fly strike (in combination with shearing and crutching where necessary).

There are a number of suitable products that prevent flystrike - the choice of these depends on factors like wool length, the actual dip equipment you have access to, the length of protection required etc. Choose a product that does lice as well as fly as then, everything else being equal, you've zapped any lice hanging around as well. If you're not sure of the best product to use for your particular circumstances please check with the retail or veterinary staff. If you really want to get back at the little black (or green) b.....s we have inexpensive fly traps for sale here.

**2. Rape Scald.** With the increase in popularity of summer rape crops for lamb grazing this condition is becoming more common so thought I would repeat the info on it just in case you come across it. It occurs when brassica crops such as rape are fed in the immature state. Rape should be fed when the leaves have developed a slight blue tinge and then only for ½ - 1 hr at a time until stock becomes used to it. The first sign of rape scald is usually thickening of the ears so that they become floppy. This thickening can sometimes extend down the neck and midline of the back. Recovery is rapid when lambs are taken off the crop and put into shade. Severe cases can be put in a darkened woolshed and allowed out at night for feed and water.

### Reminders

**1. Anti Abortion Vaccines** (in other words Toxovax & CampyVax4). **Both** these vaccines should be being used by all sheep farmers who are serious about

maximising their returns from lamb production. They both give worthwhile and proven benefits and their use well and truly makes economic sense.

Remember that obvious abortions from Toxo and Campy are just the proverbial tip of the iceberg. The bigger loss is the loss of weak lambs born alive but that subsequently struggle to survive and succumb in the first few days of life. For example a set of twins is born, one of the lambs is, due to earlier placental damage (but not enough to cause abortion), smaller and weaker, and dies even in reasonable weather. This loss, because of all the weather, storm type issues round lambing is much harder to quantify but work has shown it can be quite a significant cause of the loss.

**(a) Toxovax.** Screening in South Otago (and throughout NZ) has shown 100% of sheep farms tested have had exposure to the Toxoplasma organism. As most of you know the cat is the main source of infection with Toxo for sheep. One cat can have enough Toxo "bugs" in its faeces to theoretically infect all the sheep in South Otago. Scanning results from Vet Services Hawkes Bay, who have scanned large numbers of ewes (>100,000/year) for many years and as a result have built up a robust database of information have shown, when Toxovax vaccine is used, an increase in scanning of -

- 4.3 - 11.4% in MA ewes (when they are vaccinated as a two tooth).
- 3.1 - 12.5% in two-tooths.
- 11.1 - 23.5% (average 16.8) in hoggets.

Toxovax is given once to the first lambers at least 6 weeks pre-tup. This provides lifetime protection.

**Every year we send out an order form and remind you in newsletters, on the Clutha Vets calendar and with phone calls. All we need is the form returned or a phone call. The factory is now at capacity for some of the peak weeks in February meaning no more can be supplied for those weeks so you can't necessarily expect to get your requirements just a few days after you order it. Please return your order form or contact the appropriate clinic by phone.**

**(b) CampyVax4.** Screening has shown 84% of sheep farms in South Otago have had exposure to Campylobacter, slightly higher than the national average of 80%. Campylobacter can be spread by the introduced carrier sheep, ingestion of contaminated feed or water, or by direct contact with infected foetuses or foetal membranes. Black backed gulls and hawks may act as mechanical vectors for the spread of Campylobacter. Scanning results from Hawkes Bay looking at the effect of Campy vaccination indicate an increase of -

- 6.8 - 11.4% in MA ewes (when they are vaccinated as a two tooth)
- 6.9 - 14% in two-tooths

- 10.6 – 20.8% (average 16.9) in hoggets.

CampyVax4 is given to the first lambers 6 weeks and again 2 weeks pre-tup. Where the first lambers are hoggets a booster should be given as a two-tooth. Other than this particular instance annual boosters are not needed (even though the package insert with the vaccine says to give one) as natural challenge in the field effectively acts as a booster. Unless there are supply issues (remember vaccines are particularly prone to batch failures that can then result in supply issues) CampyVax4 is generally in stock here so pre-ordering is not necessary but giving us an idea of your requirements does assist in ordering and stock control.

Many of you do vaccinate with these vaccines – slightly more use Toxovax than CampyVax4. However, when you look at the above figures (and I am quite sure that these figures will apply to all NZ, not just Hawkes Bay, as other work done on these diseases has shown pretty consistent trends across the whole country) I would suggest **every** sheep farmer should be vaccinating for **both** diseases. It just makes economic sense to do so and with lamb prices back a bit you want all the lambs you can get.

**2. Flexidine Iodine Injection.** This increasingly popular form of iodine supplementation should be given to all ewes by at least 4 weeks (even 6 weeks) pre-tup. It should improve the scanning % by 4 – 6% on average and also result in a variable, but sometimes quite large, improvement in lamb survival. One would expect that when there is poorer weather at lambing there would be more of a benefit to lamb survival than when the weather is warmer.

Those of you who supplement iodine by oral dosing with Pot Iodide should give the correct dose (280mg) 1 – 2 weeks pre-tup. Watch out for the usual procession of snake oil salesmen at this time of the year pedalling wonder mixes. Often these contain insufficient levels of the various ingredients (like iodine) so you are wasting your time and/or when you work it out on a correct dose basis they are relatively expensive.

If you use Pot Iodide you will need to give the ewes another dose 6 weeks pre-lamb at the very least – those of you in areas where iodine deficiency is more severe may need to give 2 doses 8 & 4 weeks pre-lamb.

While we think we have placed sufficient orders to cover off everyone's requirements for Flexidine this product is increasing in popularity and also the recent history of the manufacturing company as regards supply of its products does not fill us with heaps of confidence so if you want to be certain of being supplied then phone in your order. Last year supply was very hand to mouth at times.

**3. Uddering Ewes.** This should be done anytime from at least one month after weaning onwards. Doing it at, or soon after, weaning means you –

- Miss the significant number of cases (perhaps around 50%) that occur at or shortly after weaning.
- Are likely to cause more mastitis by yarding ewes with full engorged udders in grubby dusty yards.
- Will have trouble feeling the udders anyway as they are distended with milk.

If you are not sure what is normal or abnormal mark all the doubtful ones and we can check them for you and show you what is what etc. so in the future you won't be throwing out perfectly good ewes, or vice versa, keeping some old tart that should be down the road!

**4. Teaser Rams.** As indicated in the last newsletter these can be a useful tool to increase the number of ewes (especially two-tooths) mated earlier, and also over hoggets to increase the number that get in lamb. Time will be running out to get this done as they need the "snip" six weeks prior to use (which is 17 days ahead of mating).

**5. Androvax/Ovastim Vaccination.** There are certain instances where the use of one or other of these products to increase the number of lambs born (by 20–25%) can be useful, however if you are already scanning more than 160 - 165% which is probably the vast majority of people then these products are definitely **not** for you. The programme is:

- *Previously unvaccinated stock:*
  - Androvax** - 1<sup>st</sup> dose 9 - 10 weeks pre-tup. 2<sup>nd</sup> dose exactly 1 month later.
  - Ovastim** - 1<sup>st</sup> dose 6 - 9 weeks pre-tup. 2<sup>nd</sup> dose 3 weeks later at 2 - 4 weeks pre-tup.
- *Previously vaccinated stock:*
  - Androvax** - 1 dose 5 - 6 weeks pre-tup.
  - Ovastim** - 1 dose 2 - 4 weeks pre-tup.

**6. Yersiniosis in Deer.** Yersiniosis is a very severe and highly infectious disease related to age, stress and exposure to the bacteria Yersinia. These bacteria are widespread and survive well in soil, water and pasture. Carrier animals can also shed the bacteria in faeces. It is the leading cause of death amongst fawns in autumn and winter. Weaned deer are most at risk and become infected round 4 - 8 months by eating faecally contaminated material. Symptoms include smelly green watery diarrhoea usually turning dark or bloody. Sudden death can also be a symptom without signs of diarrhoea - an autopsy will be needed for diagnosis if this is the case. Most fawns will be exposed to the disease but will only develop clinical disease if under stress. Important stressors include:

- Weaning
- Poor nutrition
- Sudden change in feed
- Mixing of deer groups
- Cold wet windy weather
- Yarding
- Transport
- Heavy parasite burdens, especially lungworm.

The idea is to reduce the effects of these stressors:

- Look at the option of weaning before the rut when it is warmer and more feed is available.
- Have an effective parasite control programme.
- Vaccinate with Yersiniavax before weaning to prevent clinical disease.
- Vaccinate from 12 weeks of age and ideally complete the 2 shot programme before weaning.
- Avoid vaccinating at weaning - the stress of weaning can compromise the effectiveness of the vaccine.

The aim of vaccinating is to prevent a serious epidemic occurring by reducing the spread of disease. Vaccination in the face of an outbreak is ineffective - if you do have an outbreak the best thing is to identify the stressor and try to minimise the effect of it!

### AgRecovery Promotion

Most of you are probably aware that Clutha Vets in Balclutha is the local AgRecovery Depot for the area. Here you can bring in for recycling the various plastic containers that gradually accumulate on the farm. They should be triple rinsed and have some holes drilled in the bottom.

Anyway, every collection receipt issued during the months of February and March automatically goes in the draw for one of 10 \$500 vouchers to spend with your preferred rural supplier – in your case Clutha Vets obviously!!

### Knockout Drenching

I mentioned this new name for a procedure that has been recommended for the last three years or so in the last newsletter. As the time for this will be upon us before the next newsletter I thought I would mention it again.

Studies have demonstrated that a drench containing a unique new active given once later in the lamb drenching programme can delay resistance development to the existing older (and cheaper) anthelmintics. This one off drench will reduce the amount of resistant worm larvae on pasture and should be given just prior to the time of optimal larval survival and development. In South Otago this is, depending on climate (specifically rainfall really), likely to be around early April. The term “**Knockout Drench**” has been coined for this concept and its use is definitely to be encouraged.

The strategic use of a unique new and admittedly more expensive anthelmintic now will mean you should be able to continue to use the cheaper existing anthelmintics for much longer rather than being forced, earlier than would otherwise be the case, to use the new more expensive ones routinely. By the beginning

of April most of you will have got rid of the majority of your works lambs so there will only be the ewe lamb replacements and later works lambs to do so the extra expense is not huge, and if it means you can continue to use the cheaper existing drenches for a lot longer, then in my opinion, the small extra expense once a year is definitely well worth it.

At present the drenches that qualify as knockout drenches are Zolvix and Startect - there are **no** others.

### 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. As someone who is useless at knife sharpening I was impressed with how sharp my knives were when we (Pihi really) tested the sharpener!
- **Merial Ancare Cattle Drenches** – Details of the new promo were not available at the time of printing – enquire at the clinic.
- **Cooper Sheep & Cattle Drench** – Purchase of Alliance, Converge and Scanda over the next month or so go in the draw for various prizes, a farm bike, water pump, Gallagher weigh scale, chainsaw etc.
- **Cydectin Pour-on** – Receive an extra 10% free.
- **Meaty Bites Working Dog 20kg** – Currently on special at \$60.70 nett inc GST

### Promotion Winners

1. **The Summer Outdoor Package** - This package - which consisted of a big solid macrocarpa bar leaner and stainless steel fish smoker - created a lot of interest in the Balclutha Clinic, especially the bar leaner and we (especially Pihi who has no where to rest his elbow now) kind of miss it. Anyway the lucky winner of this was Simon and Camille McAtamney from Greenfield/Puketi area.
2. **The Masport 6 Burner Barbeque**. This was won by Brett Burgess from Owaka.
3. **Take a Mate Fishing to Stewart Island**. All draws for this have now been made and the winners are Ken Blair, Balclutha; Jeff McKenzie, Tapanui; Roger Landels, Kuriwao; Dean Lawrence, Clydevale; Steve Sanders, Carterhope; Hugh Collie, Kuriwao; Matt Smith, Awamangu; Richard Kerr, Tarara; Brent Gardner, Romahapa and Duncan Woodhead, Milton. These lucky winners (plus their mates) are off to Stewart Island later in March for a great weekends fishing.

John A. Smart B.V.Sc.