

CLUTHA VETS SHEEP, BEEF & DEER FARMER NEWSLETTER



Issue 234

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Clinic News

Annie Jackson

At the time of writing—boy oh boy, summer has arrived.... And what a funny one it is turning out to be. If we were relying on smoke signals as a source of communication, we would have no idea that all our rain is not getting past the Bombay Hills. Driving around we can see the effects of the dry summer already beginning to bite and now is the time to take action to protect stock for the future. If you need any help with the situation don't ever hesitate to give us a call. Hopefully with the little bit of recent rain this may be the start to an easing of the dry.

We are having a busy wee period of new faces coming and a few familiar faces leaving. Marcus Yule bid farewell and is heading off on his overseas adventures that will include Japan, Canada, UK and wherever else he may choose to wander. We truly thank Marcus for all he has done for Clutha Vets and hope he has a boomerang packed!

Sam Looney (yes another female Sam!) has joined the Milton Vet Team as a mixed animal vet. Sam has a sheep and beef farming background and she has already settled in well. Sam is a Massey University graduate, and before she did her vet training she did tech training and equine nursing.

Emma Shaw has also joined the Milton Vet team as an experienced mixed animal vet. Emma is a local girl who, like Sam, has a sheep and beef farming background. Emma graduated from Massey University five years ago and has been practising in Otago since

Anneke Muller is one of our Massey new grads who has joined us to begin her veterinary career. Anneke will be based out of our Balclutha clinic. Anneke came visiting during her practical placements as a student, and realised that Balclutha is not at the end of the world!!

I would like to sincerely thank our awesome farmers that allow the extra time and opportunities for getting our new vets up to speed. When vets are looking for work these days, support is high on their wish list and having such willing, friendly and kind farming folk hugely helps with this. When we see our young vets develop into great vets, this has been achieved with your support.

In This Issue:

- Clinic News
- Ram checklist
- Checking drench efficacy
- Animal Health Reminders
 - Order your Toxovax!
 - Ram runs
 - Scanning cows
 - Two tooth feeding
 - Teaser rams
 - Velvet book returns
 - B12 supplementation
- Neurological disorder
- Pregnancy testing cows
- Salmonella in ewes
- Bionic capsules
- Competition winners

Ram Check List

With mating not far away it is time to give some thought to the health and condition of your ram flock. Following are a few things to consider:

- **What shape are they in?** Just as ewes' reproductive performance improves with improved body condition, a ram's fertility is related to his condition. Increase their feeding level if needed.
- **Book in your ram palpations** with Clutha Vets; a simple, cost effective way of identifying any abnormalities, including a check for brucellosis.
- **Give a 5-in-1 booster.** Clostridial diseases are not common in adult sheep, but spending a few dollars on vaccine is a cheap way of protecting your new \$2000 poster boy!
- **Consider an iodine injection and selenium supplementation;** both minerals are important for fertility and, chances are, you will have a part pack left over after doing the ewes
- **Check for scrotal mange** and treat if present. Injectable "mectin" products such as Dectomax or Exodus work well.
- **Do the rams need drenching?** Probably unlikely if in good condition but any that are a bit thin, especially two toothers, could be struggling to fight off worms they pick up
- **Fly and lice treatment/prevention.** Been a lot of fly around this season so keep an eye out.
- **Attend to any lame rams** and maybe run the whole team through a zinc sulphate foot bath
- **Consider Footvax** if lameness has historically been a problem in your rams. At Clutha Vets we offer a vaccination service to save you having to buy a whole 250 dose pack!

And finally.....

- **Have you got enough rams??** We recommend ratios of 1:100 for mixed age ewes and 1:80 for two toothers.

Checking Your Drench Efficacy

By Andrew Roe

If you're driving past your neighbour's place and notice a mob of lambs with assorted colours on their heads don't assume it is the work of a graffiti artist! Chances are it is the handiwork of one of the Clutha Vets crew who have been helping the neighbour carry out a faecal egg count reduction test (FECRT).

As predicted, drench resistance is continuing to get worse, with resistance to the double active ingredient products being identified fairly commonly now. And we have even found triple drench resistance in South Otago in recent years.

Undertaking a FECRT is the best way to learn how the various drenches are working on your property. If drench resistance is picked up at the stages it does not necessarily mean you have to stop using that drench. Knowing the degree of resistance, and which worm species are involved, allows strategies to be put in place to manage the problem.



So, although a FECRT involves an investment in time and money, it is well worth carrying out the exercise every few years.

Please give your Clutha Vets clinic a call if you would like to do a FECRT this season. The best time to set one up is from now till around early March as this gives us the best chance of ensuring that all of the important worm species are active on your property.

The first step is to identify a group of lambs (usually around 90, depending on the number of drenches tested) next time you have the mob in for drenching, and leave this group undrenched. We will guide you through the procedure from that point onwards.

Animal Health Reminders

Urgent Reminder: Have you ordered your Toxovax?

All sheep in New Zealand are at risk of suffering pregnancy loss due to toxoplasmosis. Despite plenty of testing there is yet to be found a sheep farm in this country that does not have the toxo parasite present! Vaccinating your maiden ewes (either hoggets or two toothers) with Toxovax is the best way to prevent this devastating disease.

We would like to remind you that, being a live vaccine with a short shelf life, Toxovax is **made to order only**. It must be **given at least four weeks before the rams go out**. If you have not yet placed your order please give your Clutha Vets clinic a call ASAP to ensure that you do not miss out.

Time to Get Your Rams Checked

The Clutha Vets sheep team has just started our annual "ram runs". Originally set up to identify and eliminate brucellosis in the region's ram flocks, the ram runs involve palpation of the testicles and associated structures of your rams. Thankfully brucellosis is a lot less common these days, but is not yet completely eliminated; we found a couple of infected flocks in the last two or three years. We need to keep the pressure on to prevent it flaring up again, so if you have not already done so, please give your nearest clinic a call to book in a visit.

As well as brucellosis these examinations are a good way to identify a range of other abnormalities that can affect your rams' ability to get ewes in lamb. Please refer to the article on Page 2 for a discussion on ram health in general.

Pregnancy Testing of Beef Cows

We can reliably detect pregnancy in beef cows from around day 42 onwards. So, once your bulls have been removed from the cows for around six weeks, give us a call and book your scanning in. However, as discussed in an article over the page, it may be advantageous to get the first scan done even earlier for some herds. Have a read and consider if such a strategy would be of benefit to you.

Look After Those Two Teeth

One of the biggest challenges of breeding hoggets is getting them up to decent weight and body condition in time for their two-tooth mating. With only a couple of months till mating, it is a good idea to go through your two toothers now (especially if they reared a lamb(s) as a hogget), identify and draft out any thinner ones and start preferentially feeding them. Checking the need for a pre-tup drench of your two toothers is also a good idea, as is giving them some selenium and iodine if unsure of their trace element status.

Teaser Rams

If your teasers are getting a bit past it, or if you are contemplating hogget mating for the first time, act now and arrange for a few rams to be vasectomised. To ensure that the teasers are completely infertile we recommend getting the procedure done at least six weeks before you are planning on introducing them to your ewes/hoggets. Any age rams are OK, but vasectomising ram lambs is the most cost effective approach as you will have them for plenty of years to come.

Accredited velvet drug and record book returns

For those farmers who are accredited to velvet your own stags, remember that one of the requirements of the programme is that your drug record book, along with any unused drugs, needs to be dropped off at the clinic by the end of March. And please also note that this requirement applies to those of you accredited to velvet your spikers only, as well as those velveting adult stags. There is a specific section of the drug record book to record spiker velveting episodes where NaturO rings are used.

B12 supplementation

Pasture cobalt availability is typically at its lowest level over the December to February period, so this is also the time when your lambs' liver reserves of vitamin B12 are likely to be running low. Thanks to the recent spell of dry weather we are expecting to see more B12 deficiency than normal as, when soil moisture gets low, cobalt becomes increasingly unavailable for plant roots to absorb. A few recent tests on our clients' animals have confirmed these concerns. An injection of B12 to your remaining works lambs and your replacement ewe lambs could be a very good idea.

By Andrew Roe

As is common at this time of year, we have recently dealt with a few cases of a neurological disorder in calves and lambs, that is associated with a shortage of thiamine (Vitamin B1).

The condition is often referred to as “polio”, which is a bit misleading as it has nothing to do with the human disease. However, when you realise that the correct term is polioencephalomalacia, you can appreciate the need for a slightly shorter name!

Affected animals usually start off appearing a bit disorientated, often appearing as if they are blind, sometimes with their neck bent back a little (commonly referred to as “star gazing”). If untreated they deteriorate to the point where they are lying on their side, neck arched right back and often paddling with their legs. They eventually die.

Ruminants such as sheep and cattle do not normally require the B vitamins in their diet as their rumen microorganisms manufacture them. Polio occurs when there is some disruption to healthy functioning of the rumen.

High sulphur diets, sudden dietary changes and shortage of water have all been implicated. The most likely cause of the condition on our farms, however, is a lack of fibre, when growing lambs or calves are grazed on lush, high quality pastures or crops. Specialist finishing forages pose the highest risk.

The risk of polio can be reduced by offering lambs and calves a source of fibre when grazing these sorts of feeds. A bale of hay (or even straw) in the corner of the paddock is all that is needed; animals only need a mouthful or two every so often to meet their fibre requirements.

Thankfully, when the condition first appears, only two or three animals are usually affected, giving you time to take preventative steps. Occasionally, however, larger numbers are affected, especially with calves, and vitamin B1 supplementation of the whole mob is considered.

If picked up at the early stages, when the affected animal(s) is still on its feet, polio can often be successfully treated with B1 injections. An anti-inflammatory injection can also be helpful.

We often diagnose the condition based on the response to treatment. But a definitive diagnosis comes from an autopsy followed by microscopic examination (histology) of brain tissue at the lab.

Some of our clients get a few cases of polio in their lambs most years, so get good at picking up the early signs. Having some vitamin B1 on hand enables them to save most cases.

By Andrew Roe

One of our main autumn jobs at Clutha Vets is pregnancy testing beef cows. Yarding mobs of adult beef cattle is not usually a simple job, especially on those more extensive properties. So it is understandable that many of our farmer clients choose to arrange their pregnancy testing for when the cows are going to be in the yards for some other reason eg TB testing or weaning.

Fair enough. That works for us too, and, if the only information you are after is which cows are pregnant and which are dry, it doesn't really matter when we do the job over the March to May period. We even tend to do the last few herds in June!

However there may be benefits to you to glean a bit more info from the pregnancy testing exercise. Following are some examples.

It may be helpful to be able to winter your earlier calving cows separately from the later ones, especially if feed is anticipated to be a bit tight in the spring and you can stretch it out a bit by keeping part of the herd on their winter block a bit longer. If we carry out your scanning early enough we can age the pregnancies to help with this.

If you tend to get quite a few sets of twins it can be helpful to identify those at scanning. The extra energy and protein requirements of carrying twins usually leads to these cows losing a lot of condition in late pregnancy, increasing the risk of metabolic disease and/or pregnancy loss. You can reduce this impact if you know who your twin bearing cows are, and winter them on better feed. You can also keep a closer eye on them at calving, as twin bearers are more likely to need some assistance. As with pregnancy aging, finding twins requires that the cows are scanned within the first three months of pregnancy.

To avoid the demand for killing space that we usually see in late autumn, it may be worthwhile being able to get at least some of your dries (and maybe your latest calving cows) off to the works early—another reason to scan a bit earlier.

If you are interested in getting some more information at scanning time, as in the examples above, give the clinic a call and we can help work out the optimum time to do the job, based on your mating dates and the information you hope to gain.

Depending on the length of your mating period it may be that the pregnancies of those cows conceiving the latest will not be advanced enough for us to pick them up. In such cases we can pop back out at a later date and re-scan the “dries” to differentiate the latest calvers from the true dries.

Salmonella Causing Problems in Ewes

By Alisa McDonald

We have seen a few cases of enteric (gut) salmonellosis in ewes recently. The disease is characterised by outbreaks of diarrhoea and death. However, death may occur so suddenly in some of the affected ewes that the diarrhoea is not obvious.

The normal clinical presentation is to suddenly find a few ewes dead, maybe with a few others looking pretty sick. Typically the affected ewes are in good condition. Sheep are often found dead near a water source. Many ewes will show no signs prior to death but some will be observed with a khaki-coloured diarrhoea that adheres to the wool on the hocks and crutch. The mortality rate is usually about 1% but can be more than 5% on rare occasions.

Carrier ewes are regarded as the source of any outbreak but clinical disease only occurs as a result of some stress factor, such as:

- A sudden change in nutrition, especially a change to poorer feed.
- Holding stock in yards over long periods (>24 hours)
- Transport over long distances
- Holding sheep at high stocking rates

Generally the enteric form of salmonellosis is seen from December to June, probably due to the increased stress associated with mob stocking and rotational or intensive grazing.

In South Otago we often see cases around shearing time, but also soon after weaning, presumably due to ewes experiencing a sudden change in diet, going from being well fed with lambs still at foot, to being run in a big mob, cleaning up paddocks.



Early winter is another common time for salmonellosis to rear its head in this part of the world, as sheep are tightened up after mating. Bad weather at that time of year probably also plays a role some years.

Post mortem examination reveals severe inflammation of the stomach and the intestines. Confirmation can be made by culture of the gut contents at our local lab.

Salmonellosis is a zoonotic disease (ie affects humans as well as animals), so good hygiene is vital when handling both the sick and dead animals in order to prevent illness in your, your family and others on the farm.

There is a vaccine available against enteric salmonellosis called Salvexin+B. It offers protection against the three species of bacteria associated with most outbreaks, namely *S. hindmarsh*, *S. typhimurium* and *S. bovis-morbificans*, as well as the abortion-causing species, *Salmonella Brandenburg*.

Unvaccinated animals should receive two injections at least four weeks apart. The second vaccination should be at least two to three weeks prior to the anticipated risk period. Thereafter animals should be boosted annually, preferably just prior to the anticipated risk period. In areas where there is risk of both Brandenburg and enteric salmonellosis, a booster of Salvexin+B prior to the abortion risk period should also be considered, even if stock have been fully vaccinated for enteric salmonellosis

Because of the sporadic nature of the disease, many farmers elect not to vaccinate their flock annually, but rather keep it up their sleeve, should an outbreak occur. Field experience has shown that vaccination, if used in the early stages of any outbreak can reduce stock losses. Usually deaths gradually stop about a week after the vaccine is given. This strategy is NOT recommended for protection against *S. Brandenburg* abortion, however.

To get the most benefit from vaccinating in the face of an outbreak, the mob should be vaccinated as soon as possible after the outbreak has started. We urge you, therefore, to get in touch promptly if you start experiencing a few unexplained deaths in your ewes, so that a diagnosis can be made early on, and if appropriate, vaccination can be implemented.

Bionic Plus Drench Capsules—Limited Stock for 2023

By Hamish Moore

As many of you will have seen in recent newspaper articles, Boehringer Ingelheim, the company that supplies Bionic Plus drench capsules, is unable to supply them for this coming season. Clutha Vets always likes to make sure we have plenty of stock in store to ensure that we can supply our members with what they need, when they need it. We therefore have a reasonable number of capsules left over from last season that we will be able to use to supply our members with this year. We are also in consultation with another supplier of capsules which will hopefully boost the number we are able to supply.

We will not, however, be able to supply the same number as we did last year.

If you think you would like to use Bionic capsules this coming year please ring the clinic ASAP and let them know how many you need and what date you need them. We will then look to supply a proportion of what you need using previous capsule purchases as a guide.

Over the next few sheep and beef newsletters we will be reinforcing the actions that you can take to; identify the target animals for capsules, minimise the need for capsule use, as well as discussing alternative options.

If you have any questions now then please don't hesitate to give us a call and, as mentioned above, if you think you want to use capsules please get in touch. Once we allocate what we currently have in store there is unlikely to be much chance of getting any more this year.

Competition Winners

Take A Mate Stewart Island 2023

The health benefits of a Salt Heavy Diet

Congratulations to this years winners!

Kelvin Ross, Owaka

Mark Anderson, Clinton

Alan Cassie, Lawrence

Alistair Paul, Stoney Creek

Clark Stephens, Balclutha

Chris Hurst, Clinton

Gary Beaumont, Clydevale

Thanks for your support!



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 |

Milton and Lawrence Clinics

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

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