

CLUTHA VETS SHEEP & BEEF FARMER NEWSLETTER



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Clinic News

By Annie Jackson

Wow! All the rain we were hanging out for in the Autumn has certainly arrived, and it feels like all in one go... It is so wet underfoot and there have been plenty of new lakes and streams arrive around the country. Still, better to be getting it now, than at lambing, but it certainly makes it difficult for looking after stock.

It has been a difficult winter in some sense, with feed shortages and some surprisingly very high worm counts amongst adult stock (a hangover from our dry Autumn), but hopefully rolling onto a good Spring!

Spring is our vets' favourite time of the year, and in the words of Sid Taylor (vet in Milton), "this is the time of the year we know we can make a difference", but it also becomes a busy time. With the ongoing vet shortage, we are very fortunate at Clutha Vets to have a good number of very experienced vets, but we would be happy to have a few more knock on the door!

Martha O'Connor, (mixed animal vet from Milton) is currently on maternity leave and we should be hearing some good news from her any day now. We are looking forward to welcoming Anna Burrell back from her overseas jaunt shortly. On her return she will be working out of the Milton Clinic for 3 days a week and continuing her small animal orthopaedics training on the other two days in Balclutha.



There is always some apprehension before lambing and calving begins, always a few slips to start concerns, and somehow it has come around yet again very quickly. All those jobs you hoped to do in winter, still seemed not to get done... but once we are all back in the swing of Spring...there is never a better place to be – as a farmer or vet!

In This Issue

- Clinic News
- FECRT results
- Benefits of anti-inflammatories
- Peri-natal lamb losses
- Animal Health Reminders:
 - Pre-lamb worm treatments
 - Lambing checklist
 - Stag nutrition
 - Heifer BVD vaccination
 - Hypothermic lambs
 - Magnesium stagers
- Metabolic disease in ewes
- Free faecal collection service
- RVM Consults
- Retail ramblings

Drench Resistance: Results of Local Reduction Tests

By Andrew Roe

Vets are often weird people, interested in weird things such as worms and worm control. Sometimes we struggle with the fact that most other people, including many of our farmer clients, have more interesting social lives than us, and so don't get very excited about what's going on in the inner depths of a lamb's gastro-intestinal tract!

It is not surprising, therefore, that it can be quite challenging for us to convince our farmers that carrying out a faecal egg count reduction test (FECRT) on their property is a good idea. However, we are slowly turning this around and are pleased to report that, each year, the number of clients keen to check out the drench resistance status on their farms is gradually increasing.

This season we worked with twenty farmers, to carry out FECRTs and establish how effective the various drench options are on their farms. The results are summarised in the table below:

Drench Type	Number of farms tested	Percentage not achieving 100% egg reduction	Percentage with 100% egg reduction but larvae present	Percentage with 100% egg reduction and no larvae present
BZ ("white drenches")	10	60%	40%	0
Levamisole	10	60%	40%	0
Abamectin	14	29%	50%	21%
Arrest (BZ/Lev)	18	28%	33%	39%
Switch (Aba/Lev)	14	7%	36%	57%
Matrix (triple)	20	15%	25%	60%
Trimox (triple)	1	0	0	100%
Startect (Derq/aba)	2	0	0	100%

Firstly you will notice that the "number of farms tested" varies for the different drenches. When setting the test up we discuss which drenches the farmer would like to check out. If earlier testing has already identified resistance to certain drenches (usually the single active ingredient options) it may be agreed to drop them this time round. Similarly, for those farms where resistance to some of the commonly used products is suspected, we may decide to include some of the newer options that aren't routinely included in a FECRT.

When looking at a drench's performance we firstly consider how many worm eggs are present in the post-drenching sample. The third column in the above table gives the percentage of farms where the drench in question failed to achieve 100% egg reduction. As expected, the single active products performed the worst here, although one of the double combos didn't fare too well either. Worryingly, there were several farms where the lambs drenched with the triple combo (Matrix) had a few eggs show up post drenching.

Next, the faecal samples are cultured, allowing any eggs present to hatch into larvae, which are then counted. It is common to find larvae in samples for which no eggs were found, because the larval culture is a more sensitive test. The fourth column gives the percentage of each drench type that fell into this category. This is referred to as "larval leakage" rather than drench resistance and serves as an early warning that there are the very occasional worms that have persisted and that extra care is needed to prevent this from progressing to detectable drench resistance.

Finally, the last column gives the percentage of each drench type where we not only achieved 100% egg reduction, but where no larvae were found either..... the ideal result. And not one that we saw as often as we'd like, for most of the drench types investigated!

For each farmer carrying out a FECRT we prepare a worm management plan for future seasons based on the results. If this is something you have been considering, why not take the plunge this season?

Benefits of Anti-inflammatories

By Jillian Clark

Under our guidance and prescribing, dairy farmers have used NSAID's (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) for many years now. These are drugs similar to ibuprofen and voltaren which we may take ourselves.

They provide pain relief, are anti-inflammatory and also help reduce fever. They can be used in combination with antibiotics or on their own when you are primarily looking for pain relief or to reduce inflammation.

So, when might you use these?

Beef Cattle

- Difficult calvings where there is a lot of vulval swelling, or she is a bit wobbly or down with a "pinched nerve".
- Down cow eg after being stuck in a bog.
- Cow with mastitis/nasty retained cleanings (with antibiotics).

Sheep

- Foot abscess in a ram or ewe (with antibiotics).
- Mastitis, especially "black mastitis" (with antibiotics)
- Difficult lambing in a hogget or ewe due to a large lamb.
- Prolonged lambing where ewe is sore and tired.
- Cast and unable to stand when righted.
- Ewes with a bearing: Use with caution; NSAID's may be of benefit for the swelling and discomfort BUT these drugs are excreted by the kidneys, so if the ewe has an overfull bladder and urine has backed up into the kidneys then her kidneys may already be compromised and these drugs may cause further harm.

I use these drugs often at home over lambing. The most obvious response I see is the return to grazing and increased mobility of lame ewes in late pregnancy which, with antibiotics alone, are still very lame. I always use it when giving antibiotics to a ewe with mastitis, and I have used it on occasion after a particularly difficult lambing where the ewe is obviously exhausted and sore. The NSAID gets her back interested in being a mother and she is less likely to spend excessive time sitting, so she will stand and let the lambs drink.

If you wish to take your stocks' health and welfare to the next level then please discuss this with a vet and we can prescribe you an appropriate NSAID.

Peri-Natal Lamb Losses

By Jillian Clark

Peri-natal losses are those that occur just prior to, and over, the lambing period. They vary immensely between farms. Some we can influence and others, like extreme weather events, we can often do little about. A measure we can use to see how well we are performing is to look at the lamb loss from scanning to tailing. Lamb loss under 15% would be rare but it can also be in excess of 30%. Aiming for around 20% or below is a good start.

How do we work out lamb loss?

If a farmer scans 170% and tails 135%, the survival is $135/170 \times 100 = 80\%$

Therefore the loss = 20%

Practical Ways of Reducing Peri-natal Loss

Good ewe body condition and feed covers

Ewes at BCS 3.0-3.5 at lambing have best lamb survival as a result of:

- Higher multiple lamb birth weights
- More, and better quality, colostrum
- Better maternal behaviour

Well-fed ewes at birth are more likely to bond well with their new lambs and stand to allow lambs to feed. Skinny, hungry ewes are more likely to drop their lambs and try to mother them between mouthfuls of grass.

Vaccination against abortion

As well as causing abortion Toxo and Campy can give rise to weak, less viable lambs

Vaccination with 5 in1 or similar

Clostridial infection via the navel causes extensive swelling (malignant oedema) around the navel and up the belly. Death soon follows

Vitamin and trace element supplementation

Adequate levels of selenium, iodine and Vitamin E are important for good lamb vitality and immune function.

Importance of Colostrum Intake

Ruminant newborns rely entirely on getting antibody protection from their mother through colostrum. The ability of the lamb to absorb the antibodies (immunoglobulins) from colostrum through its intestines declines quickly after birth. FOR BEST PROTECTION AGAINST NEONATAL DISEASE AND DEATH a lamb should drink 10-15% of its body weight in colostrum within 6 hours of birth. I recommend fully feeding once, compared to several part feeds over time.

Cow colostrum or commercially available colostrum substitutes are good alternatives.

Animal Health Reminders

Pre-lamb Worm Treatments Valuable in the Spring

Last month's issue of the newsletter dealt with the various pre-lamb ewe options in more detail, especially the long acting worm products. The combination of particularly high worm levels once the drought broke in autumn, coupled with a relatively warm start to the winter, has resulted in many farmers in the region experiencing weight loss in their ewes (especially two toothers). Some have even experienced significant numbers of ewe deaths due to parasitism.

On top of that we are anticipating low spring pasture covers on many farms. Taking all these factors into account points to this season being one where drench capsules and long acting injectable drenches could make a big difference to ewe condition and their milk production.

And, even if you don't feel the need to go down that route, an oral drench pre-lambing may be necessary, especially for stock wintered on pasture. A faecal egg count can be helpful in determining if this is necessary in your flock.

Lambing Checklist

Next time you are in the clinic, pick up a copy of our checklist; it's a great reminder of all the stuff you may need during the spring. Better to have everything on hand before lambing starts than remember you need to buy something when out on the lambing beat!

Stag Nutrition for Velvet Growth

To maximise your velvet production ensure your stags are on a high protein diet from button drop onwards. Good spring pasture is as good as anything for this purpose, but until that comes away, consider using supplements such as high protein deer nuts or lucerne baleage to fill the gap.

BVD Vaccination for Heifers

For those beef breeders who have embarked on a BVD vaccination programme, remember that your heifers require two doses of the vaccine before mating. For Bovilis, the BVD vaccine that we use, it is now possible to have an interval as long as six months between these two shots, so some of you may have given your heifers their first dose back in autumn. If you did not go down this route, then it would pay to start soon, to enable the second dose to be fitted in three or four weeks before the bulls go out.

Revival of Hypothermic Lambs

A great way to improve the survival of mis-mothered, hypothermic lambs is to refuel them with an injection of dextrose, before warming them up in the lamb warmer. Given directly into the abdominal cavity, this potent energy source is absorbed into the blood stream a lot faster than anything given by mouth, especially in lambs that are cold. A lot of our clients swear by this simple technique; if you are yet to try it call into the clinic and we will show you how it's done. Alternatively check out the fact sheet on Beef + Lamb NZ's website, that was prepared using Clutha Vets' information. Go to: <https://beeflambnz.com/knowledge-hub/PDF/reviving-newborn-lambs.pdf>

Prevention of Magnesium Staggers in Beef Cows

Sudden deaths in adult beef cows in late pregnancy or early lactation is something we get to investigate every spring. Magnesium deficiency, leading to grass staggers, is the most common cause of the problem. The cows' magnesium requirements unfortunately often coincide when magnesium availability is at its lowest. Dusting hay or baleage with magnesium oxide (Causmag) is one way to prevent the problem, but this is not feasible for all beef cattle herds. Another reliable supplementation option is the use of oral magnesium boluses. We can also blood test a few of your cows to check their pre-calving magnesium levels.

Jillian's Worm Fun Fact for August

Oscar Ostertagia thrives in the cold of winter.

As an infective larvae, you can freeze me in a block of ice then thaw me out and I will wriggle away! I will also survive at -4 C for up to 4 weeks and, once defrosted I can again wriggle away!



Preventing Metabolic Disease in Ewes

By Marcus Yule

Each year we receive a handful of calls where ewes in late pregnancy or early lactation are found 'down'. Typically, these animals have succumbed to one of the metabolic diseases that commonly affect ewes around lambing time.

The three most common are:

- Hypocalcaemia (milk fever)
- Pregnancy toxaemia (sleepy sickness)
- Hypomagnesaemia (grass tetany/staggers)

Prevention is key as the economic (and emotional!) impact can be huge when large numbers of breeding stock are lost. The most common predisposing factor we see in an outbreak is inadequate nutrition, often in combination with a stressful event (either management related or naturally occurring).

Prevention

Following are some preventative measures which will help reduce the risk of metabolic diseases affecting your flock.

1. Ensure that all heavily pregnant ewes are adequately fed, especially those carrying multiples.
2. Avoid stressful situations in late pregnancy and early lactation such as unnecessary mustering or yarding for long periods without feed. Take care when pre-lamb shearing/crutching or administering pre-lamb treatments, and try to minimise the time spent off-feed.
3. Cold weather increases the energy demand of ewes, especially those shorn prior to lambing. Provide adequate shelter and feed stock extra supplement prior to and/or as early as possible following a storm.
4. Do not transport heavily pregnant ewes.
5. Avoid sudden changes in feed type and quality.
6. Dust pasture breaks with magnesium oxide ("Causmag") where practical, especially in the days before a planned mustering/yarding event.



Treatment

Metabolic diseases can be difficult to distinguish between due to the often-subtle differences in the way each one presents. To be most effective and to minimise losses first line treatment should be started as early as possible with products that contain: calcium, magnesium, and energy.

Down or wobbly ewes can be given:

1. 120ml Glucalpos under the skin (repeat in 4-6 hrs if required)
2. +/- 120ml Ketol Xtra orally; only give once the ewe is responding to the Glucalpos to ensure that she is able to swallow (do not give if there is evidence of regurgitation).



We can help with diagnosis (particularly if the response to the above products is poor), and can also assist with treatment as well as identification of any predisposing factors, to prevent further outbreaks and losses. Just give us a call!

Free Visits to Collect Samples!

With the combination of high autumn/winter worm levels, low feed covers and some stock in light condition, we have seen an increase in the amount of ewes being treated with one of the long acting pre-lamb worm products this season.

The strategy makes good sense and hopefully those ewes treated will be benefiting from no longer having to expend valuable energy and protein reserves on fighting internal parasites. However, as we know, increased use of these products also increases the risk of drench resistance developing. So it is a good idea to keep an eye on their effectiveness so that action can be taken if it is found that there are a few worms managing to survive.

To help with this Clutha Vets are once again offering a **FREE VISIT** to call round and collect some faecal samples from ewes treated with capsules or long acting injectables. The timing of sampling depends on the product used, just give us a call to book us in.

Sort RVM Needs Before Lambing

With lambing not far away there is a good chance that you will soon require one or two animal health products that are classified as “restricted veterinary medicines” (RVMs). 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, especially for those of you who typically don’t use many of these products. An appointment is still recommended, to ensure that a vet is available when you visit.

Lousy Sheep Still Wanted!

As mentioned in our June newsletter, 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!

Thank you very much to those farmers that have already expressed an interest in participating, but who, unfortunately, were unable to be included. The main reason for this unsuitability is not having enough non-pregnant stock to use in the project. The study involves several yardings to assess lice levels following treatment. It is not feasible to use adult ewes due to the difficulty of repeated mustering of the ewes and their young lambs.

Non pregnant hoggets are, therefore, what we are after. So we are very keen to hear from anyone who does not breed their hoggets and who has noticed signs of lice in their flock. 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 fit the above description and would like to participate in the trial.

Retail Ramblings: August Promotions

Clutha Vets have all the tools to suit your pre-lamb needs and your budget.....and we offer **Deferred Payment options on all of our Pre-Lamb Drenches.**

Bionic Plus Capsules

- Heavy duty Dometic Chilly Bins on all large purchases.

Zoetis Pre-Lamb Products

- Enter the draw for a “Stay Local” weekend away, whenever you purchase **Eweguard**, **Cydectin Injection** or **Ultravac** vaccines. Receive one entry for every \$100 spent!
- And grab a woollen hat when buying **Ultravac 5 in 1/Cydectin** combinations

Pre-Lamb Vitamin/Mineral Drenches

- **Vet-LSD** - The best; no comparisons to this unique product!
- **Healthy Ewe RT** - Cheaper option, if you want budget!

Black Hawk

- Pick up some **Black Hawk Working Dog** food and get the chance to win a woollen hoody.

And don’t forget to stock up on **LAMB WOOLOVERS**; keep them warm – keep them alive!!

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, MACVSc
Sam Howarth	BVSc
David Exton	BVSc
Olivia Hickman	BVSc
Marcus Yule	BVSc
Eckard Abrie	BVSc
Sam Lewis	BVSc, MSc MACVSc
Darius Tan	BVSc

Milton and Lawrence Clinics

Jillian Clark	BVSc
Sid Taylor	BVSc, MACVSc
Annie Jackson	BVSc
Martha O’Connor	MVB
Bevan Topham	BVSc
Anna Burrell	BVSc
Anene Du Plessis	BVSc
Alisa McDonald	BVSc