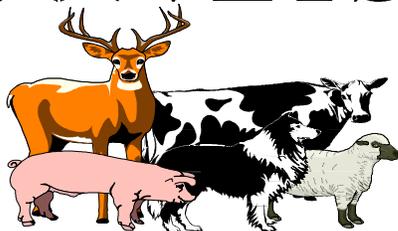


Sheep Farmer Newsletter February 2014

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Practice News

Welcome to the first Clutha Vets Newsletter for 2014. Hope you have managed to recharge the batteries at some stage over the holiday period and are ready to face another farming year.

So far this season we can probably divide the season into pre- and post- Christmas. Pre-Christmas was warm, getting a bit dry but on the whole, lambs were doing well. Post-Christmas, cooler, not much sun, moderate rain and lambs have somewhat gone off the boil. We really need some warmer weather again to get them going. A drench of 'liquid sunshine' is possibly indicated in this situation - see later in the newsletter for more information about this.

Staff wise, Bevan and Izzy, new graduates from Massey have started. They got married about three weeks ago, hence the change of surname for Izzy. Steven Butler has put his resignation in effective the end of February, to go and have a look at the other side of the world. Steven has been here three years and while sad to see him go, hopefully he will come back here when he is sick of the English climate. In the meantime we are advertising for a replacement for Steven so hopefully someone will appear out of the woodwork soon.

Recent Animal Health Problems

1. Salmonella Hindmarsh in Ewes: We have had a couple of cases of this lately which is unusually early. Whether this means it is going to be a 'bumper' season for it or not, I am not sure. Anyway, you need to keep an eye out for relatively sudden death in a good condition two-tooth or mixed age ewes. Look closely at the back end - you may see evidence of a khaki coloured diarrhoea. If you see this then don't muck around thinking you will wait and see what happens. If it is Salmonella, invariably deaths will continue and the longer you delay the more you will lose. Contact the clinic and bring one in for an autopsy. Usually we can make a provisional diagnosis and have you organised with some vaccine without waiting for laboratory confirmation so losses are kept to a minimum.

Cases of Salmonella Hindmarsh have been creeping back in during the late summer/autumn for 3 - 4 years now. We used to see it routinely but when the Salmonella Brandenburg outbreaks started in 1997 it disappeared for 12 or so years, probably due to the immunity that developed from Brandenburg giving some cross protection.

Although Brandenburg hasn't gone away, cases of Hindmarsh are returning, so as I said - be on the lookout. One dose of Salvexin+B in the face of an outbreak is very effective and deaths usually cease within 7 - 10 days. Prompt antibiotic treatment can save the crook ones but you need to be pretty quick. Penicillin is not effective - contact the clinic for a suitable antibiotic to use.

Incidentally, if you are losing the odd ewe to what could be Salmonella please don't leave getting an autopsy done until Friday afternoon. We can't get samples to the lab until later on Monday afternoon and when we are trying to grow bacteria to confirm the diagnosis this delay is too long and could mean the bacteria dies off resulting in no growth and no confirmed diagnosis.

2. Polioencephalomalacia (PE): Don't be put off by the big word - it just means spongy holes in the brain. This is a problem that pops up sporadically in sheep, cattle and goats of all ages, but often more so in younger stock. We have had several cases lately in lambs and calves plus the odd ewe and cow. For some reason this season has been worse than usual - not sure why, but the incidence overall does seem to have increased in the last few years - possibly some of the newer varieties of ryegrass could somehow be behind the increase.

PE is caused by an induced deficiency of Vit B1, also known as Thiamine. This is nothing to do with Vit B12. Note the word induced. Invariably the Vit B1 level in the diet is adequate but something - occasionally a change in feed/diet can upset the balance of normal bugs in the rumen. Some can proliferate and then destroy Vit B1, effectively creating a deficiency. This then results in degeneration and softening of areas of the brain causing an assortment of nervous signs depending on the areas of the brain affected. Blindness is a common symptom though.

Keep an eye out for any stock, but especially lambs or calves, with various nervous symptoms, can't walk properly, holding their head at a funny angle etc. The condition is quite treatable if you get to it promptly so contact the clinic if you suspect you have a case.

3. Flystrike: There seems to have been a number of farms with cases of this. Probably the warmer than usual spring/early summer meant the fly population started increasing in numbers earlier than usual. Any sporadic cases can be treated by spot treatment with Maggo or Cyrex. Don't clip the wool on the affected area too short as the skin can get badly sunburnt. Just saturate the area with one of the above chemicals. If you start to get more than a few cases then a treatment with a chemical that gives a reasonable length of protection against flies may be needed. Depending on wool length you may be able to use this treatment as the annual lice control as well. Contact the clinic for more information on the various options.

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 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, remind you in newsletters, on the Clutha Vets calendar and with phone calls. The factory is now at capacity for some of the peak weeks in February meaning no more can be supplied for those weeks so don't necessarily expect to get your vaccine shortly after

you place your order. So, return your form, phone your clinic or order through our website www.cluthavets.co.nz (go to forms on the front page)

(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 fetuses 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 us 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 at current levels you want all the lambs you can get.

2. Flexidine Iodine Injection: This popular form of iodine supplementation should be given to all ewes by 4 – 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 peddling wonder brews. 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. A couple of years ago supply was very hard 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 tighten up the lambing (especially with two tooth), determine optimum mating dates and if used with hoggets, increase their lifetime mating performance. We have already done the majority of those who indicated on their ram run form they wanted this done, but if you have neglected to return this and want some done then time is running out to get this done as they need the 'snip' at least 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 the majority of people then these products are definitely **not** for you. The programme is:

- *Previously unvaccinated stock:*
 - Androvax** - 1st dose 9 - 10 weeks pre-tup. 2nd dose exactly 1 month later.
 - Ovastim** - 1st dose 6 - 9 weeks pre-tup. 2nd 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!

Lamb Growth Rates and Dull Summers

Many years ago (pre 1982) I carried out a trial on the effect of Vit A, D, and E supplementation on lamb growth rates during a rather dull summer. Obviously this way pre-dated computerisation in the practice and the trial results have been lost, (surprising given my deep litter filing system!) however I definitely recall that in the month following dosing, lamb growth rates were doubled but can't recall the exact figures - it was in the order of 60 gm/day for the controls and 120 gm/day for the supplemented ones. I found a reference in an early 1982 CVA sheep newsletter referring to this trial.

Hence, if the duller weather continues it could be worth adding some LSD to the lamb drench. LSD's compatibility has been tested with all Merial-Ancare anthelmintics. Cost is around 13cents/lamb dose.

Cattle Pregnancy Testing

This is best done at least 6 weeks after the bull is removed. Young pregnancies can be missed and there can be a high rate of embryonic loss up until then, so for these reasons we don't like to pregnancy test less than this. If tested 6 - 8 weeks after the bull is removed empties (which are then confirmed manually) and late calvers can be identified. With all the dairy cows around we have no shortage of scanners on the go.

New Book

Local farmer Ross Agnew has produced a book of poems/songs called *Farmyard Blues*. Most famous is his Fart Tax Blues, however in the book there is also one called 'The True Cost of a Vaccine Failure'

referring to the Scabine batch failures of 2006 which I found quite hilarious, (it wasn't funny at the time though!) having been heavily involved in that particular debacle. Ross's book is available at our Balclutha, Milton and Clydevale stores - \$25, which you can put on your account.

Working Dog Corner

This is the season for grass seeds, especially barley grass seeds, in toes, eyes, ears and just about everywhere else, and not only in working dogs for that matter but also those more inclined to just "pot licking" as well. Clipping long haired dogs, especially around the toes and ears and checking for seeds helps reduce the problem. Seeds that penetrate the skin will eventually form a weeping draining sore that becomes infected. Bring these in for treatment ASAP as the seeds can migrate anywhere and be very difficult to find. The grass seeds can be fatal if they migrate into the brain, chest or abdomen. Likewise seeds in the eyes and ears need removed ASAP - sedation is usually required for this.

Merchandise Matters

This month's list is as follows:

- **Merial Ancare Sheep Drench** - Receive a short sleeved Swannndri shirt with every 1 x 20lt of Matrix or Switch or 2 x 20lt Arrest.
- **Merial Ancare Cattle Drench** - Receive a Swannndri oilskin vest on qualifying products.
- **Genesis Pour-on 5lt** - Buy 2 X 5lt & get the 3rd one free. Cost \$1466.60 nett incl GST - that's \$2.44 per 500kg cow (nett inc GST).
- **Eprinex Pour-on 5lt** - buy 3 x 5lt, get the 4th one free.
- **New Product** - Eat some Aussies - there is a new cat and dog food product made with kangaroo meat. Available in treats and tinned wet food.
- **Dectomax Promo** - Purchase two starter packs of Dectomax injection or a herd pack of pour-on and receive a 100 litre handy storage box.
- **Meaty Bites Working Dog 20kg** - Super special price of \$55.56 nett incl GST (while stocks last).

Promotion Winners

1. **The Merial Ancare "We've got you Covered" Christmas Promotion:** (tool chest, massive cantilevered umbrella & all sorts of other goodies) was won by Donald & Jo Murray (Waitahuna).
2. **Merial Ancare/Clutha Vets 'Take a mate fishing' to Stewart Island:** All draws for this have now been made & the winners are Lionel Bugden, (Waitahuna); Hamish Wilson, (Rongahere); Doug Robertson, (Arthurton); Maurice Judson, (Awamungu); Jason Greer, (Lovells Flat); Ivan Steel, (Hillend); Jeff Young, (Lawrence); Marcus Sutherland, (Clinton); Matt Lawlor, (Waiwera South) and Peter Johnston, (Port Molyneux). These lucky winners (plus their mates) are off to Stewart Island in March for a great weekend fishing.
3. **The Eukanuba Instore Summer Promo:** This was won by Chris Roughan, (Glenomaru).

John A. Smart BVSc.