

CLUTHA VETS SHEEP & BEEF FARMER NEWSLETTER



February 2018



Clinic News

Well you don't need me to tell you it is a bit on the dry side. While what rainfall there has been (only 18 mm in Balclutha for January and it was pretty dry in December) hasn't been much it has varied quite a bit across the region so that while it is overall very dry some areas are worse than others.

We are running a drought seminar however the nature of these mean they need to be organised at short notice so by the time you read this the event will likely be past. At the very least organising a drought seminar probably means it will rain just before it is held - if that happens it will probably have been worth it!

Staff wise we have a new member in the vet team at the Balclutha clinic. Erin Caswell started here mid January. Erin hails from the UK but has been in NZ for about 4 years and comes to us from the other side of the Blue Mountains. Marek and Bevan are both leaving in the next fortnight or so to look around the world – there are other replacements coming which I will introduce in the next newsletter.

Recent Animal Health Issues

1. **Brucellosis in Rams** - There is perhaps an element of complacency creeping in regarding this contagious cause of infertility in rams. Starting in the early 80's when an accurate blood test was developed we eradicated it off dozens and dozens of farms both stud and commercial and reduced it to the extent it is now quite rare in South Otago. However rare does not mean eradicated and there have been cases in recent times in the Hindon area and even more recently cases in the Lawrence/Beaumont area including at least 1 stud. So don't neglect to get your rams vet checked and when purchasing rams from a stud ask to see their Brucellosis certificate. Ram exam forms were included with the last newsletter.
2. **Cobalt/B12 Levels** - Usually in a drier type year levels often tend to be better than in a wetter growthy year however it does seem that this season could be an exception. Jillian reports 1 farm with the lowest levels she (or I) have ever seen and I have had several farms whose levels would best be described as OK but only just, and that is following earlier supplementation. So it might pay to do an Optigrow check to see what your B12 levels are like. As far as supplementation goes bear in mind that while it is dry and the grass isn't growing supplementing by pasture spraying or fertilising with Co prills will be ineffective as grass has to be growing to take the Co up.

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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 makes sound economic sense.

Remember that obvious abortions from *Toxoplasma* and *Campylobacter* are just the proverbial tip of the iceberg. The bigger loss is the loss of lambs born alive but weak that subsequently struggle to survive and invariably succumb in the first few days of life, even in quite reasonable weather. 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, as I said, even in reasonable weather. These losses, because of all the other usual issues going on at this time of the year e.g. mis-mothering, weather/storm type issues, metabolic diseases etc can be kind of hidden amongst all these other causes and as a result can be hard to recognise and quantify but work has repeatedly shown they can be quite a significant cause of lamb loss.

2. Injectable iodine - There are now 2 more or less identical products available, Flexidine (250ml) and Depodine (500ml). I carried out a trial (reported on in detail in the June 2015 newsletter) and confirmed that the standard 1.5ml dose given pre-tup lasts through lambing. The best time to give this is round 4 weeks pre-tup although we found in the trial that blood levels were elevated within 2 weeks of administration. So you could probably go down to 2 weeks pre-tup, but I think round 4 weeks would be the better option.

Pre-tup use of Flexidine or Depodine should improve the scanning % by 4 - 6% on average, but the bigger benefit is the variable but sometimes quite large improvements that occur 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 peddling apparent wonder brews. These often contain different ingredients but bugger all of any particular one so you end up wasting your money. If you're not sure bring in the label, or a list of the ingredients and their concentration and we can assess it for you.

This year the rumour mill is rife that Flexidine and Depodine are in **very** short supply. This is kind of true - due to an "incident" in 1 of only 2 factories in the world producing peanut oil, a main component of both products, (& both factories are in China) the Chinese Government shut them both down. That's the bad news. The good news however is that due to our very efficient retail dept we have secured our requirements, based on last years sales, for the season.

However to help your fellow farmers in other 'less fortunate' areas it would be appreciated if you could phone in with the no of doses you require. That way we can release any excess stock (if indeed we have any) to

help clinics in other areas.

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, 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. 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.

If the season stays dry and ewe bodyweights pre-tup are likely to be somewhat lower than normal there is always the option to use these products in some stock to help compensate for the likely drop in scanning. However I do urge caution in the use of these.

5. Teaser Rams- As indicated in the last newsletter, these can be a useful tool to tighten up the lambing (especially with two-tooths), 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 then time is running out to get it done as they need the 'snip' at least 6 weeks prior to use which is 17 days prior to mating.

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 the first dose of 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.

Fly Strike

Several factors are combining to make flystrike in South Otago much more common than it used to be. The arrival of the Aussie Green Blowfly (*Lucilia cuprina*) in South Otago several years ago is probably one of the main factors as it is quite an aggressive species (typical Aussie!!) in striking sheep. If you have had sheep struck along the back odds on that it will be this species that is responsible. That combined with warm and moist conditions means that some flystrike is almost inevitable. This year with the warm spring the fly population will have got off to an early increase plus although it is dry there has been the odd drop of moisture (and little wind). All this with maybe a bit of global warming chucked in means flystrike will, in many years now have to be contended with in South Otago.



Flystrike and its prevention is actually quite an involved subject when you haven't had to deal with it in the past and are relatively unfamiliar with it. To aid in the decision making I have produced a comparison chart of the majority of the treatment/prevention options available. A copy is included with this newsletter. Bear in mind however that this chart is **just a start** - all sorts of other factors may have to be taken into account that can't really be allowed for in a format like this. Wool length for example - this can alter dose rates and even which products can be used. Some products are instant knockdown meaning they are suitable for treatment of existing infestations, others are not.

So if you are having issues with fly strike and are going to have to do a preventative treatment, peruse the chart

but then come into the clinic to discuss the finer detail/ pro's & cons of particular products that you think might suit your situation.

Beef Reproduction and Pregnancy Testing

A few points on beef herd reproduction (from Tom):

1. **Nutrition** - This is the most significant driver of reproduction. Having cows in correct body condition at calving to ensure they are cycling prior to mating is paramount. Mate well grown heifers - yearling heifers should be at least 60% of adult body weight at mating.
2. **Mating Lengths** - Aim to achieve a compact calving every year. Early calving cows get in calf earlier. Mating for shorter periods may result in a few less cows in calf initially but in the long term a tighter calving pattern will result in easier management and better calf weights at weaning. In herds that currently have an extended calving you can reduce the mating length gradually over a few seasons. Aim to mate no longer than 84 days for cows and 42 for heifers.
3. **Bull Management** - Fertility testing bulls prior to mating can help pin point "duds". Observe to ensure bulls are serving cows throughout mating. Use a ratio of 1:25 - 30. Remove lame or broken bulls immediately from the group. Avoid single sire mating. BVD test new bulls and vaccinate all bulls annually.
4. **Pregnancy Testing** - This is a valuable management tool and has lots of benefits. Scanning cows 42 days following bull removal is ideal as it allows for:
 - Early culling of dries to save feed.
 - Accurate aging of pregnancies so that early and late calvers can be fed and managed appropriately.
 - Further opportunity to compact calving next season by culling later calving cows.
 - Good opportunity for blood tests to monitor herd BVD and trace element status pre winter.

Pregnancy testing is performed using ultrasound by experienced vets. To be absolutely certain dry cows are further confirmed by manual palpation.

Grain Feeding of Sheep - Some Tips

As I write this (30/1) it is very dry however rain is forecast so by the time you read this an article on feeding grain may largely be a waste of time. However if there is no significant rain it is likely that a number of you will end up feeding grain/nuts to the ewes to help maintain body condition in the run up to mating. As there are potential hazards with this I thought an article on the do's and don'ts could be useful. Hopefully the article is indeed a waste of time and not needed!

The hints/tips are:

- Although some sheep are reluctant feeders they should not be starved before feeding grain.

- To avoid deaths from grain overload (acidosis) sheep must be introduced to concentrates slowly. Start at 50gm/head/day (5kg/100) & gradually build up to the full ration over 7 - 10 days.
- About 500gm/head/day (50kg/100) of barley provides half maintenance. More than this is not recommended.
- Sheep cannot be maintained on grain alone. Some other pickings from pasture, stubble or any straw should be fed. Saliva produced while eating straw/pasture is rich in bicarbonate helping to neutralise acid in the rumen.
- Feeding hay first helps prevent gorging.
- The safest grain to feed is oats followed by barley, rye-corn and lastly wheat. Wheat is the most dangerous and may require a longer introductory period.
- Access to water is very important.
- To attract hoggets to grain you can add salt (3kg/100kg of grain) or molasses.
- Whole grain is ok for sheep. Cattle require the grain to be crushed to fully utilise it.
- Grain should be fed from a hopper leaving a trail 40mm deep and 100mm wide. This allows enough room for all sheep to feed. To avoid trampling losses you can feed the grain under a fence. Also it is often better to feed out the grain and then shift sheep into the paddock. Troughs should be used for cattle as they are less able to pick grain off the ground.
- Watch for shy feeders and draft out as necessary.
- If possible continue supplementary feeding (or sacrifice paddocks) until at least 3cm of pasture returns. There is a tendency (naturally!) to graze pasture in the recovery phase too soon. It takes grass to grow grass in other words.
- Having a strategy and feeding plan organised early makes getting through a dry spell easier.

Retail Ramblings

A fairly short list from the retail team this time around:

- **Boehringer Ingelheim (formerly Merial Ancare) Sheep Drenches** - Receive a grey checked Horizon shirt with each qualifying purchase.
- **Blackhawk Working Dog Biscuits 20kg** - Get \$15 off every bag of this premium dog food - while stocks last.
- **Elanco Products - Extinosad, Expo and Cyrex** - All purchases of these fly &/or lice treatments go in the draw for a Weber barbeque.
- **Ridgeline Clothing** - We have some children's size 2 camo fleece pants for sale at only \$20 a pair - normally \$39.95. We can source other Ridgeline clothing for you - just ask.
- **Coppermax Injection** - Receive a free thermos mug.
- **Dectomax Starter Packs** - Receive a free 200ml.
- **Tux Energy 25kg** - Special discount price for February.

John A. Smart BVSc

Promotion Winners

- **Boehringer Ingelheim/Clutha Vets Take a Mate Fishing to Stewart Island:** All the draws for this have been done and the winners are: Geoff Blackmore, Lawrence; Hamish Wilson, Rongahere; Lachie Campbell, Otanomono; Ian Sinclair, Owaka; Mark Ritchie, Greenfield; Ross MacDonald, Rongahere; Steven Watt, Kakapuaka; Roger Tweed, Waitahuna; Mark Divers, Clarendon and Mike Jones, Milton.
- **Clutha Vets Christmas Promo** - The winner of the Stu Robbie manufactured bar leaner and stools and outdoor gas heater was Kyle and Heather Burnett of Pukekoma, Hillend.
- **Tux Energy Lenovo Tablet Draw** - The winner of this was Phil Hunt and Lizzie Carruthers of Fork Farm, Wanaka. Meyrick (Lizzies father) is going to become a 'geek' and move into the hi-tech age. Maybe he might even start tweeting & have Facebook friends who like him!

Your Vets

Balclutha Clinic

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|-------------------|--------------|
| John Smart | BVSc |
| Jason Darwen | BVSc |
| Rob Mills | BVSc |
| Hamish Moore | BVSc |
| Catherine Copland | BVM&S |
| Peter Heslip | BVSc, MVM |
| Annie Jackson | BVSc |
| Steven Butler | BVSc |
| Elspeth Geddes | BVSc, BAgrSc |
| Bevan Topham | BVSc |
| Ruth Andrews | BVSc |
| Bridget Mason | BVSc |
| Marek Misiewicz | BVSc |
| Anna Burrell | BVSc |
| Erin Caswell | BVetMed |

Milton Clinic

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|---------------------|--------------|
| Peter Kalb | BVSc |
| Jillian Clark | BVSc |
| Sid Taylor | BVSc, MACVSc |
| Barbara Christensen | BVSc, MACVSc |
| Tom Wallbank | BVM&S |