

# CLUTHA VETS SHEEP & BEEF FARMER NEWSLETTER



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## Clinic News

### *Annie Jackson*

As I write this in front of a lovely burning fire, it reminds me of the enjoyable aspects of winter. The reason it is lit, is the not quite so enjoyable aspects of rain, and a huge drop in temperature. In a few of my last jobs in the cattle yards, I encountered mud again, and realised... we haven't had this for a while!

May has become a big month for the large animal team to help and assist with the end of the dairy season. With the ongoing staffing issues that our farmers are facing with COVID and lack of available people, this has become a big month. We are also still preg testing beef cattle, surveillance blood testing for M.bovis, and squeezing all the sick cows etc. in as well.

Kim Bastiaansen, our head tech in Balclutha, decided it was time for a change in her career, and after 6 great years with us, has moved to Farmlands, Mosgiel to begin her training as a TFO. We wish Kim all the very best and we are very grateful for all that she has contributed to our awesome Large animal vet team. Lauren Johnston, will be filling in the role as head tech, a role that she will be more than capable of.

Martha O'Connor will shortly be leaving our Milton clinic as she prepares for the birth of her first baby. We wish Martha and John all the very best as they embark on one of life's most exciting adventures!

With our borders opening again Anna Burrell will be saying "See you soon" as she flies off for a couple of months to see a bit more of the world. Many of the OE's have been postponed, so now we are encouraging the young vets to have a taste of the world. When Anna returns, she will be joining the Milton large animal vet team for 3 days a week and will be on small animal duty 2 days a week in Balclutha, continuing with her orthopaedic training.

COVID is still wreaking its havoc amongst our staff, but it is testament to our awesome team that we have been able to manage each absence, as often these are without warning! It is also testament to our awesome farmers that cope with sudden changes and are understanding. Thank you.

We are hoping that the fire is not lit too much this winter, as a mild winter will be required to get through the areas that are still short of feed.

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# Salmonella Strikes Again!

**By Alisa McDonald**

We have had a few cases of salmonellosis in ewes recently, with cases popping up in various parts of our practice area. The usual time of year for the enteric (gut) form of salmonella in New Zealand is December to June, although in this neck of the woods late autumn seems to be when we start to see cases.

*Salmonella hindmarsh* is the main culprit, although we are seeing *S Typhimurium* and *S Bovimorbificans* more often. These strains are all included in the Salvexin+B vaccine, which is also used to prevent *Salmonella Brandenburg* abortion.

Within most flocks there will be some animals that are carriers of the salmonella bacteria, but we only see clinical disease when there is some sort of stress factor, such as sudden changes of feed (good feed to poorer quality), prolonged yarding, or high stocking rates. These conditions also lead to a rapid spread of infection

Usually some sheep are found dead (often near a water source), with others sick or dying. There is often a khaki coloured diarrhoea, but sheep can die from salmonellosis rapidly, before diarrhoea has developed. Affected ewes are often in good condition. Salmonellosis can look similar to listeriosis so lab tests are required to determine which it is.



In an outbreak, spreading stock out will help to reduce transmission. Ideally they should be moved from the paddock where deaths have occurred asap. Sick animals should be isolated and treated if appropriate. Treatment involves antibiotics and fluids, however the prognosis is poor once symptoms are seen.

In an outbreak vaccination can help to reduce losses, especially if given early in the outbreak. Yards and equipment should be disinfected after vaccinating.

If you already have a preventative vaccination program for *Salmonella Brandenburg* your flock may have some protection against the gut forms of salmonella as well. The optimum timing of preventative vaccination for gut salmonellosis does differ slightly than for abortion prevention, however.

It is also important to remember that *Salmonella* is a zoonotic disease (i.e. it can affect humans as well) and so hygiene is vital to prevent you, your family and your staff from becoming infected.

Please give us a call if you suspect you have an outbreak. The sooner we get onto it the smaller the losses will be.

## RVM Consultations

With spring just around the corner, it won't be long before you will probably require one or two animal health products that are classified as "restricted veterinary medicines" (RVMs). Whether it be some penicillin for ewes with bearings, post winter copper supplements for your cattle or scabby mouth vaccine at tailing time, spring is the time of year when RVM usage is usually at its highest.

Penicillin and all other antibiotics (whether they be injectable, topical or oral), most vaccines, including scabby mouth vaccines, as well as some trace elements such as injectable iodine and copper products, all fall into the RVM category.

As such we are not permitted to sell any of these products without a veterinary consultation. For most farmers the most convenient approach is to have one "annual consultation" where we cover off a whole year's predicted RVM usage. We can discuss any other animal health or production issues at the same time. If you have not had a consult for a year please make a booking soon and get sorted before lambing.

For those preferring not to have an annual consult, the other option is to speak to one of our vets each time you require an RVM. An appointment is still recommended, to ensure that a vet is available when you visit.

## Animal Health Reminders

### ***Keep an eye on worm levels over winter***

According to recent predictions we are in for a warmer than normal winter. While this will be very welcome news for farmers facing feed restrictions thanks to the dry autumn, it could lead to a few problems too. For any animals being wintered on pasture, especially young stock, warmer conditions could translate to continued exposure to worms. It is certainly not looking like a season where you can hang up the drench gun at the end of May and allow Jack Frost to deal to the worms till spring! Be diligent and either continue your hoggets' monthly drench programme deeper into winter than usual, or being in some faecal samples for us to check.

### ***Pregnancy scanning hinds***

Pregnancy testing your hinds in early winter can be a valuable management tool. Not only does it allow you to get rid of the dries before you've spent money on wintering them, but it can also improve the survival of your calves. It is a common finding that those calves born after around mid December have a much poorer chance of making it to weaning than earlier born animals. This is largely due to them (and their mothers) being harassed by the other hinds in the mob. Early scanning allows you to identify the late calving hinds through foetal aging, and calve them together in a mob on their own, improving calf survival rates. It also gives you other options, such as holding the late calving group on winter crop longer, to conserve pasture, or sending them to the works along with your dries if there are not very many. Give us a call to book in your herd.

### ***Boost your hoggets' pulpy kidney immunity before crop feeding***

In the April newsletter we discussed how high quality feeds and better genetics have lead to an increased risk of death from pulpy kidney and other clostridial diseases in our young stock. If you are planning on putting your hoggets onto fodder beet or a good brassica crop this winter make sure they are well protected. This could mean giving them a third shot of "5 in 1" or Coglavax, if they got their first two doses a while ago, as young lambs.

### ***Worm control in adult stags***

Parasite management strategies in deer have a lot of similarities with those in sheep, especially when it comes to drenching of adult stock. With drench resistance in mind, most farmers follow the industry guidelines and avoid drenching adult animals unless there is a clear need to do so. One situation, however, where it may pay to deviate from this recommendation is with your breeding stags, post-rut. Stags nearly always lose condition during the roar, no matter how well you are feeding them and, just like ewes around lambing time, this can result in increased susceptibility to worms. A timely pre-winter drench can help them regain that lost condition faster and also lead to heavier velvet in the spring.

### ***Check your herd's copper status***

As mentioned in Marcus's article on copper deficiency (page 5), it is important for cattle and deer herds to have good liver copper reserves at this time of year, so that they can cope with the decline in copper availability in the feed that typically occurs during the winter and early spring. If you have animals e.g. cull cows or dry hinds, going to the works soon, an ideal way to assess the herd's copper status is to have liver samples collected at the slaughter plant for testing. Please give your nearest clinic a call to arrange this.

### ***Do your hoggets need a vitamin boost over winter?***

While brassica crops are good sources of energy and protein, they can be low in some minerals and vitamins. And, to compound the problem, animals grazing diets high in polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) such as brassicas require higher amounts of some of these nutrients; Vitamin E and selenium being the main examples. Winter, as we know, is a time when Vitamin D levels can drop due to reduced sunlight hours. Clutha Vets has a range of vitamin and mineral supplements to help your young stock get through the winter in better shape. And, of course, these same products, especially VetLSD, can also enhance lamb survival when given to your ewes closer to lambing.

## BVD Having an Impact

By Andrew Roe.

The BVD (bovine viral diarrhoea) virus is widespread in the country's beef cattle population, with around two thirds (65%) of herds believed to be infected. The impacts of the virus are wide ranging and include scouring and reduced growth rates in young stock, poor reproductive performance, especially in heifers, and increased susceptibility to other diseases due to the virus's effect on the immune system.

The severity of these impacts depends on how long the virus has been present on a property. If it is endemic in your herd the effects may not be very dramatic as there will be a certain level of immunity amongst your cattle. You may not even recognise that you have a BVD issue. But, nevertheless, the subclinical reductions in growth rates and pregnancy results will still be having an economic impact.

If, on the other hand, your herd has been free of the virus and then it is suddenly introduced the effects can be disastrous as none of the cattle will have any prior immunity. We encountered a couple of such cases this autumn with the herds involved having unexpectedly high numbers of dry cows at scanning time. By blood sampling a selection of each herd we were able to demonstrate a high level of recent BVD virus exposure and investigations are now underway to identify the carrier animal(s).

If you have not taken any steps to determine the impact BVD may be having on your herd, the best place to start is to arrange for us to collect blood samples from around 15 of your younger cows to work out the likely level of exposure to the virus. If this turns out to be high, we can put a plan in place to eliminate or manage the disease. If your herd is found to have had no BVD exposure, you will know to focus on measures to prevent it from arriving.

Please get in touch to get the ball rolling, or to discuss any aspects of BVD control.



## Listeriosis Risk

By Andrew Roe

As stock is gradually moved onto winter feed the risk of Listeriosis rises sharply. We have already seen one case this winter, involving illness and deaths in a mob of older ewes.

*Listeria monocytogenes* is a soil bacteria, and as such, it is possible to get disease in animals grazing pasture. We see this very occasionally, but the more common scenario is sick and dying animals after baleage or silage feeding, which was the situation in this year's case.

Listeriosis can manifest itself in three ways:

- The enteric (gut) form, which resembles salmonellosis, featuring lethargy, loss of appetite, scouring and death.
- The neurological form with affected sheep and cattle often exhibiting the classic circling behaviour
- Abortions

Listeria bacteria can multiply in conserved feed if conditions are suitable for it, namely oxygen (air) is present and the pH is higher than 5.5.

Silage and baleage made from good quality pasture or crops that has been conserved correctly, should have a pH well below 5.0, preventing Listeria from growing. It should also not have any air in it.

Problems arise when damage to the cover/wrap occurs allowing air into the feed, or when large amounts of woody material, such as mature thistles, are incorporated allowing pockets of air to become trapped in the bales/stack.

Poor quality feed, such as pasture that has gone to seed, may not have enough soluble carbohydrate present to allow the silage to ferment sufficiently to get the pH down low enough. Not only does this increase the risk of Listeriosis, but it means the silage will be poorly preserved and have poor nutritional value. Some silage and baleage samples that we send off for nutritional analysis are so poor that the lab technicians unkindly describe them as "compost"!

If you notice that parts of your silage stack or baleage has gone mouldy, black and slimy, or smells bad, avoid feeding these sections to your stock. If concerned we can arrange testing of your silage or baleage, to assess the risk of Listeriosis.

# The Copper Conundrum

By Marcus Yule

## Why is copper important and what are some signs my herd could be deficient?

Copper is an essential trace element and is required by an animal's body for a number of important reactions. It has a role in the development of bone, growth, immune function, and coat pigmentation.

Deficiency is particularly common in cattle and deer. Clinical signs of a deficiency include general ill-thrift which can be accompanied by a poor coat, and bone abnormalities in severe cases. Subclinical deficiency, however, is more common, with signs including reductions in growth rates, fertility and calf survival.

## What causes deficiency?

Primary deficiency occurs when there is insufficient copper in the diet. In a pasture-based system this is often a result of plants growing in low copper soils and is relatively uncommon compared with secondary deficiency.

Secondary deficiency occurs when other factors (antagonists) in the diet (e.g. iron, molybdenum, and sulphur) bind to the copper present in feed reducing its availability for absorption and utilisation by the animal. This type of deficiency is worse in animals wintered on crop, in part due to increased soil ingestion as soil contains the factors mentioned above, especially iron. As a result, liver copper reserves decline over winter, generally reaching their lowest point come spring.

## What is the best way to diagnose deficiency and then monitor the effectiveness of copper supplementation?

The liver stores copper, releasing sufficient amounts into the bloodstream to maintain health and function until its reserves are depleted. For this reason, blood sampling alone has limitations as low blood copper levels only occur when deficiency is severe and an animal's liver stores are exhausted. Liver samples give the best indication of a herd's copper status and can be taken either by biopsy or by getting livers tested at the meat works. Autumn is the best time to get samples tested; at this time of year copper stores should be at their seasonal high. Quantifying liver copper stores indicates whether there will be sufficient copper to get an animal through the winter and into spring without developing a deficiency.

## How can I supplement my herd?

Copper supplementation with boluses or injections is the most reliable way to ensure that all animals receive the same amount of copper, without antagonists in the soil affecting absorption/ utilisation.

Boluses are a great way to supplement young stock as they come in a variety of sizes and are effective for a number of months.

Injections can be a more practical option in older animals. Although shorter acting compared with boluses, products such as Coppermax can be used to boost copper stores at strategic times of the year e.g. pre-winter and late pregnancy. Other injectable products such as Multimix and Marks-Min are designed more to maintain adequate copper levels. They contain other trace elements as well, such as selenium and zinc.

For more information on supplementation feel free to speak to one of our vets or retail staff.



## Can copper be harmful?

Being a trace element, copper is only required in very small amounts. It can be toxic (and fatal!) if products are incorrectly administered/overdosed or over-supplementation occurs over a period of time. For this reason, we advise that the copper status of your herd is known before starting a supplementation programme.

## Wanted: Lousy Sheep!

Clutha Vets have been approached by an animal health company, keen to test a new product for the treatment of lice and internal parasites. So we are after some sheep with lice!

The trial would involve comparing the new product to an existing, recognised lice treatment so there is no requirement to leave a proportion of the mob untreated. Compensation will be paid to the participating farmer for the work involved.

Please get in touch with Andrew at the Balclutha clinic (phone 027 611 3077) if you notice signs of lice in your flock over the winter, and would like to be involved.



## Roly at Your Service

Winter has only just started, but it won't be long before you'll be making some decisions around pre-lambing animal health treatments for your flock.

With so many options available, not only around worm products, but also vaccines and trace element supplements, it can be quite a daunting task weighing it all up and settling on a plan, especially now that part flock treatments are being advocated to help delay the onset of drench resistance.

If you'd like some help evaluating these options, Roly (Rhiane Smith) would love to call round and lend a hand. Roly has extensive product knowledge and experience and will ensure you exercise your buying power to the max.

To book a farm visit please ring the clinic, or give Roly a call on 027 643 5813



## Retail Ramblings: June Promos

### Boehringer Ingelheim Cattle Drenches

- **Last chance** to pick up DeWalt drill, screw driver set or toolbox with your BI cattle injectable, pour-on or oral cattle drench

### Boehringer Ingelheim Sheep Drenches

- **Last chance** to grab a hard wearing Degree work shirt when you purchase selected BI oral drenches.

### Turbo Cattle Pour-On

- **Last chance** to take home a Pole Saw when you pick up a 7.5lt pack of Turbo Pour-On.

### Sheep Drenches

- Grab a \$30 New World voucher with each drum of Boss drench
- Purchase Startect 15ltr and get a FREE Ezepak Drench Pack

## 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