

# CLUTHA VETS SHEEP & BEEF FARMER NEWSLETTER



Issue 238

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## Clinic News

### *Annie Jackson*

Lambing will be well under way for many of you, if not already finished, and the tailing season is now getting started. On the whole, lambing has gone pretty well, with the weather behaving itself for the most part.

I always think that if we can get through September without a snow storm it bodes well. The horrific snow storm we had in September 2010 still haunts me as I remember the horror of it on the stock and the effect on our farmers coping with the aftermath. Fortunately, apart from the drastic rain a couple of weeks ago, we seemed to have mainly missed the storms of Spring.

On the vetting front we are enjoying our first season for a while being fully staffed with our vet and tech team. We have Andie Goodman join us for the spring. Andie is from the UK and she is really enjoying New Zealand and working with the team, but thinking three months is barely long enough to explore our beautiful part of the country!

We welcomed Martha O'Connor back to our Milton vet team after her maternity leave. It's great having her back in the team; she will be working three days a week continuing on with her mixed animal work.

Dave Exton returned from his Vanuatu adventures where he successfully combined surfing, beach holiday and vetting for three months. With the great versatile training our vets get he was able to turn his hand to anything that came his way, including gelding 25 wild stallions / colts!

The busy vet season is mirrored by a particularly busy period on-farm. With lambing and calving winding up, tailing, tractor work, drenching and vaccinating will all soon be happening again for another season.

A reminder the AGM of the Association will be coming up on Tuesday 21st November at the Clutha Clinic. Further details to follow.

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## Ewe Abortion Debrief

This spring a number of our sheep farmer clients experienced abortion outbreaks in their ewes or hoggets. Of those who submitted samples for testing, all of the usual suspects were found.

The main offender was Salmonella Brandenburg with a cluster of farms between Balclutha and Clinton suffering losses, especially in their two toothers. Unlike some of the other common causes of abortion, ewes affected by Brandenburg not only lose their lambs, but are usually also quite sick, with a large percentage often dying.

It is believed that, because it was so widespread a number of years ago, the organism is probably present on most sheep properties now, with a proportion of ewes in each flock acting as carriers.

Cases of disease, however, are not as common as they used to be, presumably due to reasonable levels of immunity in many flocks. Outbreaks can still occur from time to time, as shown by the cases we experienced this year.

Vaccination is available in the form of Salvexin+B, and, while it will not necessarily prevent an outbreak completely, it has been shown to reduce abortion rates significantly when given to two toothers. Aborting ewes are also less likely to get sick and die if they have been vaccinated.

One of the farmers involved in the latest outbreak had earlier vaccinated their two toothers, and ended up with only a small number of abortions, with some of the affected ewes bouncing back quite quickly.

We have also had Campylobacter and Toxoplasma identified as causes of ewe/hogget abortions this season both in non vaccinated flocks. While "Campy" vaccination is ideally carried out before mating it can be given later on, right up until about a month before lambing, in an attempt to limit the impacts of an outbreak, or to protect other mobs of ewes on a property where one mob has started to suffer abortions.

One of our clients made use of this option this year. After Campy was identified as the cause of abortion in his mixed age ewes he elected to vaccinate his pregnant hoggets, which were still six weeks away from lambing, to minimise the chances of the outbreak spreading to them.

Another interesting case involved Listeria causing abortions in a mob of ewes. The pattern resembled Brandenburg with some of the affected ewes getting sick and dying, despite antibiotic treatment.

## Ewe Bearings Bad this Year

As with any year, there has been a wide range of results when it comes to things like scanning percentage, lamb survival and, no doubt, (once the tallies are in) tailing percentage.

However, one thing that most farmers in our area will agree on is that there have been lots of bearings this season! We have heard of quite a few farmers who have had more than 200 ewes affected.

A comprehensive study, conducted about twenty years ago, set out to try and identify the risk factors for bearings in ewes. The project, which involved nearly 140 farms in Southland and Hawkes Bay found that ewes that gained body condition in the early part of the pregnancy were more likely to have bearings compared to those that were static or that lost condition.

It is not surprising, therefore, that this year has seen more bearings than normal on most farms. After a summer dry spell, we eventually got rain around March, which led to a flush of feed when the rams were out. With so much grass about, it was hard for ewes not to gain a reasonable amount of weight during, or shortly after, mating.

One positive thing that came out of the study was that there appeared to be no relationship between feeding levels in late pregnancy and the incidence of bearings. This gives farmers the confidence to feed their ewes well as lambing approaches, without the fear that they will be increasing the risk of bearings.

In our August newsletter we discussed the benefits of using injectable anti-inflammatories to improve the survival of those ewes that do suffer a bearing. We have been really impressed with how many of our clients have picked up a bottle or two and tried it, with a number providing some pretty positive feedback.

Meloxicam is the drug in question. There are a number of brands available; we have recently been able to source one called Reliven which, unlike the earlier brand we were using, does have a label claim for use in sheep.

As well as for bearings, Reliven can be used in other situations where an anti-inflammatory or pain relief would be helpful. Examples include difficult assisted lambings and black mastitis. By reducing fever and masking pain, affected ewes tend to become mobile and regain their appetite quicker compared to when given anti-biotics alone, thus improving their chances of survival.

# Clostridial Vaccination of Lambs at Tailing

**By Alisa McDonald**

Why give lambs a clostridial vaccine at tailing?

Most sheep farmers vaccinate their ewes pre-lamb with 5 in 1 vaccine. This produces antibodies in the colostrum which will help to protect the lamb from clostridial diseases, such as tetanus and pulpy kidney, for the first six to eight weeks of their life.

So, by tailing time, the protection gained from the pre-lamb vaccination of their mothers is starting to wane, and by weaning time it will certainly have run out.

Lambs need two doses of vaccination initially, ideally between four and six weeks apart. The first ("sensitiser") clostridial vaccine primes the immune system but only provides short term protection against disease. The second (booster) dose stimulates the lamb to produce protective levels of antibodies against clostridial disease. The antibodies produced after the second dose of vaccine should provide protection for twelve months.

As tailing is a risk period for clostridial disease, vaccinating lambs at tailing, with the booster given at either pre-weaning drench time or at weaning, can reduce lamb losses over the tailing to weaning period.

After this, a yearly booster (usually pre-lamb for ewes, or, for replacement hoggets, prior to going onto winter crop) is all that is required for continued protection against clostridial disease.

Even with the projected lower schedule this year the cost of vaccinating all of your lambs at tailing still stacks up financially. At \$6/kg, an 18kg lamb = \$108, so you don't need to prevent many deaths to justify vaccinating earlier.

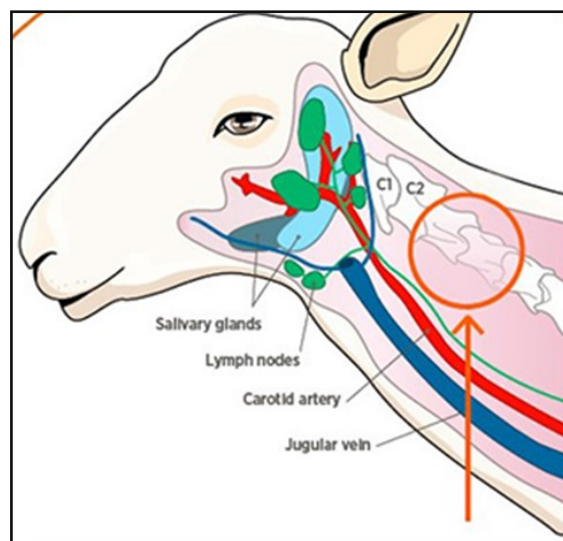
There are lots of different options for clostridial vaccination; we are here to help discuss the best option for your flock.

## **Correct Site for Subcutaneous Injections:**

*The orange circle in the diagram indicates the correct site to vaccinate; under the skin (subcutaneous) on the side of the neck, avoiding critical structures at the base of the ear and the upper joints of the vertebral column*

## Vaccination Refresher

- Make sure all vaccines are stored correctly in a working refrigerator. When taking vaccines out on farm at tailing time, store in a chilly bin or bag with ice packs.
- Always check dose rates, and that the product is licenced for the animal you are treating. Check withholding times.
- Check expiry dates and record these and batch numbers. Gently mix contents of vaccine pack and ensure it has not settled out.
- Use new needles: boiling old needles and storing them in methylated spirits doesn't make them any sharper! Blunt needles cause more trauma and make the job harder.
- Change the needles regularly and dispose of old needles appropriately. At the very least needles should be changed with every pack of vaccine, or if the needle is burred, bent or broken.
- For lambs at tailing, a 18G ¼' needle is long enough. For older lambs or ewes an 18G 3/8' needle is required.
- Avoid vaccinating wet animals. This is more likely to lead to injection site lesions and carcass downgrades due to abscesses.
- Make sure new staff know where to inject: Subcutaneous injections should go in the top 1/3 of the neck (see below). Inject at a 45 degree angle, tenting the skin.



## Animal Health Reminders

### ***Check lambs for scabby mouth vaccination reactions***

We strongly recommend you catch a few lambs about a week after vaccinating them against scabby mouth and check that they have responded to the vaccine. Well vaccinated lambs should have a prominent, raised brownish scab extending along most of their “scratch” line.

Although it has been quite a few years since the last major vaccine “failure”, we still come across a few properties each year where problems with either vaccine storage and handling or vaccination technique has led to some lambs not being properly protected. If things have not gone well, it is better to find out now, rather than in a month’s time when lots of lambs start showing up with nasty scabby mouth lesions.

### ***Getting ready for the velveting season***

It won’t be long before the first few stags are ready to be velveted. For accredited velveters, if you have not already done so, remember to pay your annual NVSB fee ASAP to ensure you maintain your accreditation. And, once you start to get a few stags ready, please give us a call to arrange your supervisory visit.

Any VelTrak velvet ID tags that you have left over from last season are still able to be used this year; we will be in touch soon to sort out your tag requirements for the season ahead.

### ***Check effectiveness of pre-lamb injectable drenches***

With no Bionic Plus drench capsules available this year, there was increased use of injectable moxidectin products such as Cydectin LA and Eweguard. Although these products are very helpful in assisting your more vulnerable ewes through the lambing period, their usage does carry the increased risk of drench resistance developing. To check if many worms have survived the treatment we suggest you carry out a faecal egg count on treated ewes.

Not only will this inform you if an exit drench is required this season, it will also help you decide if you need to modify your pre-lamb programme next season. The exact timing of the faecal egg count will depend on which product you used—give the clinic a call for specific advice.

### ***Replenish copper reserves in deer and cattle***

Deer and cattle have higher copper requirements than sheep and spring is the time when their liver reserves of this important trace element are usually at their lowest, especially if they were not supplemented before winter. Animals wintered on fodder beet or brassica crops are at the most risk as the iron in the soil they ingest with the crop interferes with copper uptake.

Stock to pay the most attention to now are pregnant hinds, to ensure their offspring are born with good copper reserves, and breeding cows, to ensure good copper levels for mating. Talk to our vets about the range of supplement options available and the pros and cons of each method.

### ***Pre-weaning lamb drenching***

Most farmers in South Otago start their lamb drenching programme about a month before weaning, largely to control one species of worm, *Nematodirus*. This is often the first of the important worm species to appear on our pastures in the spring, as its larval stage is quite hardy, having no trouble surviving harsh winter conditions. *Nematodirus* can be particularly harmful to young lambs, typically causing a dark scour and, if levels are high enough, even death.

### ***Book in your calf debudding***

For those farmers rearing dairy-beef calves, the best way to avoid the hassle of dehorning them when they are older, is to have them “debudded” when they are small. We offer an efficient calf debudding service involving removing the horn buds under sedation and local anaesthetic. If done when your calves are around four to six weeks old the entire horn bud can be readily removed guaranteeing that the animal will not develop horns. If you wait until the calves are older, the buds start to calcify and unite with the skull, forming the actual horn. This means that, even though they can still be removed, there is a chance that they will be able to grow back.

## Do My Lambs Need B12?

*By Andrew Roe*

With tailing getting underway we are fielding plenty of questions around the pros and cons of vitamin B12 supplementation of lambs at tailing time. Should I give B12 at tailing? What's the best product? How long does it last?

When talking about B12 and cobalt deficiency it is very hard to give general recommendations as every farm is different, and even more annoyingly, every year can be different!

For those farmers vaccinating their lambs at tailing you have the convenience of choosing a 5 in 1 vaccine that contains B12 (and selenium too, if necessary). This is a commonly used option, however remember that the B12 contained in products like Multine or Ultravac 5 in 1 is fairly short acting. So, just because you treat the lambs at tailing, it doesn't mean that they won't need further supplementation at weaning (or earlier).

SmartShot B12, a long-acting B12 product, takes a lot of the guess work out of the situation. An injection at tailing time reliably maintains your lambs' B12 levels for 3-4 months (if using the 0.5ml dose), or around 6 months for the full 1ml dose. The downside is that the product is not available in combination with a vaccine, so it does require one extra job at tailing. However, on those farms where cobalt / B12 deficiency is a recurring problem, the benefits of a long-acting formulation usually outweigh this inconvenience.

We carry the full range of B12 and selenium products, including long and short acting options as well as the "5 in 1" vaccine / B12 and selenium combinations. So call in and we can help sort out the best plan for you.



## Maximising Fawn Survival

*By Andrew Roe*

After taking a dive during the covid epidemic it is great to see that the venison schedule has clawed its way back to a decent level. For those farmers running a mixed sheep, beef and deer operation the improved profitability of the deer side of the business will be very welcome in the face of the drop in lamb prices.

So the more you can do to maximise the survival of you fawns/calves, the better. Most of our clients have no trouble getting well over 90% scanning percentage, but unfortunately this does not always translate into a good calving percentage, with quite a lot of wastage happening somewhere between scanning and weaning.

When it comes to calving time with deer the usual policy is to keep well away! So it can be hard to figure out where any losses are occurring. But there are a few things you can do to improve the survivability of your young calves.

### ***Calve late calvers separately***

Calves born in December usually have a poorer chance of survival, partly due to bullying by earlier calved hinds. If you didn't identify your late calvers at scanning you can do so by "bagging off" the hinds. This involves checking them for udder development shortly before set stocking, and taking out all those not yet showing any udder enlargement and calving them separately.

### ***Calve young hinds separately***

First calving hinds should definitely be calved away from the mixed aged girls, but benefits can also be gained by having the second calvers in a separate mob. And allocate the paddocks with the best shelter and least chance of any external disturbance to the younger hinds.

### ***Don't overstock the calving paddocks***

Hinds prefer to calve 100m or more from other hinds; to achieve this the stocking rate should not exceed 7 hinds/ha. And try to provide good shelter and pasture covers of at least 1800 kg DM/ha

### ***Provide good water sources***

Even young fawns require drinking water, especially in hot weather. Death from diseases such as E coli infections have been shown to occur if fawns are forced to drink from wallow holes and puddles

### ***Check the herd's copper and leptos status***

Leptospirosis has been shown to cause pregnancy loss in maiden hinds, while calves born to copper deficient hinds have poorer chances of survival.

## Scabby Mouth Vaccine Orders

For those farmers who prefer the Phenax Classic scabby mouth vaccine brand, we suggest you get in touch and let us know how much you are likely to need, especially if you're in a later lambing area and therefore, will be tailing a little later than most others in our patch.

Phenax tends to have quite a short shelf life so we are reluctant to order large quantities unless we have orders for it. We can usually get it down from the distributor within a day or two, but if you turn up wanting some vaccine for tailing the next day, you may be disappointed if you hadn't already placed an order.

Scabigard, the other scabby mouth vaccine, typically has a 12 month (or more) expiry date, so there is not the same need to advise us of your requirements if this is your preferred vaccine option.



## Clutha Vets & Zoetis Pre-lamb Promotion

Winners received a 2023 All Blacks World Cup Jersey and the option to donate \$1000.00 to a club or charity of their choice. Congratulations to the lucky winners and thank you all for your support!

Matthew Lawlor, Waiwera South	<u>SOHS—School Girl Rugby</u>
Wayne & Susan Holgate, Lawrence	<u>St Johns - Lawrence</u>
Marty Deans, Barewood Station	<u>Outram Rodeo Club</u>
Craig & Wendy Sheppard, Paratai	<u>Owaka Cricket Club</u>
Rex Lowrey, Owaka	<u>Owaka Lions</u>



## Retail Ramblings: Spring Promos

### Cattle Pour-Ons:

- **Eprinex**

Get an All Blacks Bag with Eprinex 5ltr  
Get 2.5ltr FREE with every 25ltr Eprinex

- **Turbo pour-on**

A FREE 14" Chainsaw with Turbo 5ltr.  
**Very limited stock!**

### Sheep Oral Drenches

- Matrix is back! And with a FREE shirt on every drum!

### Smartshot Long Acting B12 (+/- selenium):

- Go in the draw to win an Espresso Coffee Machine—two chances to win at Clutha Vets

## Your Vets

### Balclutha Clinic

Jason Darwen	BVSc
Rob Mills	BVSc
Hamish Moore	BVSc
Catherine Copland	BVM&S
Peter Heslip	BVSc, MVM
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