

Sheep Farmer Newsletter February 2015

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Practice News

Since the last newsletter a couple of months ago we have had a complete turnaround in the season. It has gone from cold and wet to hot and dry. Here in Balclutha we did get 32mm of rain round the middle of January which was a big help, but at the time of writing this more would be good.

The garage/parking area out the back of the clinic is finished and the clinic utes can now park there which frees up more parking round the rest of the building.

On the staff front we have taken on two new grads -

Bridget McCauley comes from Auckland and studied at Massey University, and Marek Misiewicz, despite his surname, is actually Australian and comes from Perth where he went to Murdoch University. We are also pleased to say that Ruth Andrews, who had been locuming for us for the past year or so is now a permanent member of the veterinary staff.

We recently farewelled June Caldwell from our Milton clinic. After 30 years of outstanding service sharing her wealth of animal health knowledge with clients, and always with her ready smile, I'm sure you will join me in wishing June all the best on her retirement.

Recent Animal Health Problems

1. Salmonella Hindmarsh in Ewes- Looking back at the Feb 14 newsletter, I see I mentioned that we had had some early cases of this disease. Well the first case this year was even earlier - January 8th to be precise. Traditionally it has been late summer, even autumn before cases of this disease turn up.

Irrespective you need to keep an eye out for this amongst your ewes as if you are a bit slow noticing or reacting to it, it can result in quite a lot of deaths and expense. Look out for sudden death in good condition two-tooth or older ewes, or if you're really on the ball you may notice some ewes really crook and off colour, possibly hanging around water. Look closely - you may see evidence of a khaki coloured scour smeared around the back end, however this isn't always apparent. If you encounter what you think could be Salmonella, don't muck around and wait and see what will happen. Usually 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 interim treatment and vaccine without waiting for the laboratory confirmation, so losses are kept to a minimum. The first case alluded to above however was one of the few that was not obvious to the naked eye when autopsied.

One dose of vaccine (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 do need to be pretty quick. Penicillin is not effective - contact the clinic for a suitable antibiotic to use.

We used to routinely see this disease in the late summer/early autumn prior to Salmonella Brandenburg emerging as a disease, however it all but disappeared for 10 - 12 years. In the last 4 - 5 years it has re-emerged and seems to be getting a bit more prevalent each summer so as I said - keep a close eye on the ewe flock and act promptly at the first sign of trouble.

Please try to avoid bringing in suspicious Salmonella cases on Friday afternoons. We can't get samples to the lab until later on Monday and when you are trying to culture bacteria for diagnosis this delay is too long and the bacteria can have died off in the samples, resulting in no growth and no positive diagnosis.

2. Polioencephalomalacia (P.E.) - 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. Over the last few years we do seem to be seeing more cases of this.

It is caused by an induced deficiency of Vit. B1 also known as Thiamine. Note the work induced. Invariably the Vit. B1 level in the diet is adequate but

something, occasionally a change in diet can upset the balance of normal bugs in the rumen. Some can proliferate and destroy B1 creating the deficiency. This results in degeneration and softening of areas of the brain, causing a variety of nervous signs depending on the area of the brain affected. Blindness is a common symptom as is holding the head at funny angles and staggering. The condition is quite treatable if you get to it promptly so contact the clinic if you suspect you have a case.

3. Fly strike: Lately with the hot weather there have been a few reports of flystrike occurring. Any sporadic cases can be treated by spot treatment with Maggo or Cyrex. Saturate the affected area with one of these chemicals - don't clip the wool on the affected area too short as the skin can get pretty badly sunburnt. If you start getting more than a few cases then a preventative treatment will be the best. Depending on wool length and chemical used, you may be able to use this treatment as the annual lice control dip 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 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 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, in the Clutha Vets calendar and people still forget to order! The factory is now at capacity for most of 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.

(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 introduction of 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 us in ordering and stock control.

Many of you do vaccinate with these vaccines, 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.

2. Flexidine Iodine Injection: This popular form of iodine supplementation should be given to all ewes by 4 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.

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 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 turn out to be rather expensive.

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

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 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 contacted the majority of those who indicated on their ram run form they wanted some done, but if you have neglected to return the form and want some done then time is running out to get it done as they need the 'snip' at least six weeks prior to use.

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 often 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 changes in feed, mixing of deer groups, cold wet, windy weather, yarding, transport and 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 this 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 try and identify the stressor and try to minimise the effect of it.

Post Weaning/Premating Ewe Management

Ewe body weight and condition score are the biggest factors in determining scanning outcome. If you are giving the abortion vaccines, iodine and selenium, the rams are checked and ram ratios aren't excessive but you aren't achieving the scanning you want then it's time to seriously look at ewe bodyweight and overall ewe flock condition at mating and whether ewes are gaining weight over tugging. There are some considerable gains in scanning performance to be made by targeting the lighter ewes of the flock with extra food rather than wasting precious feed supplies on already good condition heavy ewes. Condition score (CS) 3 and above can just be feed maintenance until quite close to mating. Whereas CS 2 ewes can be preferentially fed so that they are at CS 3 by mating. Targetting the bottom end of the mob like this, often around 20% of the mob gives the best bang for your food buck. We have hand-outs here on condition scoring if you want a copy.

New Product

1. Depodine Iodine Injection- This product from Alleva is identical to Flexidine. Alleva is a small company started by some ex Ancare personnel who are bringing a number of new products to the market. The Boss range of anthelmintics are from them and they are also the ones who are producing the replacement Spectrablock product for watery mouth in lambs. Incidentally, this product is just waiting for "sign off" from the Wellington bureaucrats but they seem to move excessively slowly!

Anyway, back to Depodine. The main difference to Flexidine is that is in available in a 500ml pack size. With the same 1.5ml dose as Flexidine, this means there are 334 doses/bottle, as compared to Flexidine's 167. This may suit those users who use a

conveyor for administration as it will mean less stops for changes of packs. Price is similar although there are buy breaks for larger amounts.

Merchandise Matters

The list of specials, promotions etc this month is as follows:

- **Merial Ancare Sheep Drench Products** – Receive a Canterbury brand rugby jersey on selected products while stocks last. We have had limited supplies of some of the smaller sizes but hopefully this will come right.
- **Merial Ancare Cattle Drench** - Receive a tough as guts Swanndri fleece jacket with qualifying products - oral, injection and pour-on.
- **Eclipse Pour-on or Injection** - With 12.5lt of pour-on or 6x500ml of Injection receive a Stihl Miniboss Chainsaw.
- **Eprinex Pour-on 5lt** - Buy 3 x 5lt and get the 4th one free.
- **Genesis Pour-on** - Buy 2 x 5.5lt and receive the 3rd free.
- **Vetdectin Oral Drench** - Buy 20lt and receive 1lt free.
- **Cydetin Pour-on 5lt** - Receive a portable Bluetooth speaker with each 5lt.
- **Kaiwaka Children's Wet Weather Clothing:** Come and see the over trousers, bib overalls and parkas from size 2 up. These are particularly well priced.

Promotion Winners

- 1. Clutha Vets Christmas Promotions:**
 - a) *Powerbuilt Tool Chest and Set of Tools.* Won by Stephen and Lynley Wilson of Kuriwao.
 - b) *Stihl Combi Pack plus Blower.* Won by Lex and Jeanette Morris of Clydevale.
 - c) *Shimano Fishing Pack.* This was won by Cameron and Michelle Clark of Purakauiti.
- 2. Merial Ancare/Clutha Vets Take a Mate Fishing to Stewart Island** - All the draws for this have now been made and the winners are: Rob Willocks (Balclutha), Paul Stephens (Tahakopa), Alec Liggett (Clifton), Gary McElrea (Milton), Bryce Clark (Lovells Flat), Allan Casse (Lawrence), Peter Cooper (Clydevale), Nathan Wilson (Glenomaru, Chris Hurst (Kuriwao), and Sean Williams (Kuriwao). These lucky winners plus their mates are off to Stewart Island in early March for a weekends fishing.
- 3. Meaty Bites Barbeque** - Winners of this were Malcolm and Kate Wilson of Hillend.
- 4. Eukanuba Barbeque** - And finally to complete the list of promotion winners, Michael and Emma Sutherland from Kuriwao won this barbeque.

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