

# CLUTHA VETS SHEEP & BEEF FARMER NEWSLETTER



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## Clinic News

### *Annie Jackson*

The shortest day of the year has passed, with the promise of days getting longer, albeit slowly. Along with the days gradually getting longer, it also seems to herald in some horrible weather. This last week we have had snow, rain and wind, and tramping through the mud really makes it feel like winter.

I recently attended our annual vet conference with many of our New Zealand colleagues and sat in on a Wormwise workshop run by Ginny Dodunski. It was very sobering to hear how serious drench resistance already is, but also encouraging to hear that there are tactics and solutions we can be doing to mitigate the issues arising. Faecal Egg Counts and monitoring are high on the list for aiding in making sustainable decisions for our farms. Andrew has more on pre-lamb drenching on page 3.

A few of our vets are currently off making the most of our not so good temperatures to have some adventures in some warmer temperatures.

Dave Exton is in Vanuatu combining work and leisure. So far he has lined up every colt that needs gelded, and has already clocked up 25! Eckie has been off exploring some interesting parts of South America and should be winging his way home soon.

Last week we bid farewell to one of our Balclutha technicians, Nicole Kennedy, who is heading to north Otago with her partner for work. Nicole joined the team just over a year ago, quickly settling in to our team, and we will miss her quiet efficiency.

Everyone will be back on deck for Spring and we are looking forward to a Spring where we are fully staffed and able to help everyone that needs it! And sitting here in front of the fire and experiencing a very bitter winter week, I am looking forward to Spring and the weather warming up again!

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## Vitamin D and ewe bearings—what's the story?

**By Andrew Roe**

A number of our clients have voiced their concerns that this spring could be a bad one for bearings in ewes in our region. They have good reason to be a little nervous. A large, comprehensive study on bearings, that was carried out over about 120 farms in Southland and Hawkes Bay, revealed that one of the risk factors for the condition is a gain in weight or body condition during early pregnancy. With the significant flush in feed that we have experienced over the last two or three months, many ewes will have put on a bit of condition since the ram went out.

This heightened concern about bearing numbers has gone hand-in-hand with a renewed interest about the role that injectable Vitamin D may play in reducing the incidence of the problem. The link was identified about six years ago by Ben Allot, a vet in North Canterbury. He found that a 1ml injection of Hideject (a vitamin A,D and E product) significantly reduced bearing numbers in twin bearing, mixed age ewes, in one of his client's flocks. While it is hard to prove, it was assumed that it was the vitamin D in the Hideject that was responsible for the benefit seen.

Since Ben's findings were publicised, a number of our sheep farmer clients who had typically experienced quite high bearing rates in their ewes, started using Hideject. Ewe bearings is a hard problem to investigate because numbers can vary so much from year to year. However, the fact that a few of our farmers have used the product for a number of years and consistently reported fewer bearing numbers than they used to get, has given them confidence that Hideject has helped.

One pleasing finding from his study was that giving Hideject shortly after scanning was as effective as giving it earlier. This means that anyone looking to try it can save some money by waiting until after scanning and only treating their multiple bearing ewes, as the singles have a lot lower risk of having a bearing.

Please get in touch if you would like to try using Hideject in your ewes, or if you would like to learn more about the strategy. Like a lot of products at the moment, Hideject has been in short supply, but we do have another batch scheduled to arrive soon. All the same, it would pay to let us know your requirements soon, to ensure we set some aside for you.

We would also be keen to hear from any local farmers who would be keen to trial the product. This would involve treating about half of your twin bearing ewes, mixed age ewes with Hideject and

leaving the other half untreated, and then recording how many of each group went on to develop bearings.

While Allot's study was conducted according to good scientific principles, and the results analysed by a statistician, it is still only one study. To be completely confident about the benefit of Hideject in controlling bearings, we would like to see if Ben's results are repeatable and not just a "one-off". And it would be especially good to investigate it on farms in our own area.

We are very grateful that one local farmer has already put up his hand to carry out such a trial on his flock this season. If anyone else would also like to do so, we would love to hear from you!

## Listeria Cases on the Rise

Over the last month or two Clutha Vets has dealt with quite a few listeriosis outbreaks in ewes and hoggets. The disease is caused by a bacteria, *Listeria monocytogenes*, which is present in the soil.

Most outbreaks are associated with baleage or silage feeding, as the bacteria multiplies rapidly in conserved feed if conditions are suitable for its survival. However we occasionally see cases where there has been no access to supplements, suggesting that the bacteria was ingested with the pasture, presumably when sheep are forced to graze low to the ground, or during muddy conditions.

The disease can cause abortions in sheep and cattle, but the two main manifestations we see are: Neurological form—the bacteria penetrates the oral or nasal lining, tracks along the nerves and finds its way to the brain. The resulting "micro abscesses" lead to a range of neurological signs including circling, apparent blindness and seizures; Gut form—this condition resembles a salmonella outbreak with affected ewes appearing sick, off their feed, scouring, and dying within a day or two.

Listeria can only survive in conserved feed if the pH has not dropped sufficiently, and if oxygen is present. Both factors are indications that something has gone wrong with the ensiling process; either the pasture quality was poor, preventing the feed from fermenting properly, there were holes in the wrap/cover allowing air to get in, or maybe there were pockets of hollow stemmed weeds, such as thistles, which allowed pockets of air to be trapped within the bale.

# Pre-lamb worm control—what are the options?

**By Andrew Roe**

This is the time of year when we have plenty of discussion about the various pre-lamb worm control options with our farmers. What are my options? Which ewes to treat? What are the pros and cons of each option?

And this year, of course, there is the added complication of the unavailability of Bionic Plus capsules, leaving many farmers with one less option than they have had before.

Following is a brief summary of each approach.

## No worm treatment

Adult sheep that are in good condition and being well fed should have good immunity to internal parasites and be able to handle the incoming worms themselves, especially if only rearing one lamb. Also worth considering is the fact that a ewe's immune system has an impact on not only the number of worm eggs she passes, but also the viability of those eggs. Trials have shown that, even if adult ewes are excreting worm eggs, less than 5% of them are likely to hatch. So healthy, well conditioned ewes will not significantly contribute to the total worm population on your pasture that your lambs will be exposed to later on.

If concerned, you can carry out a faecal egg count to determine if your ewes currently have much of a worm burden coming out of the winter. If they don't, and you are happy that they are looking good, you may opt to rely on good nutrition to control any new worms that pick up over lambing.

## Oral drenches and Nilvax

Apart from the drenches containing moxidectin (eg Cydectin Oral) which continue working for about three weeks these products do not have any persistent activity, so they are great at cleaning out existing worm burdens but offer no help in preventing new ones establishing over lambing when the ewes are typically at their most vulnerable. Again, a faecal egg count will help in deciding if an oral pre-lamb drench is likely to be of any benefit at all.

## Short acting injectable products

Injectable "drenches" containing moxidectin, such as Exodus 1%, Cydectin Injection and Eweguard (which also contains a 6 in 1 vaccine) offer five weeks persistent activity against the most important worm type at this time of year (Ostertagia). So, as well as eliminating existing worm infections, they prevent new ones establishing for about one month. Because of this relatively short window of protection they need to

be given quite close to lambing for maximum benefit. Being single active products there is a greater risk of drench resistance development than with the drench capsules.

## Long acting injectable products

Exodus LA and Cydectin LA continue working for around 100 days against Ostertagia, so there is more flexibility around the timing of treatment with respect to lambing dates. And with this extended period of cover, they have value in treating the most vulnerable animals such as pregnant hoggets and ewes rearing triplets, which are more likely to take longer to bounce back after lambing than other ewes.

The accompanying insert gives some suggestions around how you may use these various options for different groups of ewes within the flock.

Considerations when deciding "who gets what" include:

- **Age of ewe**—hogget vs two tooth vs mixed age
- **Pregnancy status**—single vs twin vs triplet
- **Body condition**—good vs light
- **Anticipated feed covers over lambing**—good pasture covers vs grazing closer to the ground

## Mitigating the Risk of Drench Resistance

Use of persistent acting drench products carries an increased risk of drench resistance development. Ways to reduce this risk include:

- **Partial flock treatment (examples in insert)**
- **Giving a primer dose of a combination oral drench (one that contains different active ingredients to the injectable) at the time of administration. Adult worms, already in the ewe's gut are harder to kill than incoming worm larvae, especially for drenches where resistance is starting to develop.**
- **Carrying out a faecal egg count on treated ewes part way through the "payout period" of the product in question and, if necessary, giving an exit drench at tailing. For the long acting injectable products around 60 days post-treatment is a good time to collect the faecal samples.**

## Bionic Capsule Reminder

As was widely publicised earlier this year, no new batches of Bionic Plus long acting drench capsules are being released for the coming spring. The only product available therefore, was what was carried over from last year, either by vet practices or farmers themselves.

A more recent development, mentioned in our June newsletter, was MPI's decision to ban the use of all Bionic Plus capsules until further notice due to concerns about the rate at which the active ingredients are being released from the capsule. So any capsules currently in circulation, either at vet clinics or already on farm, are not permitted to be administered to ewes.

***We are very happy to discuss other ways of reducing the impact of worms on your ewes this spring in the face of this ban on Bionic usage. For those considering using alternative pre-lamb worm products please call one of our technical field staff to discuss options and sort out your requirements:***

**Contact: Roly - (027) 643 5813 or  
Lisa - (021) 262 0387**

## Book in Your RVM Consult

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.

## Special Offer on BVD Vaccine

The BVD (Bovine Viral Diarrhoea) virus is widespread on NZ sheep and beef farms. It can cause pregnancy loss in breeding animals, and diarrhoea and reduced growth rates in young stock. It also suppresses the immune system making animals more susceptible to other diseases.

Over the last couple of years a number of our clients experienced poorer than expected pregnancy scanning results in their cattle thanks to the recent introduction of the BVD virus into their herd.

Vaccination is an effective way of protecting your stock from the impacts of this costly disease, both for herds that are working their way towards eradication, and for those that have not yet been exposed (and therefore have no immunity to the virus).

Previously unvaccinated heifers and cows require two injections in the first year, with the second one given at least four weeks before the bulls go out. And don't forget the bulls!

***Clutha Vets are currently offering a generous incentive—a discount of 20% off the cost of Bovilis BVD vaccine to all vet club members. If keen to take up this offer, please get in quick as it expires once current vaccine stocks run out.***

## Your Vets

### Balclutha Clinic

Jason Darwen	BVSc
Rob Mills	BVSc
Hamish Moore	BVSc
Catherine Copland	BVM&S
Peter Heslip	BVSc
Steven Butler	BVSc PGDipVSc
Andrew Roe	BVSc, MANZCVS
David Exton	BVSc
Eckard Abrie	BVSc
Sam Lewis	BVSc, MSc MANZCVS
Darius Tan	BVSc
Anneke Muller	BVSc
Wing Szeto	BVSc
Dana Marais	BVSc

### Milton and Lawrence Clinics

Sid Taylor	BVSc, MANZCVS
Annie Jackson	BVSc
Martha O'Connor	MVB
Bevan Topham	BVSc
Anna Burrell	BVSc
Sam Howarth	BVSc
Alisa McDonald	BVSc
Sam Looney	BVSc
Emma Shaw	BVSc