

CLUTHA VETS SHEEP & BEEF FARMER NEWSLETTER



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Clinic News

Andrew Roe

Welcome to a New Year and our first edition of the sheep, beef and deer newsletter for 2022. We trust you all had a chance to have a good break during that extended spell of warm sunny weather!

While the hot, dry conditions were great for holiday makers it lead to a very anxious few weeks for farmers in the region, so last week's rain was extremely welcome. Hopefully, things are greening up again at your place and any concerns around feed shortages have been eased for the time being.

We sadly farewelled a couple of our farm animal vets over the past month or so. Ruth Andrews decided to take a break after spending eight years as a highly valued member of the Balclutha team. Although primarily servicing our dairy clients during that time, many of our sheep farmer clients will know Ruth and, no doubt, learnt how passionate she is about sheep farming, putting much of her spare time into developing her own little sheep flock on her block at Romahapa.

Matt Buckley also said goodbye, deciding to take up a position in Waikato. Matt joined us during the spring of 2020, after returning from working in the UK for a while. He has spent most of his time with us based at our Milton branch, where has ably turned his hand to dairy, beef, sheep and deer work, with the odd horse and alpaca thrown in too! Matt is about to satisfy his hankering for some research-based work, taking up a mixed research/clinical role in Morrinsville.

And, as Annie mentioned in the December newsletter, we are excited to welcome Darius Tan to the vet team. Darius, who recently graduated from Massey, spent time with Clutha Vets as a student. He enjoyed his time with us (as well as the fishing!) so much that he has returned to start his career in South Otago. We are sure that, like us, you will make Darius very welcome, when you get a chance to meet him, and maybe even share a few fishing secrets with him!

In This Issue:

- Clinic News
- Ram Health
- Animal Health Reminders
 - Ram palpation runs
 - Beef cow scanning
 - Two tooth condition
 - Teaser rams
 - Velveter reminders
 - Worm warning
 - B12 in lambs
- Making the most of beef cow scanning
- M bovis testing
- "Polio" in calves and lambs
- Drench Resistance Results
- Retail ramblings
- Take a Mate Fishing
- Competition winners

Ensure Your Rams are in the Best Shape for Mating Time

By Andrew Roe

With only a couple of months to go until mating, it is time to give some consideration to the health and condition of your rams. At Clutha Vets we are just getting into our "ram runs" now, conducting pre-mating checks on our client's rams, and we are occasionally concerned at how light in body condition that some ram teams are. The relationship between body condition and reproductive performance is very well understood for ewes. But rams also need to be well conditioned to achieve good results; not only to ensure sustained semen quality throughout the breeding season, but also so that they can stand up to the physical challenge of mating 100 or more ewes in two or three weeks.

As well as providing good nutrition there are a number of animal health considerations for your rams at this time of year. Giving a 5-in-1 booster is a very good idea. While diseases such as pulpy kidney are not very common in adult sheep, they do occur occasionally, and so it really is a no-brainer to spend a few dollars on vaccine to protect a ram team worth tens of thousands of dollars. A shot of selenium may also be helpful if the rams have not had access to any selenium supplementation. And, if you are using a long acting injectable iodine product on the ewes, why not give the rams a dose too?



Scrotal mange can be a problem in some ram flocks. The inflammation and irritation caused by the mite can be severe enough to affect the viability of their semen. If you notice the tell-tale signs of mange, the problem can be fixed with an injection of one of the products in the "mectin" family of worm drenches eg Dectomax or Exodus.

Ram Check List

- Check body condition and increase feeding level if needed.
- Book in your ram palpations with your vet
- Give a 5 in 1 booster
- Selenium supplementation
- Consider an iodine injection
- Check for scrotal mange; treat if present
- Do the rams need drenching?
- Fly and lice treatment / prevention
- Attend to any lame rams and maybe run the whole team through a zinc sulphate foot bath
- Consider Footvax if lameness has historically been a problem

And finally.....

- Have you got enough rams??

And don't forget worms. Just as ewes can temporarily lose their immunity to worms during the stresses of late pregnancy, rams can also become susceptible to the effects of internal parasitism if they get a bit run down over mating time.

Lameness can also be a big concern for rams at this time of year. We have all experienced the frustration of perfectly sound rams suddenly getting a sore foot a few days before they are due to go out! A run through a zinc sulphate footbath is a great way to tidy up a bit of scald or the early stages of foot rot. However, for those who have had more serious issues with lame rams, we encourage you to consider vaccinating your rams with Footvax. For ongoing protection two injections are required 4-6 weeks apart. However a single shot, given at this time of year will protect your rams over the mating period. To save you buying a whole 250 dose pack, we are happy to vaccinate your rams for you, when we call round to palpate them.

And finally, one of the most important considerations: do you have enough rams? A ratio of 1:100 is theoretically adequate, however experience has shown that 1:70 to 1:80 is a safer bet, especially if you're after a nice compact lambing. Having a few extra rams provides cover for the odd lameness or other mishap, and a higher ratio over your two tooth's often seems to yield better results.

Animal Health Reminders

Time to Get Your Rams Checked

The Clutha Vets sheep team has just started our annual “ram runs”. Originally set up to identify and eliminate brucellosis in the region’s ram flocks, the ram runs involve palpation of the testicles and associated structures of your rams. Thankfully brucellosis is a lot less common these days, but is not yet completely eliminated; we found a couple of flocks with the disease two years ago. We need to keep the pressure on to prevent it flaring up again, so if you have not already done so, please give your nearest clinic a call to book in a visit.

As well as brucellosis these examinations are a good way to identify a range of other abnormalities that can affect your rams’ ability to get ewes in lamb. Please refer to the article on Page 2 for a discussion on ram health in general.

Pregnancy Testing of Beef Cows

We can reliably detect pregnancy in beef cows from around day 40 onwards. So, once your bulls have been removed from the cows for at least six weeks, give us a call and book your scanning in. However, as discussed in an article over the page, it may be advantageous to get the first scan done even earlier for some herds. Have a read and consider if such a strategy would be of benefit to you.

Look After Those Two Teeth

One of the biggest challenges of breeding hoggets is getting them up to decent weight and body condition in time for their two-tooth mating. With only a couple of months till mating, it is a good idea to go through your two teeths now (especially if they reared a lamb(s) as a hogget, identify and draft out any thinner ones, and start preferentially feeding them. Checking the need for a pre-tup drench of your two teeths is also a good idea. As is giving them some selenium and iodine if unsure of their trace element status.

Teaser Rams

If your teasers are getting a bit past it, or if you are contemplating hogget mating for the first time, act now and arrange for a few rams to be vasectomised. To ensure that the teasers are completely infertile we recommend getting the procedure done at least six weeks before you are planning on introducing them to your ewes/hoggets. Any age rams are OK, but vasectomising ram lambs is the most cost effective approach as you will have them for plenty of years to come.

Accredited velvet drug and record book returns

For those farmers who are accredited to velvet your own stags, remember that one of the requirements of the programme is that your drug record book, along with any unused drugs, needs to be dropped off at the clinic by the end of March. And please also note that this requirement applies to those of you accredited to velvet your spikers only, as well as those velveting adult stags. There is a specific section of the drug record book to record spiker velveting episodes where NaturO rings are used.

Worm warning

Based on some of the faecal egg counts we have been doing, quite a few farms in the district have experienced pleasingly low worm levels in their lambs so far. However, now that we have had some reasonable rainfall, this could change rapidly. Warm, damp conditions are ideal for worm larvae development on your pastures so be prepared for a spike in worm levels very soon.

B12 supplementation

A number of clients have taken advantage of the opportunity to check their lambs’ trace element status, via the meat works, with quite a few recent tests revealing low vitamin B12 levels. Pasture cobalt availability is typically at its lowest from around mid November to February, especially in drier conditions. So your remaining works lambs, as well as your ewe hoggets may benefit from a B12 top up.

By Andrew Roe

One of our main autumn jobs at Clutha Vets is pregnancy testing beef cows. Yarding mobs of adult beef cattle is not usually a simple job, especially on those more extensive properties. So it is understandable that many of our farmer clients choose to arrange their pregnancy testing for when the cows are going to be in the yards for some other reason e.g. TB testing or weaning.

Fair enough. That works for us too, and, if the only information you are after is which cows are pregnant and which are dry, it doesn't really matter when we do the job over the March to May period. We even tend to do the last few herds in June!

However there may be benefits to you to glean a bit more info from the pregnancy testing exercise. Some examples include:

1. It may be helpful to be able to winter your earlier calving cows separately from the later ones, especially if feed is anticipated to be a bit tight in the spring and you can stretch it out a bit by keeping part of the herd on their winter block a bit longer. If we carry out your scanning early enough we can age the pregnancies to help with this.
2. If you tend to get quite a few sets of twins it can be helpful to identify those at scanning. The extra energy and protein requirements of carrying twins usually leads to these cows losing a lot of condition in late pregnancy, increasing the risk of metabolic disease and/or pregnancy loss. You can reduce this impact if you know who your twin bearing cows are, and winter them on better feed. You can also keep a closer eye on them at calving, as twin bearers are more likely to need some assistance. As with pregnancy aging, finding twins requires that the cows are scanned within the first three months of pregnancy.
3. To avoid the demand for killing space that we usually see in late autumn, it may be worthwhile being able to get at least some of your dries (and maybe your latest calving cows) off to the works early.

If you are interested in scanning your herd a little earlier than normal please give the clinic a call and we can help work out the optimum time to do the job, based on your mating dates and the information you hope to gain.

Depending on the length of your mating period it may be that the pregnancies of those cows conceiving the latest will not be advanced enough for us to pick them up. In such cases we can pop back out at a later date and re-scan the "dries" to differentiate the latest calvers from the true dries.

....how about a bit of free blood testing?

In earlier newsletters we have described how Clutha Vets is one of the agencies tasked with blood testing beef cattle as part of the country's efforts to prove our freedom from M bovis.

With New Zealand now on the verge of eliminating the last pockets of M bovis, we are moving to a surveillance phase to be able to demonstrate that we have indeed got rid of the disease. An important part of this process is the National Beef Cattle Survey, where a proportion of the country's beef herd is blood sampled.

Pregnancy scanning is a great opportunity to be part of the programme. What's in for you? As well as the knowledge that you are assisting the country to be recognised as M bovis-free, by participating in the survey we will carry out any other blood tests that you are interested in, at no cost to you. Whether it be BVD, trace element, or any other testing, all you need to pay are the lab fees. Our blood testing fee, all of the materials used, as well as the travel costs are all covered by us.

If you are interested in being part of the M bovis survey, and would like us to carry out the blood sampling at scanning time, please let us know when you make the booking to ensure we bring out enough people for the job.

Neurological Condition Reported

Come across any calves or lambs displaying weird nervous signs recently? If so, you are not alone.

This summer we have dealt with several cases of polioencephalomalacia (more commonly known as PE, polio or thiamine deficiency) in dairy calves, lambs and hoggets, and have fielded reports of quite a few more.

Signs of the condition include apparent blindness, aimless wandering, seemingly unaware of their surrounds. Some animals display the characteristic "star gazing" stance. As the condition gets worse affected animals are found lying on their side, paddling, often with their neck arched backwards.

The disease is triggered by a failure of the rumen micro-organisms to produce enough thiamine (vitamin B1), which leads to damage to parts of the brain. The commonest causes of this disruption are a sudden change of diet, or the feeding of high quality forages (eg red or white clover and/or chicory based pastures) with inadequate levels of fibre needed for healthy rumen function.

Prevention, therefore, often involves providing a fibre source (eg hay) when grazing such feeds. Affected animals can be successfully treated with vitamin B1 injections if picked up early enough.

Long Acting Pre-lamb Worm Treatments—How Did They Stack Up?

By Jillian Clark

Last spring a number of our sheep farmer clients took advantage of an offer we made in a bid to learn more about the drench resistance status of those farms where long-acting pre-lambing worm products were used.

The fact that the use of these products can increase the risk of drench resistance development is widely known across our industry. Despite this, very few farmers have gone to the trouble of checking the effectiveness of the long acting “drenches” used on their own properties. At Clutha Vets we take our product stewardship responsibilities seriously and were keen to address these concerns. A promotion was duly set up whereby we offered to visit farms for free, and collect faecal samples from ewes that were given either a dual active, controlled released capsule (Bionic or Bionic Plus), or a long acting moxidectin injection (Exodus LA or Cydectin LA), to determine the level of worms that survived the treatment.

The exercise also gave us the opportunity to demonstrate the benefits of the new worm egg counting system (the Parasight machines) that Clutha Vets have recently invested in. Traditional faecal egg counting (FEC) can detect worm eggs down to a level of 50 eggs/gram. The Parasight machine is fifty times more sensitive, detecting an egg count as low as 1 egg/gram, and can therefore pick up drench resistance at an earlier stage.

Fourteen farmers who used Bionic capsules took part in the project along with ten LA injection users. All samples were tested through our Milton/Lawrence clinics.

So, what did we find?

Bionic Capsule Results

Seven of the fourteen flocks (50%) had no indication of resistance, with zero worm eggs found by both the traditional FEC and Parasight. Of the other seven, one was inconclusive as some untreated ewes were running with those given a capsule; one had a few eggs detected by the FEC; and five were negative on FEC

However, when samples from these farms were put through the Parasight machine, worm eggs were detected in all five. This highlighted the benefit of using a more sensitive worm counting tool. Samples from all positive farms were sent to the lab for larval culture, with either Trichostrongyles or Ostertagi (our two most significant worm species), or both, found to be the culprits. One farm even had resistant Haemonchus (“barbers pole worm”) present.

Of the six farms, in total, with resistant worms eggs/larvae detected, four were shown to be at very low frequencies, while the other two had more definite evidence of resistance.

Long Acting Moxidectin Injection Results

This group did not fare so well, with only two of the ten farms having no eggs detected post-treatment, by both the FEC and the Parasight system.

However, of the other eight where post-drenching eggs were found, three had an unusual pattern, whereby a couple of samples had moderate eggs detected, with the rest all being zero. Such a pattern is more suggestive of unsatisfactory injection technique, rather than drench resistance. Possible explanations include under-dosing some of the ewes (one farmer confirmed that ewes were dosed based on the average weight of the mob, rather than on the heaviest), or part of the dose being injected into the wool, or leaking out of the injection site, in some animals.

Summary

The exercise has identified the following points;

- When carrying out faecal egg counts to determine whether or not drench resistance is present, our new Parasight system is more accurate than the traditional FEC method.
- Overall the results for the Bionic treated flocks were quite pleasing; sure, half of these farms did have some worm eggs present, but most were at a very low frequency
- Post treatment worm survival was more common in the LA moxidectin treated flocks. Several of these were likely to be due to problems with product dose and administration but, of course, we can not tell if there was an element of resistance present as well.

These results, I believe, highlight the dilemma of the ease of application of the LA injection versus the two potential disadvantages;

- The issue of “the tail”; as the levels of drench decline in the body exposing worms to lower and lower levels of the active, it doesn’t kill all worms for the same length of time
- It is difficult, without care and attention, to apply a 3.5ml-5ml dose under the skin to every ewe. On a conveyor this isn’t necessarily the job for the least capable person!

Fishing Trip Winners for 2022

All the places have now been drawn for the 2022 edition of the world famous "Take a Mate Fishing" competition. This year's deserving winners are:

- ◆ Vic Stanley, Milton
- ◆ Ian Sinclair, Owaka
- ◆ Bradley Williams, Milton
- ◆ Garth Shaw, Clydevale
- ◆ Craig McCrostie, Kaitangata
- ◆ Peter Bloxham, Crichton
- ◆ Jason Greer, Milton
- ◆ Barry Gray, Owaka
- ◆ Mike Power, Waitahuna
- ◆ Tom Willocks, Balclutha

This intrepid group, along with their lucky mates, will be hitting Stewart Island next month.

Congratulations to all of the lucky winners and a big thank-you to all of our farmers for your support over the year. Thanks also to **Boehringer Ingelheim** for sponsoring this event, in conjunction with Clutha Vets.

Retail Ramblings:

Boehringer Ingelheim Cattle Products

- Pick up DeWalt tools on BI pour-ons, injectables and oral drenches. Options include drills, toolboxes and screwdriver sets

Boehringer Ingelheim Sheep Drenches

- Get a hard-wearing Degree Workshirt on selected BI drenches

Zoetis

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

Congratulations to our Turbo Winners

Well done Max and Elspeth Geddes of Clifton, who are now the proud owners of the amazing "man cave" fridge, after winning our Turbo promotion. Thank you to Alleva Animal Health.



Your Vets

Balclutha Clinic

Jason Darwen	BVSc
Rob Mills	BVSc
Hamish Moore	BVSc
Annie Jackson	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
Martha O'Connor	MVB
Bevan Topham	BVSc
Anene Du Plessis	BVSc
Alisa McDonald	BVSc