

# CLUTHA VETS SHEEP & BEEF FARMER NEWSLETTER



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## Clinic News

### *Annie Jackson*

This month sees the end of an era at Clutha Vets, with Sue McNutt, who has been on the end of the phone for many of our clients for 25 years, hanging up the receiver and RT hand piece, and heading off for a well-deserved retirement.

Sue began at Clutha Vets in December 1998 in an administration role and has gone on to lead our admin team. In that time there have been many changes in vets, buildings, technology and services, and keeping up with them in a proficient way is a huge task, something which Sue has excelled at.

Sue has been responsible for our professional standards, overseeing our communications to our clients far and wide. I wouldn't want to count how many newsletters and flyers that is!

Sue, along with Shona, has been responsible to get vets to your farms in the most efficient way and the knowledge that is required to do this is mind boggling. Cattle yards, dairy farms, deer sheds, sheep yards, run-offs, etc all need to be located and explained to vets to be able to get them there in a timely manner, (in an era when farm location maps was a huge step forward!!) This local knowledge of farms and farmers is only built up over the years and so Sue's departure will be a big loss in the office.

As well as leading the administration team to improve all our lives, Sue has also helped and supported the many vets, vet techs and vet students that come through the doors. Young vets and students are an important part of Clutha Vets and Sue has played a large role in supporting and encouraging them as needed. This is especially important for our new, young vets as it is a big journey that they are beginning, and supportive staff are paramount to helping them settle in.



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## Clinic News (continued)

One of Sue's passions has been ensuring that our farmers and clients get the best service that Clutha Vets can provide and part of that is having ongoing relationships with farmers – and sometimes that is only over the phone, but she remembers everyone and their nuances!

After 25 years of dedicated service Sue is certainly entitled to a well-earned retirement and everyone at Clutha Vets wishes her the very best. I'm sure we will still be calling on her in the future and she will be helping us out!

Lucy Caldwell another very capable member of the Balclutha admin team, will step up to fill Sue's shoes as the new administration team leader.

To wish Sue all the best for the future and to say a very big thank you for the many years of hard work and commitment to Clutha Vets, clients and colleagues, we will be holding a BBQ at the Balclutha clinic on the 21st December 3pm. We invite you to pop in to wish her the best.

### **Merry Christmas from Clutha Vets**

On behalf of everyone at Clutha Vets I would like to wish all of our clients a wonderful Christmas and New Year and hope you get the chance to take some valuable and well earned time off over the festive season!



## Toxovax Orders & Rams

Toxoplasmosis is the most common cause of pregnancy loss in ewes in this country, especially hoggets and two toothed, and the causative organism is present on 100% of our sheep farms. The parasite can strike at any stage of the pregnancy, from a small embryo (manifested as dry ewes at scanning) right to full term lambs. Since its launch over 30 years ago Toxovax has helped to lift lambing percentages nationwide by preventing toxoplasmosis.

Your Toxo order form is enclosed—remember the product contains living organisms and so has a **very short shelf life, and is made strictly to order.**

And don't forget your ram examination form on the reverse. These ram checks-ups not only look at detecting Brucellosis but also provide an opportunity to identify a range of other abnormalities that can affect a ram's reproductive performance. And, if any of your farm dogs are due for their vaccine, we can incorporate that into the job too.

## Checking up on Your Bulls

**Alisa McDonald**

It's that time of year when the bulls are out with the cows and heifers, the ground work is done and so maybe it's time to get the boat out! But, a bit of time spent observing what is happening in the paddock can help pick up any bull issues before they become a major problem. There is still time to take action if there are any issues, rather than getting a very unpleasant surprise at pregnancy scanning time!

Firstly, check that the bulls are actually 'working'. Are they sound on all four legs? Not spending all their time fighting with the other bulls (if multi sire mating)? Are any spending most of the time sitting down, away from the cows? You also want to check that the cows and heifers are exhibiting cycling behaviour.

If doing multi sire mating it is best to ensure that bulls are of a similar age and size, and have had time to establish a hierarchy before mating. If a dominant bull is sub fertile that can cause reduced conception rates in multi sire systems.



Ideally, if your bull numbers allow it, bulls should be rotated every 21 days (one breeding cycle). This is most important in single sire mating systems where the impact of bull failure will obviously be huge.

As far as bull ratios are concerned, individual farm and bull factors will determine the best ratio for your farm, but the following recommendations are a useful guide;

- Yearling bulls: 1 bull to 23 – 30 cows
- Mature bulls: 1 bull to 30 – 50 cows.
- Hill/rough country/low stocking rate: 1 bull to 35 cows

Pregnancy testing can be done from around six weeks after the bull comes out. Scanning beef cows earlier allows us to give you more accurate information: if you want foetal aging carried out or twins identified then the earlier the better!

# Taking a Whole-farm Approach to Worm Management

**Sam Looney**

Drenching will be well underway for many lamb finishers, and now is the time to establish sustainable ways to minimise drench resistance on your farm.

Managing internal parasites is not as simple as “just” drenching every 28-30 days, you need to look at the whole farm management. With the well-documented emergence of triple drench and novel drench resistance, it is important to highlight ways on your farm to not solely rely on drenching for internal parasite management.

The purpose of any worm management programme is to maintain or enhance profitability of the farming system. This can be achieved by breaking down parasite management on farm into three areas:

- Minimising contamination of pasture with infective worm larvae
- Minimising uptake of infective larvae by susceptible stock
- Monitoring the success of worm management strategies

Many tools are available but those used will vary from farm to farm, depending on what is most appropriate. The situation on any farm is not static and strategies need to be reviewed frequently to take advantage of changes in farm conditions and new control technologies

The following table identifies some of the tools and strategies that can be used

Minimise Contamination	Minimise Uptake	Monitoring
Use of forage crops as a part of the total rotation.  Cross grazing pastures with alternative stock classes after lambs. It may take 4–16+ weeks, depending on initial contamination levels of grazing, to make a pasture safe for the next stock class.  Refugia—establishment of a population of parasite sensitive to your drench used on farm. Example: mixing skinny non-drenched MA ewes with your lambs  Breeding sheep for parasite resistance	Use of forage crops as a part of the total rotation.  Longer pasture sward height for lambs.  Shift lambs off weaning areas for autumn – avoid or minimise grazing lambs on lambing areas in autumn.	Pre-drench checks to identify if drenching is required.  Post-drench (7-12 days) checks to identify efficacy of drench.  Faecal larval cultures if drench checks indicate lower efficacy.  FECRT for farm level identification of drench efficacy.  ***Ring ahead to arrange in clinic or lab testing***

## ***Faecal Egg Count Reduction Tests (FECRT);***

Each year a number of our sheep farmer clients take the plunge and carry out an FECRT on their property. We now have a reasonable bank of information concerning how well the various drench types are working in our region. The level of drench resistance in South Otago may not be as bad as further north, but we are still detecting resistance to all of the commonly used products, including the triple combos.

If you are interested in checking out the resistance status of drenches on your property this season, please get in touch soon and we will guide you through the initial stages of the FECRT. The first step is, at your weaning drench (or the one after), identify a group of lambs and leave them undrenched. You need about 15 lambs for each drench type you are looking to test.

# Preventing Animal Health Issues on Summer Forage Crops

**Andrew Roe**

Specialist lamb finishing forages offer a number of advantages over conventional ryegrass/white clover pastures. Crops such as summer brassicas, lucerne and the various red and white clover/chicory/plantain mixes, all provide diets high in energy and protein, at the time of year when ryegrass loses its quality. They are also better adapted to the drier conditions that seem to be a regular occurrence now. And they are great for reducing worm infections and the need to drench your lambs over the summer months, something that is only likely to become of increasing importance as drench resistance continues to become more widespread.

However these forages do come with a number of potential animal health issues that you need to be aware of. Following are the ones we encounter the most.

## **Clostridial diseases, especially pulpy kidney**

The spores of these sudden-death-causing organisms are everywhere, but the risk of disease increases with the quality of the lambs' diet. It is strongly recommended that your lambs are fully vaccinated (ie had 2 shots of vaccine) before being put onto summer forage crops. Consider using Coglavax (8 in 1), as the additional three organisms covered (compared to "5 in 1") are three strains of *Cl. perfringens*, the bacteria responsible for pulpy kidney.

## **Redgut**

Mainly associated with lambs grazing lucerne, redgut is another form of sudden death and is often confused with pulpy kidney which can lead to farmers questioning the effectiveness of their vaccines.

It actually involves a torsion of the whole intestinal tract, believed to be due to the rumen shrinking as a result of the highly digestible diet.

Offering a fibre source (eg hay) to the lambs can reduce the risk, as can occasionally putting the mob back on pasture for a few days every so often. The condition can be readily diagnosed on post mortem which can help reassure you that the sudden deaths were not the result of a failure of your 5 in 1 vaccination programme.

## **Vitamin B1 (thiamine) deficiency**

Ruminants rely on the micro-organisms in their rumen to manufacture all of the B vitamins. Sometimes this process gets interrupted if the rumen is not functioning as well as it should. Common causes are a sudden change of feed or a lack of fibre in the diet. We see the condition most commonly on clover dominant forages.

Affected lambs display a range of neurological signs such as "star gazing" and appearing to be blind and unaware of their surroundings. Injections of thiamine will usually turn them round if caught at this stage. But if left untreated the condition progresses to them going down, neck arched backwards, paddling and, eventually, dying.

Transitioning lambs onto the crop can help prevent the problem, as can having a bale of hay or straw in the paddock that the lambs can nibble on as needed.

## **Photosensitivity (rape scald)**

Now that a range of other summer brassicas, such as pasja and raphno, are commonly grown we don't see this condition as much as we used to when rape was the more popular choice.

Usually occurring when the crop is fed before fully mature, affected lambs develop swellings around their face, ears and, sometimes, the midline of their back. The damaged skin dies and gradually peels off, giving the appearance of severe sunburn.

Holding off grazing until the rape crop matures (developing a purple tinge to the leaves) should minimise the problem. It is also recommended to transition lambs onto brassica crops over a few days. And badly affected lambs should be moved off the crop, to a paddock offering them some shade.

## Weaning Checklist

### **Vitamin B12**

If your lambs were not given Smartshot at tailing, or short acting B12 within the last month, they may require a top-up around weaning time. Alternatively you could get a liver B12 test carried out on your weaning draft, via the meat works, to see if supplementation is needed. Contact the clinic to arrange the test if keen to go down this route.

### **Fly control**

As many local farmers have discovered in recent years, flystrike is now a regular summer problem, often resulting in the need for preventative measures as opposed to just treating affected animals. There is a range of products available, all with their own pros and cons. Call in to the clinic to discuss the options

### **Checking drench efficacy**

Mention was made of carrying out an FECRT, on page 3. If you're not ready to go to this length just yet, the very least we recommend is a 10 day drench check to satisfy yourself that your current drench is working well.

# Pneumonia in Lambs and Its Impact on Your Flock

*Alisa McDonald*

## What is pneumonia?

Pneumonia is a disease process that causes lung lesions and abscesses. Chronic non-progressive pneumonia is the most common form and it can be caused by viruses, bacteria or mycobacteria. Pneumonia often leads to pleurisy, where inflammation causes scarring and the lungs stick to the chest wall which causes impaired lung function. Studies done in New Zealand show that on average 24% of lambs on any farm are affected by pneumonia.

Symptoms can range from very mild (sub clinical), to severe with exercise intolerance, open mouth breathing, coughing and reduced weight gains/ill thrift. The most severely affected lambs may die.

## Impact of pneumonia

Pneumonia and pleurisy become a major issue when more than 20% of the lung area is affected, as growth rates are halved. This has a massive economic impact, as these lambs take longer to finish and require much more feed to get to required weights. Not to mention that pleurisy often leads to carcass downgrades at the works.

Ewe hoggets that have had pneumonia are likely to have poorer lifetime performance and production. Often you will see sporadic deaths in apparently healthy animals after periods of stress if they have unresolved lung lesions or pleurisy.

## Predisposing factors

Flock level factors are more likely to influence the prevalence of pneumonia than the location of the farm. Things like being walked a long distance on hot days, or higher worm burdens or nutritional stress may mean a higher prevalence in some mobs compared to others on the farm. Healthy, well fed lambs under minimal stress are much less likely to develop pneumonia.

Risk factors vary but the main ones are shearing at weaning, drenching on the day of weaning, high temperatures or humidity leading to more open mouth breathing during stock movements, and inhaling dust. The length of time on farm is also significant. Lambs later in the season are more likely to have carcass downgrades. This could either be because they are on farm longer, and therefore more likely to be exposed, or because pneumonia has led to lower growth rates.

## Treatment and prevention

Antibiotics can be given to affected lambs/hoggets, but treatment is often unrewarding, especially if clinical signs are obvious.

Prevention involves minimising stressors (especially on the day of weaning), moving stock early in the day, before it gets hot, and moving them slowly to minimise panting. Dust mitigation such as sprinklers in yards before use, and handling the mob quietly to avoid stirring up dust (leave the young huntaway on the truck!) also reduce the risk.

On a side note: when killing ill thrifty ewes for dog tuckers it is always good to look at the lungs and see what the incidence of lung lesions and pleurisy is—often ill thrift in older ewes is due to everything but parasite burden. If you are seeing a lot of pleurisy in your ewe flock it might be time to take a look at what you can do to reduce the incidence.

## Udder Checking Your Ewes

We all recognise that abnormalities that develop in a ewe's udder during one lactation can have a big impact on her milk production the following season. But it is often hard to know where to draw the line when deciding which ewes to cull and which ones have less severe defects and could be given another chance.

To help us out the sheep research team at Massey University recently conducted a large study on this very subject. They followed mobs of ewes across 11 farms, taking note of all udder defects found after weaning, and determining the impact these abnormalities had the following season. One key finding was that, on average, ewes with udder defects wean 11-15kg less lamb than ewes with normal udders. The recommendations that came out of the study were:

- The best time to examine ewes' udders is 4-6 weeks after weaning.
- Ewes with any hardness in their udder should definitely be culled
- Ewes with lumps within the udder tissue should ideally also be culled
- Ewes with soft, subcutaneous lumps either just in front or just behind the udder, do not need to be culled. These lumps were shown to be milk filled swellings that disappear over time. With careful palpation you can tell that they are not actually within the udder tissue

# “Christmas is coming” Promotions....

**Alleva Drench** Get a Christmas Ham with every 2 x Boss 20ltr



**NEW!** Turbo Triple + Tape PLUS with a Xmas Ham

Turbo & Boss Pour On—get a Xmas Ham on Selected Products

**WIN!** Purchase any Alleva drench and go in the draw to win **A Multi Draw 297pc Tool Kit!**

**WIN!** Take A Mate Fishing—Stewart Island...

**Zoetis:** Buy Local Support Local— Get 2 x 20lt of Troika or 4 x Ultravac 500ml, Dectomax or Dectomax-V and you get a local butchery voucher worth **\$50.00**

**BI Cattle:** Get an All Blacks Bag with Eprinex 5ltr

Get 2.5ltr FREE with every 25lt Eprinex



**BI Sheep:** Matrix is back! And with a shirt on every drum!

**Smartshot:** Win a Espresso Coffee Machine—2 chances in Clutha Vets

**Win Win Win**  
with Clutha Vets!  
Purchase Boss & Turbo  
To be in the draw  
For this Draw  
Full of Tools!  
Plus other prizes to win when you race

**alleva** ANIMAL HEALTH  
**CLUTHA VETS** Animal Health Centre

*We've got Christmas covered this season!*  
Enjoy delicious satisfaction this season with the Ultimate parasite control combination from Alleva Animal Health. Plus receive a ham with qualifying products.

Purchase a 2.5L of TURBO or BOSS Pour On, 20L of TURBO or BOSS Pour On or 2.5L of BOSS Pour On and receive a ham.

**Take A Mate—Stewart Island 2023**

**Getting enough Salt in your Diet?**  
See your Clutha Vet Today

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**CLUTHA VETS** Animal Health Centre