

# Sheep Farmer Newsletter August 2014

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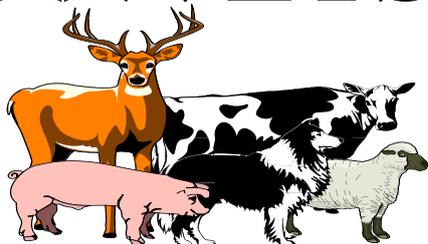
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## **Practice News**

Hope you're managing to get through what is proving to be a rather soggy winter. This winter would have to be on of the wettest underfoot for quite a few years. On the whole though, as far as animal health goes, most of you seem to be getting through without too many issues or problems, however, the crunch pre-lamb / pre-calving time is really just starting for most. In the last week or so there has been the odd person in for sleepy sickness treatments so this indicates some degree of under feeding on these properties.

Staff wise, Steven Butler will be back from his O.E soon and will re-commence working here at the beginning of next month, so we look forward to welcoming him back.

This month we have two retirements / farewells to mention. Firstly, Teresa O'Riordan, who has been with us for 12 or so years, the last several years since the start of her family on a part-time basis 2 days a week, has decided to pull the plug. We wish Teresa all the best. Things won't be quite the same around here without all the Irish blarney!!

The second retirement to mention is Rob Mill's trusty white Ford Courier ute which recently cracked the 400,000km mark. This was scheduled for retirement in about another month but an unplanned trip backwards down Rob's relatively steep driveway with no actual driver inside it saw this retirement inadvertently brought forward quite suddenly!

## Recent Animal Health Problems

**1. Salmonella Hindmarsh in Ewes** – This has been an ongoing issue most of this year basically, and as little as 2 weeks ago we were still seeing new cases. Keep an eye out for sudden deaths in good condition two-tooth or older ewes. If you look closely you may see evidence of a khaki coloured diarrhoea - this isn't always apparent though. Give us a call if you suspect this to be the problem. If baleage is being fed you/we can't assume Salmonella will be the problem. Enteric Listeriosis (from dodgy baleage) looks exactly the same and samples will need to be sent to the lab to culture the relevant bacteria to sort this out. There is a more detailed account of *S. hindmarsh* in the Feb newsletter of this year.

**2. Internal Parasites** – There have been some higher than usual egg counts around in hoggets and adult stock so far this winter. I think the main reason for this is that up until the start of July, the weather was pretty favourable for larval development on pasture - plenty of moisture and not really that cold. So if you're not that happy with the condition of your stock, take some faecal samples and get us to check them. It just maybe that there is a bit of worm burden holding them back.

**3. Salmonella Brandenburg** – The first and at the time of writing this, the only case of *S. brandenburg* abortion in ewes came to my attention on 24<sup>th</sup> July, much the same time as last year. Hopefully we don't get too many outbreaks of this occurring. Contact us immediately if you suspect it and we can go through the steps you can carry out to try to limit its impact. Also remember about personal hygiene (washing hands etc) when handling aborted lambs or ewes as it is easily transmissible to humans and is not a particularly pleasant disease to pick up (so they say – I haven't had the pleasure of it!!)

## Reminders

**1. Clostridial Vaccinations** - Give the annual booster shot to the ewes 1 - 3 weeks pre-lamb. At a stretch you could go to 4 weeks pre-lamb if necessary. An exception to this is Nilvax, which can be given up to 6 weeks pre-lamb, although this does come at quite an extra cost over that of Ultravac.

Last year Lamb Vaccine (Pulpy Kidney and Anti-Tetanus Serum) was unavailable. This year it will be back on the market, however, hopefully those very few users of it will, in the meantime by necessity, have converted over to the more desirable Ultravac 5 in 1 programme as this is a more effective

programme and as a bonus it is also cheaper. Because of this, we will be holding minimal stocks of Lamb Vaccine, so if you did want some it would pay to pre-order it.

While on the subject of pre-lamb vaccinating, every year we see cases of metabolic disease (mainly milk fever, but occasionally sleepy sickness) following yarding for this procedure. If they are on a nutritional "knife edge", then this period of yarding, maybe combined with a slight sore neck following vaccination (meaning they are perhaps less inclined to eat), can be enough to precipitate metabolic disease.

To help prevent this, obviously you should minimise the yarding time, but also ensure ewes are extra well fed the day before, and for the next few days post vaccination, with access to fresh water.

**2. Trace Elements:** The two important ones are selenium and iodine. Selenium, if necessary, can be administered with Ultravac 5 in 1. Unless Flexidine was used pre-tup (in which case further iodine supplementation should not be needed) then the only other effective form of iodine supplementation is an oral dose. The correct dose is 280mg of pot iodide (note that many so called mineral mixes containing iodine have a lot less), and the correct timing for this in severe cases of iodine deficiency is 8 and 4 weeks pre lamb. In moderate cases (which are the majority) give one dose 6 weeks pre lamb. This timing is important - because of convenience factors some farmers administer it at the same time as they give Ultravac etc but this is too late (and six weeks is too early for Ultravac). Note: LSD contains the correct dose of Pot Iodide.

If you want to check out whether low iodine could be an issue affecting lamb survival then there is an ideal opportunity to do this coming up. Collect up a few newborn dead lambs (around 10) and bring them in for a post mortem. Comparing the lamb's thyroid gland weight to its body weight is quite an accurate way of seeing if iodine deficiency was a factor in these lambs non-survival, and hence whether iodine supplementation in the future could be beneficial on your place.

**3. Vitamin E:** A deficiency of Vit E can also result in poorer lamb vigour and survival. A deficiency of this (and also iodine) is practically guaranteed where stock (sheep, cattle and deer) have been on brassicas, but it is also likely on other winter feed as Vit E is low in stored feed (hay, baleage etc) and in mature grass.

Various factors determine the best time to administer Vitamin E making it hard to give a recipe for all. Where Flexidine has been used (so taking iodine out of the equation) the closer to lambing it can be given the better. For other situations, enquire at the clinic.

LSD liquid still represents the gold standard for quality and more importantly, stability. As I have previously warned, there are some pretty poor copycat attempts out there - including most if not all powder products. One of these local products, when tested by an independent lab, only had 7% of the Vitamin E it claimed to have.

**4. Lambing Kit:** Time to be thinking about this and getting it organised. Disinfectant (Vetacide), lubricant, penicillin, Glucalpos, iodine spray, mothering up aids, sleepy sickness treatments, Dextrose for intra-abdominal injection, Sprayline, Woolovers, shepherds crook etc.

To reinforce last year's message, in the case of some of these products you should always have good supplies of them on hand at this time of year in case of sudden storms. I refer specifically to:

- **Milk Fever Treatments** – e.g. Glucalpos, Calprophos. Have 5 - 6 500ml packs per 2000 ewes on hand. Don't worry about expiry dates as Calcium Borogluconate doesn't go off.
- **Sleepy Sickness Treatments** - Ketol, Ketol Xtra. As a minimum have 2 - 5lt on hand.
- **Woolovers** – If you do use these then have a number equivalent to about 10% of your expected lamb numbers stored away in a rodent safe environment. We are holding an extra 10,000 of these over and above our normal stocks, however these will go nowhere if a storm hits. The manufacturer just can't respond quickly enough to sudden surges in demand.

### Milk Fever vs. Sleepy Sickness

We quite often get asked about the differences between these two metabolic conditions and it is a few years since these were last written up in a newsletter so I will go through these again.

**1. Sleepy Sickness:** Due to more energy going out than going in. Symptoms include:

- It occurs up to about six weeks prior to lambing, mainly in fat ewes carrying multiples when subjected to under-nutrition.
- Not eating; aimless walking; star gazing.
- "Propping" against obstacles.
- Teeth grinding, muscle twitching round ears and eyes.
- Apparent blindness.
- Recumbancy progressing eventually to coma and death in 2 – 4 days.

**Treatment:** 60 – 90ml of Ketol or Ketol Xtra repeated 6 – 8 hours later. You've got to treat **early** before they are down to have any chance of success.

**2. Milk Fever:** Due to a sudden drop in blood calcium levels. Symptoms include:

- Mainly occurs prior to lambing (from 6 weeks prior) but can occur after lambing.

- Often occurs within 24 hours of a sudden change of feed, bad weather or a short period of fasting as is imposed by yarding.
- Sudden onset - compared to sleepy sickness having a slower onset.
- Usually found sitting down, sometimes with hind legs extended backwards and a slight bloating.
- Green nose and mouth from regurgitation.
- Progresses to coma and death in 6-36 hours.
- Occasionally you may see the very early signs of slight excitability, muscle tremors and stilted gait however this doesn't last long and you usually find them down.

**Treatment:** 120 – 150mls of Glucalpos or Calprophos given under the skin over the ribs and rubbed in well. Should respond in 3 – 4 hours.

### Calf Rearing

Last year, Elspeth Dunne coordinated and ran a pretty popular "club" for calf rearers. This is being repeated this season. Those who register will receive a fortnightly emailed newsletter throughout spring with various tips and advice on calf rearing, things like calf shed requirements, colostrum feeding, the nutrition behind weaning from milk as well as services the clinic offers such as a facilities inspection, painless disbudding and weighing. If you would like to receive these emails, please send your name and address to [edunne@cluthavets.co.nz](mailto:edunne@cluthavets.co.nz)

### Pre-lamb Drenching

Every year we field a lot of questions around this topic, along the lines of "should I be drenching my ewes pre-tup, and if so what should I use?" In a forum such as this, I can really only talk generally as the situation is likely to vary from farm to farm.

The first and quite important point to make is that you don't (and what's more, you shouldn't) look at the flock as a whole and everything, whether a triplet bearing two-tooth or a mixed age single, gets the same treatment. You should look at the various groups according to:

- Age - hogget, two-tooth, mixed age.
- Pregnancy status - 1, 2, or 3.
- Condition - maybe there is a lighter mob.
- Maybe some FECs.

Then using all of this information, plus feed availability etc, make an assessment of the need for a drench of the various mobs. Keep in mind the three principles of internal parasite control:

1. Avoid or mitigate high risk practices.
2. Preserve or maintain refugia.
3. Use combinations of effective anthelmintics.

Pre-lamb drenching of ewes is a higher risk practice and more so when moxidectin injection (Cydectin, Exodus, Eweguard) is used. The main mitigating factor here is not to use these products in all ewes

and especially year after year. A typical programme of pre-lamb drenching on a farm could be:

- Use of Bionic capsules in in-lamb hoggets and triplet bearing ewes.
- Single bearing ewes get nothing other than fed appropriately.
- Twin two-tooths get a moxidectin injection.
- Twin mixed age ewes get a conventional oral drench.

The point is, there are no exact right or wrong answers here - it will vary from farm to farm, and year to year on the same farm. Please feel free to contact the veterinary staff if you have any queries in this area. Our advice is free and unbiased, which is more than you can probably say about the salesman up your drive.

### Scanning Results

I haven't heard of a lot of results yet but of those I have most mainly tended to be up on last year, although there does seem to be a bit of variation - the odd result is back. I would expect most results to be up on last season as the dry autumn and tight feed conditions last year did impact on scanning.

There does seem to be a few farms so far that have had a few too many dry two-tooths. A target or normal dry two-tooth percentage would be 3%, for mixed age ewes it would be 2%. If you have significantly more than this, then give us a call. There are often several factors involved in this and some investigation can be needed to sort it out.

There is plenty of useful information apart from sorting out dries, singles, twins and triplets for feeding management that can be gained from scanning. This includes:

- Whether some factor other than a change in body weight is responsible for a change in scanning %. You can work this out from knowing your scanning index (scanning % ÷ average pre-tup weight).
- Identifying early lambers (e.g. first 10-14 days) can be useful. This could enable half the flock to be given their pre-lamb treatments, set stocked, tailed and weaned earlier.
- Dry ewes should be culled. Some people give dry two-tooths a second chance but you should cull these as these are the less fertile ones and you have already selected them out.
- Identifying the low condition score twin bearing ewes gives the opportunity to introduce some early preferential treatment.
- Likewise if you scan for triplets these can also be targeted for preferential treatment.

### Product Supply & Outages

A bit of an update needed here. The last newsletter had been written and printed but hadn't even been posted when my good news story about Prolavax

availability partially turned to custard. We received news that Prolavax Plain will not be available this season after all. Apparently some wally at Bayer (the manufacturer) didn't put it in (or inadvertently took it out of) a refrigerated store so it was stored at room temp and as a result didn't pass the final quality control check. Most frustrating!

Prolavax Selenised will still be available, however it does have a November 2014 expiry date. Those of you wishing to use Prolavax Se, if you could let retail know roughly how much you want, that would be much appreciated. With the lack of availability of Prolavax and Eweguard over the last few seasons, we really have no useful historical "normal" use data from which to base an order on, and because of the expiry date will have to be pretty cautious when ordering to avoid possibly wasting a lot of money.

So far (touch wood), it looks like all the various versions of Eweguard (Plain, Selenised and B12 + Se) will be available, again for the first time in several years. An indication of your requirements would be appreciated because, as is the story with Prolavax, we don't have any recent normal historical use patterns to base ordering the various versions on.

### Merchandise Matters

The list of specials etc this month is as follows:

- **Bionic Capsules:** Purchases of these go in the draw for 2 x \$10,000 travel vouchers and entry into the Wanaka Wine Tour. In addition, each purchase of 2500 capsules, qualifies you for a \$399 Macpac luggage bag.
- **Exodus (Moxidectin Injection):** Purchases of this go in the draw for the 2 x \$10,000 travel vouchers and entry into the Wanaka Wine Tour.
- **Merial Ancare Cattle Products:** Purchases of these products also go in the draw for the travel vouchers and Wanaka Wine Tour.
- **Eprinex Pour-on 5lt:** Buy 3 x 5lt, get the 4<sup>th</sup> one free.
- **Exodus 1% 500ml Injection:** New product from Merial Ancare equivalent to Cydectin Injection. \$275.52 / 500ml nett incl GST.
- **Dectomax Injection:** With every starter pack of 2 x 500ml you get a free 200ml. With every two starter packs you get an outdoor clothing pack.
- **Cydectin Pour-on Packs:** Receive an extra 10% free.
- **Combat Topline Abamectin Pour-on 5lt:** Only \$2.34 / 500kg cow nett incl GST.
- **Kaiwaka Children's Wet Weather Clothing:** Come and see the over-trousers, bib over-trousers & parkas from size 2 up. These are particularly well priced.

John A. Smart BVSc.