

CLUTHA VETS SHEEP & BEEF FARMER NEWSLETTER



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Clinic News

Annie Jackson

The rain that arrived recently was very welcome, even though for many places it came too late to truly recover from the lengthy Indian Summer. If we didn't have animals and feed to worry about, it has been a spectacular Autumn. When we have had a huge dry as we have had, it is very important to remember the worm storms that follow quickly on the heels of the welcome rain.

On the staff front, we are working through the COVID journey with staff contracting COVID and doing the necessary isolation and recovery. Fortunately, at this stage it has been manageable with people "taking turns"! We are all looking forward to returning to some normality in the near future. We would like to thank everyone that has been patient and understanding whilst we do our best to protect our clients and staff.

Anna Ramsay, a tech from Scotland is returning to her homeland shortly. Anna has been an awesome addition to the team and could put her hand to anything. She has also been using her vet nursing skills as needed. Hopefully, this won't be the last we see of her.

Marcus Yule returned from his OE in February, and managed to avoid COVID in all his travels! He loved his time away, but was happy to be back and get stuck back into it all.

Anna Burrell has been quietly working away at her post-grad orthopaedics qualifications, and we are pleased to announce she has passed her radiographic imaging and orthopaedics paper (an A, no less). Anna has been building up her skills with the orthopaedics, and is a great apprentice for Peter Heslip.

Darius Tan (new grad) has joined the team from Massey University and has got off to a great start. Darius is originally from Singapore, but "fell in love" with the Clutha District (& the fishing!) when he visited as a student and is very happy here.

In the next wee stage, we will be having new techs join the team as we are gearing up for the big season of teatsealing in the Dairy world.

In This Issue:

- Clinic News
- Post Drought Pitfalls
- Animal Health Reminders
 - Teasers for hoggets
 - Beef cow scanning
 - Velveter reminders
 - M bovis surveillance
 - Yersiniosis in deer
 - Worm warning
- Salmonella in Ewes
- Vets Can Do That!
- B12 Deficiency
- Pneumonia in Sheep
- Additional Pulpy Kidney Protection
- Retail Ramblings
- Take a Mate Fishing Wrap Up

Be on the Look-Out for Post Drought Pitfalls

By Andrew Roe

At time of writing we are being cruelly taunted with a few spots of rain. There's promise of a little more, along with some strong winds to dry things out again! Hopefully we will get some serious rainfall soon, while the soil temperature is still high enough to get some grass growth before winter.

Once the rain does come there are a number of potential post-drought animal health issues to be aware of. Following is a brief summary of some of the more common ones.

Gastrointestinal Worms

There should be no surprises here, as this has been a bit of a recurring theme for the last three of four years. Following recent dry summers/autumns plenty of local farmers have experienced some pretty nasty problems with worms, in adult stock as well as lambs, once the moisture arrived.

The prolonged dry spell would have killed off some worm larvae on your pastures, but plenty more will have taken refuge in the topsoil or survived in the dung. Once we get some rain these will emerge en masse to continue their development and infect your stock in large numbers. Last year, thanks to relatively warm temperatures in early winter, we were identifying new infections in ewes and hoggets right into July, in animals being wintered on pasture.

And remember, in these circumstances, basing your drenching decisions on faecal egg counts alone can be a bit hit-and-miss. After worm larvae are ingested by your stock it takes about three weeks for them to mature into adult worms and start producing eggs. So, following a drought, your lambs' faecal egg count can go from close to zero to into the thousands almost overnight!

Lungworm

Lungworm has pretty much the same lifecycle as the gastrointestinal worms, so a sharp post-drought peak in lungworm is similarly on the cards. The species of lungworm that infect sheep is only of minor importance but in cattle and deer lungworm infections can be very severe with death often the result.

One important difference compared to the gut worms, is that immature lungworm can do almost as much damage as the adults, so even in a normal year we occasionally run into nasty outbreaks, if the drenching interval has been stretched out a bit long. Following a dry spell you need to be extra vigilant.

Acidosis and Laminitis

These conditions can arise when ewes eat too much grain or sheep nuts, leading to the production of lactic acid in the rumen. It can, therefore, occur during a drought, if these feeds are being used to maintain stock, or after the drought when stock are held in a confined area, allowing the rest of the farm to build up some pasture cover following the rain.

As a general guide, start feeding small amounts of grain (about 50g/head/day) until you are happy that the vast majority of the mob are eating it, and then gradually increase to the desired amount. Ensure that the ewes have access to some form of roughage as well.

Salmonellosis and Yersiniosis

Both of these infectious diseases are mentioned elsewhere in the newsletter. Salmonellosis (mainly in sheep) and yersiniosis (young deer and cattle) can occur following stressors such as bad weather, changes in diet and feed shortages.

After a dry spell it is common practice for animals to be mob stocked over a few paddocks, allowing the rest of the farm to benefit from the rain. These crowded situations can precipitate outbreaks of such stress related to diseases. Keep an eye out for unwell/scouring/dead animals and consider vaccination if concerned.

Nitrate toxicity

During dry conditions nitrates accumulate around the roots of plants. Following rain the nitrates are rapidly taken up by the crop, often at a rate faster than the plants can incorporate them into protein (especially in overcast weather).

Nitrate poisoning is an acute condition, with animals sometimes dying within minutes of the signs appearing. To minimise the risk, introduce the crop gradually, ensuring other sources of feed are available. Clutha Vets have nitrate testing kits if you would like us to test your crop before feeding it.

Grass Staggers

Caused by a shortage of magnesium, the incidence of staggers (as well as subclinical magnesium deficiency) is often higher in the winter/spring following a dry spell. The use of nitrogenous fertiliser is usually one of the most cost effective ways to address the post-drought feed deficit, and high nitrogen levels can suppress magnesium uptake. Consider magnesium supplementation to breeding ewes and cows to minimise the risk.

Animal Health Reminders

Get the Teasers Out

For those farmers who breed their hoggets it will soon be time to introduce the teasers. The benefits of teasers are well documented, especially if you want to restrict the hogget mating period to three or four weeks, as most people do. Most ewe hoggets that have not yet started their oestrous cycles will respond to the presence of the teaser rams and have a “silent” heat around three to five days after they’re introduced. They’ll have their next heat about 17 days later, so make sure the “real” rams are running with them by then.

Pregnancy Testing of Beef Cows

We are well into our beef cow pregnancy scanning now. If we have not scanned your herd yet, please give us a call and book it in. We appreciate that, on many farms, mustering the breeding cows is not a quick job, so we are happy to work in with you and arrange the pregnancy testing for when the cows are in the yards for other procedures such as weaning or TB testing. While in for scanning we can also carry out other procedures, as required, eg BVD blood testing and/or vaccinating (of the calves as well as the cows, if appropriate), trace element testing and Mycoplasma bovis surveillance. Please let us know in advance if you would like to tack on any of these tasks so that we can bring out extra staff, if needed, to speed up the job.

Velvet record books and drug returns

If you are accredited to velvet your own stags and/or spikers please remember to drop off your drug record book at your nearest clinic if you have not already done so. And for those velveting adult stags, please also drop off your left over drugs for us to store until next season.

Mycoplasma bovis surveillance

As discussed in the previous newsletter, the beef industry needs to undertake a certain amount of M bovis testing for us to be able to demonstrate that we are free of the disease. There are some worthwhile incentives in place to encourage farmers to participate. For example, if you are planning on blood testing your cattle for other reasons (eg BVD or trace elements) all vet fees, materials and travel costs are paid for by the M bovis scheme. All you have to pay are the lab fees. In addition, Clutha Vets have added our own incentive; for every animal tested, we will donate \$1.00 to your nominated school. Having the cattle through the yards for pregnancy testing is a good opportunity to participate. Give us a call if interested.

Yersiniosis prevention in weaner deer

If you vaccinate your weaners with Yersiniavax they will be due for their booster about now, if not already done. With yersiniosis being a stress related condition there is a possibility that we will see more cases of the disease this autumn/winter due to the effects of the drought. So even if you do not routinely vaccinate it may pay to consider it this season. If you are planning to feed supplements to the weaners it can help with the transition to start while they are still on their mothers (for those who practice post-rut weaning).

Please give the clinic a call if you plan to protect your weaners with Yersiniavax to ensure that we order enough product to meet demand. Similarly, get in touch if you would just like to discuss yersiniosis prevention in general.

Knock out drenching

“Knock out” drenching is the catchy name used to describe the strategy of swapping your regular lamb drench for one that contains a different mix of active ingredients for just one drenching episode in the autumn. The rationale is that if a few worms have managed to survive the previous drenches given to your lambs, you can “knock them out” ideally by using one of the newer products (Startect or Zolvix Plus), therefore reducing the contribution these resistant worms make to the worm population on your property. All remaining works lambs as well as your ewe lamb replacements should be done.

To have the biggest impact it is recommended to give the knock out drench at the time of year when worm levels are at their highest. In a typical year this would be the period from about mid March to mid April. But with this autumn being so dry, if you have not already carried out the procedure, it would probably pay to wait until after we get some rain.

Salmonella is Here!

By Andrew Roe.

Salmonellosis is often described as a stress related condition. Further north outbreaks of the “enteric” (gut) form of the disease often occur in ewes in early summer, shortly after weaning. This is understandable, with the disease being triggered by the change in diet. Ewes tend to go from being well fed, when still having their lambs at foot, to being put on “clean-up” duty round the farm, once their lambs are removed.

Conversely, in our area, we usually see the first few cases in the autumn in the lead-up to mating, which seems strange, as that’s when we are trying to feed our ewes as well as we can, to maximise conception rates.

This year is no exception with several cases of enteric Salmonellosis already reported. The typical presentation is a number of ewes lying dead (often near a water trough or creek) with a few others looking pretty sad. Being a gut infection, the affected ewes will often be scouring, but this can be hard to notice. Rather than the obvious dark green scour that you associate with worms, the diarrhoea with salmonellosis tends to a pale yellow/green colour, and you have to look closely to spot it. Another common finding is that the affected ewes tend to be good body condition.

There are a number of Salmonella serotypes (“strains”) that can be responsible for the disease in our livestock, with *S. Hindmarsh* being the main culprit in recent years. However *S. Bovimorbificans* is being reported more frequently now, especially in cattle, and a third one, *S. Typhimurium* pops up from time to time.

The good news is that all three of these serotypes are included in the vaccine, Salvexin+B, along with *S. Brandenburg* the cause of ewe abortion and death in ewes that many farmers in South Otago are, unfortunately, very familiar with.

Quite a few local farmers have a preventative salmonellosis vaccination in place, primarily to control *Brandenburg*. If you are in this camp your flock maybe be protected against the gut forms of *Salmonella* too, depending on the timing of your vaccination and the classes of stock you vaccinate (a lot of people just do their two toothers now).

If not, Salvexin is quite effective at controlling an outbreak if given at the early stages after you’ve noticed the first deaths. So, if you start to lose a few ewes, please get in touch and we can help decide if *Salmonella* is the likely culprit. From there we can discuss the vaccination option, as well as other measures to take.

And please remember, salmonellosis is a human disease as well so good hygiene is vital when handling affected ewes and carcasses.

We Can Help With That...

Autumn is a great time for vets who enjoy sheep and beef cattle work. Ram palpating and cow scanning are two of the main jobs at this time of year and, for many of our sheep and beef clients, it may be the only time we actually get out to your farm!

Unless, that is, when something has gone wrong and we are involved in investigating the problem, whether it be a salmonella outbreak in your ewes, an ill thrift problem in your hoggets or a BVD-induced pregnancy failure in your heifers.

However there are lots of other ways we can have some beneficial input into farming operation over and above the traditional routine tasks and ambulance type services that vets are often associated with.

Bigger picture-type stuff such as discussing your flock/herd’s reproductive performance or your lamb growth rates and then putting plans in place to make some gains. And helping to assess and monitor, as required, whether that be condition scoring a sample of your ewes, or a doing a simple feed budget.

So, if there are areas of your stock performance that you are looking to lift, or want a bit of input or advice into some changes you are considering making, give Clutha Vets a shout... we love getting out on farm and putting our brains, as well as our bodies, to work!

B12 Deficiency Common

The 2021/22 lamb growing season has been a bad one in our region for vitamin B12 deficiency. Based on data from Gribbles Veterinary Pathology, the laboratory that carries out our trace element testing, almost half of all mobs of lambs they have sampled via the meat works from Otago/Southland, have been B12 deficient.

This is a lot higher than normal and is, no doubt, due to the very dry conditions over the last two or three months. The availability of cobalt (the mineral required for the manufacture of vitamin B12) to the pasture reduces as soil gets drier. For this reason most deficiency is usually seen during the summer.

Normally in the autumn pasture cobalt levels rise, and if we see lambs/hoggets with good B12 reserves in March we would usually advise that they will be OK for the rest of the season and that no further supplementation is likely to be required. That is certainly not the case this year. Thanks to the dry spell it is likely that ongoing B12 supplementation will need to continue for a while yet on many properties.

Pneumonia in Sheep

By Marcus Yule

Pneumonia is something we commonly see in sheep of all ages and occurs in two forms: acute fibrinous pneumonia and chronic non-progressive pneumonia. The acute form is commonly seen in hoggets and often results in outbreaks of sudden death, or visibly sick animals that lag behind, or lie down, in respiratory distress. The chronic form is more common but subclinical in nature with animals often not showing any obvious signs of disease.

At this stage of the season you may notice an increase in pleurisy (where lungs adhere to the chest wall) on your kill sheets which can give you an indication of the levels of pneumonia in your flock. This late season increase in part occurs as these animals have been on farm longer and are therefore at a greater risk of developing pneumonia compared with those slaughtered earlier.

Pneumonia has a profound impact on growth rate. Studies have shown that lambs where 20% of their lungs were affected grew 50% slower. This is the hidden cost of pneumonia and results in affected animals being slaughtered much later or not achieving weight targets.

Also pneumonia is often a source of ewe wastage, especially two tooth, where animals that recovered from pneumonia as a lamb are left with a portion of their lung damaged and succumb to its effects when the pressure goes on, such winter or lambing time.

With no vaccines currently on the market to help combat pneumonia prevention is key. Healthy stock with good nutrition, up-to-date animal health and minimal stressors are less likely to develop the disease. Below are a few on farm management strategies that can be used to reduce both the amount and cost of pneumonia to your flock.

- Avoid shearing of lambs at the same time as weaning.
- Keep yarding time and close confinement of lambs to a minimum (smaller mobs).
- Minimise stock movement in the heat of the day when dust levels are at their highest.
- Avoid long distance movements where practical (factor distance to yards into your rotation plan).
- Reduce the extent and duration of open mouth panting when mustering lambs by moving stock at a suitable pace and cooler time of day.
- Consider a sprinkler system/dampening down dust before a mob is yarded.

When Three is Better than Two

By Andrew Roe

Most of the livestock vaccines we regularly use require the familiar programme of two injections given about four to six weeks apart, followed by an annual booster, to achieve ongoing protection.

Clostridial vaccines (Ultravac 5 in 1, Multine, Coglavax etc.) are no exception to this regime. However, in certain circumstances, it can be beneficial to give an additional dose of these vaccines.

It has been demonstrated experimentally that three shots of "5 in 1" given to a lamb/hogget provide a higher level of protection, particularly against pulpy kidney, than the traditional two doses. At the time these findings were not thought to translate to any significant benefits in the field. But more recently, with changes to the way we feed our young sheep, a number of farmers are finding that losses can be reduced by incorporating a third injection into their lamb/hogget vaccination programme.

The most obvious scenario where this may apply is when lambs are being finished on "specialist" high quality forages such as lucerne, red clover and/or chicory. The bacteria that causes pulpy kidney multiplies most rapidly in the lamb's intestine when large amounts of soluble carbohydrates are available. So it is not surprising that even well vaccinated lambs can still succumb to the disease when grazing these forages. A third dose of the vaccine can give the additional protection needed to overcome even high challenges of pulpy kidney bacteria and the toxins they produce.

Another scenario where local farmers are noticing the benefits of an additional dose of "5 in 1", or similar, is the grazing of ewe hoggets on winter crops, particularly fodder beet, but also good brassica crops.

As with specialist lamb finishing forages, beet and brassicas are high quality diets, increasing the risk of pulpy kidney. While still receiving some benefit from the two injections received as a ewe lamb, the pulpy kidney protection will be declining by winter time, so a third shot before going onto the crop can help save a few lives.

We have worked with several clients recently who were frustrated about losses over winter in their ewe hoggets. After contemplating changing to a different clostridial vaccine, they opted instead to try giving a third dose, as discussed, and were very happy with the results.

Retail Ramblings: DeWalt Tools on Offer with BI Cattle Drenches

Pick up some quality DeWalt tools when you purchase the following Boehringer Ingelheim oral cattle drenches, injectables and pour-ons:

- **DeWalt 18V Cordless Drill Set** - Eprinex 25lt pour-on, Eclipse 12.5lt pour-on & Eclipse-E B12 + Se inj
- **DeWalt Deepbox Toolbox** - Eclipse 5lt pour-on and Matrix C oral drench
- **DeWalt 35pc Screwdriver Kit** - Eclipse 2.5lt pour-on, Eclipse-E injection and more....

Or, if you're just after the **Best Buy**, pick up a 5.5lt Eclipse Pour-On for the price of a 5 litre!



Take A Mate Fishing 2022

Yet another great weekend away with the weather and the fish both playing their part. Only the 2nd year, from memory, where we had caught our quota before lunch!

Watch this space to see what we can salvage for next year.

Fingers crossed...

Retail Ramblings: April Promos

In addition to the DeWalt tool offer, we have the following autumn promotions running on a range of sheep and cattle drenches.

Some giveaways are getting low so get in quick!

Boehringer Ingelheim Sheep Drenches

- Get a hard wearing Degree Work Shirt on selected BI oral drenches.

Alleva Cattle Pour-Ons

- **Boss Pour On:** Get a Rugged Oilskin Vest on Boss 5lt, or a warm Zip Top on Boss 2.5lt
- **Turbo Pour On:** Get a Pole Saw with Turbo 7.5lt Promo Pack ****VERY LIMITED STOCK****

Zoetis Sheep Drench

- Receive an Ezepak drench pack when you purchase a 15 litre drum of *Startect*

Your Vets

Balclutha Clinic

Jason Darwen	BVSc
Rob Mills	BVSc
Hamish Moore	BVSc
Catherine Copland	BVM&S
Peter Heslip	BVSc
Steven Butler	BVSc PGDipVSc
Anna Burrell	BVSc
Andrew Roe	BVSc, MANZCVS
Sam Howarth	BVSc
David Exton	BVSc
Olivia Hickman	BVSc
Marcus Yule	BVSc
Eckard Abrie	BVSc
Sam Lewis	BVSc, MSc MANZCVS
Darius Tan	BVSc

Milton and Lawrence Clinics

Jillian Clark	BVSc
Sid Taylor	BVSc, MANZCVS
Annie Jackson	BVSc
Martha O'Connor	MVB
Bevan Topham	BVSc
Anene Du Plessis	BVSc
Alisa McDonald	BVSc