

CLUTHA VETS SHEEP & BEEF FARMER NEWSLETTER



CLUTHA
•V•E•T•S•

Issue 247

February 2025



Clinic News

Steven Bamford (Chairman of the CVA board)
Annie Jackson

Happy New Year from Clutha Vets

A Happy New Year to you all! We hope that despite the busy Christmas and New Year period, which doesn't slow down on the farm, you found some time for rest and relaxation with friends and family. Here's to a promising year ahead, with positive prospects on the schedule and feed front for the farm.

Welcoming new graduates

Clutha Vets is excited to start the year fully staffed and to welcome two new Massey University graduates in February and March. Rebecca Everingham from Canterbury and Mikey Sole from Tauranga both spent time with us as students and were drawn back to South Otago. They will be training as mixed-animal vets at our Balclutha clinic.

Farewell and thanks to Tom Wallbank

We bid farewell to Tom Wallbank, who completed his summer locum with us. Although it had been three years since his last stint at Clutha Vets, Tom seamlessly stepped back into the role, and we've thoroughly enjoyed having him on board. We hope he's packing a boomerang in his bag and that this won't be the last time we see him!

Exciting expansion plans on the Taieri

Clutha Vets is pleased to announce the first steps toward establishing a new clinic in Outram. We have secured a section in Outram, marking a significant milestone in our mission to provide top-quality and up-to-date animal health services, advice, and products to our members and the community.

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Clinic News (continued)

This new clinic will enable us to offer improved and more efficient services for our Taieri and Strath-Taieri clients. It will also support future recruitment efforts, as many of our vets currently working out of the Milton clinic live on the Taieri. The clinic will cater to all animals, with small animal service facilities designed to handle orthopedics and a wide range of other treatments - an essential service for our hardworking farm dogs.

The proposed timeline anticipates the clinic's completion by the end of 2026. We are excited

about the opportunities this expansion will bring and look forward to serving our community even better in the years to come.

Looking ahead

As we embark on a new year filled with possibilities, we remain committed to delivering exceptional veterinary care and support to our clients. Thank you for your continued trust and support in Clutha Vets. Here's to a successful and rewarding 2025 for everyone!

Autumn an Important Time for BVD Control

Hayden Linton

BVD (Bovine Viral Diarrhoea) has long been a significant challenge for sheep and beef farmers, with conservative estimates placing its prevalence at around 65% of our beef herds. That's a substantial amount of lost growth and pregnancies from a disease that is both preventable and manageable.

While large-scale outbreaks make its impact obvious, the hidden, ongoing losses caused by BVD as it lingers in the herd year after year often go unnoticed.

BVD vaccines, such as Bovilis BVD and Ultravac BVD can be administered to cattle over four months of age, but there's an optimal timing window to maximise their effectiveness. While there is a lot of flexibility around the timing of the first (sensitiser) dose for heifers, their second vaccination, as well as subsequent annual boosters for the mixed age cows, should be given four weeks before the planned start of mating. This timing allows the immune system to fully respond to the vaccine, ensuring foetal protection during the high-risk period. For replacement heifers, this preparation is especially crucial to safeguard future breeding success.

To track BVD in your herd, we recommend taking 10–15 blood samples from unvaccinated cattle over 10 months old and testing for antibodies produced in response to BVD exposure. By repeating these tests over time, we can gauge the level of BVD activity in the herd. If the virus is successfully eliminated from your herd, we'd expect a steady decline in antibody levels. However, a sharp increase in the antibody level signals that BVD has re-entered. For those farmers who do not yet know the BVD status of their herd, the antibody test can be a useful starting point.

Any BVD monitoring can be performed in conjunction with M bovis testing through the national M. bovis surveillance program. If you are willing to be part of this scheme the blood sampling and travel costs associated with any other testing that you would like to do (eg BVD or trace elements) are paid for by the program. You also receive a discount off the lab fees. This makes it an especially appealing option for farmers looking to test larger groups of cattle.

Autumn BVD Checklist

Autumn is an important time of year for BVD prevention and control. The coming few months are a good time to:

- Check that none of the heifers you plan to select as replacements are BVD virus carriers. A simple blood test is all that it takes (via the M bovis surveillance scheme to save some money, if your like).
- Start the heifer vaccination program. For the BVD vaccines that we stock, the interval between the first and second heifer doses can be as long as six months, giving you the convenience of getting the first shot done before winter
- Check your herd's BVD status by sampling a small group of young cattle, as described above (which can also be done through the M bovis scheme).

Get ahead of BVD and protect your herd today. Contact Clutha Vets to book blood sampling, vaccinations, or to discuss how to better manage BVD in your operation.

Constipation a Serious Problem in Working Dogs

Hayden Linton

Constipation is a serious but often overlooked condition in working dogs, particularly male, entire Huntaways. When dogs suffer from constipation they can go for extended periods without producing faeces at all. Working dogs are often fed low fibre diets, with a majority of the diet consisting of bones and meat. A diet that is insufficient in fibre reduces passage of food throughout the gastrointestinal system. This leads to increased water uptake and hardening of the faeces in the colon.

Signs

- Generally uncomfortable
- Depression or changes in behaviour.
- Decreased appetite
- Straining and discomfort when trying to defecate

Figure 1: Radiograph of a 'normal' dog without constipation. Note, the green lines showing a normal sized colon:

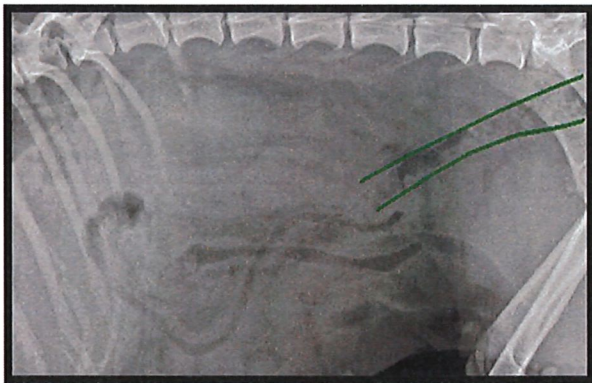
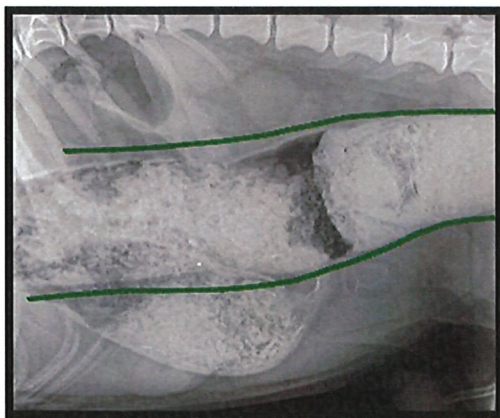


Figure 2: : Radiograph of a dog suffering with constipation. Note, the green lines showing the enlarged colon full of faecal matter.

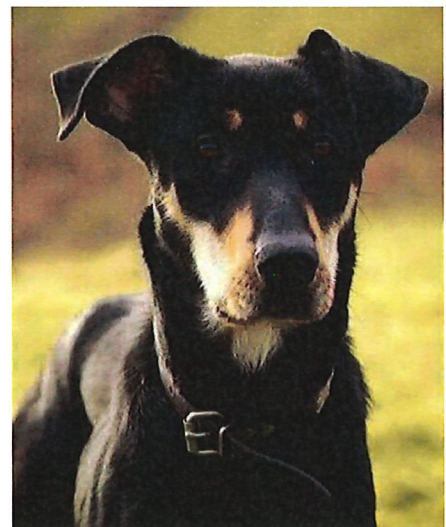


Treatment

- Typically, straightforward but varies depending on severity:
- Early cases – Laxatives and dietary management. These are only suitable for well hydrated patients that are still eating and drinking.
- Severe cases – Enema under general anaesthesia, usually in combination with intravenous fluid therapy. And correction of the underlying cause e.g. castration. Most male patients presented with constipation undergo this procedure.

Prevention

- High fibre diets – We recommend Royal Canin 4800 which contains dietary fibre, including psyllium (a soluble natural fibre, also found in human supplements such as Metamucil)
- Ensure full access to water at all times.
- Avoid feeding bones that can be broken and swallowed
- Stress or prolonged work can contribute to decreased gastrointestinal function
- Castration – The prostate gland of entire male dogs enlarges as they age, pushing up on the colon, potentially contributing to constipation.



When to call Clutha Vets:

If your dog has been straining to defecate for more than 48 hours or showing additional signs such as vomiting, lethargy or abdominal pain. Call us or bring your dog in to the clinic; Prompt treatment is crucial.

Congratulations to Our Winners!

Alleva Cattle Promotion:

Congratulations to Ashley and Shonelle Townsend from Stoney Creek, who won a Hikoki Tool Set after purchasing an Alleva cattle drench

Zoetis Promotion

Congratulations to Peter and Penny White who won the "Chillax Pack" after purchasing Zoetis sheep products

Take a Mate to Stewart Island

The following lucky people (along with their mates!) will be heading off for a weekend on Stewart Island next month, after participating in our Alleva worm drench promotion:

- Max Geddes, Clifton
- Ash Beattie, Outram
- Morgan Stott, Owaka
- Hamish McGregor, Carterhope
- Mark Budge, Balclutha
- Wendy Campbell, Dunedin
- David Shaw, Clinton
- Ian McQueen, Lawrence

Ram Checklist

At this time of year we are all focused on growing the lambs as quickly as possible, as well as getting the ewes in the best possible shape for mating. So sometimes the rams can get forgotten about until it's almost time to put them out.

For the boys to be at their peak at tupping time they need to be in good shape too. Following are a few things to keep in mind:

- Take a look at the rams' body condition; if a bit light get them onto some better feed ASAP and maybe consider drenching them
- Book in a pre-mating check with Clutha Vets
- Sort out any foot problems; consider Footvax
- Just like ewes, rams require adequate trace element levels for good fertility; if giving the ewes an iodine and/or selenium injection, why not give the rams a dose too?
- Clostridial diseases such as pulpy kidney and malignant oedema are uncommon in adult sheep but they still occasionally occur; a shot of "5 in 1" is very cheap insurance
- Protect the rams against flystrike, a common occurrence if they suffer fight injuries around the head.

Retail Ramblings: Autumn Promos

Sheep Promotions:

- **Boss Triple Drench** 20ltr – get an Alleva Shirt with every 20ltr (new year, new colour!)
- **Matrix Drench** 20ltr – get a chiller bag & merino socks with every drum.
- **Troika Triple Drench** – NO PROMO - just the best price!

See our Pre - Tup Flyer for extra savings

Cattle Promotions:

- **Eclipse Pour-On** – get extra members discount on 5.5 and 2.5 litre drums! Best buying.
- **Boss & Turbo Pour - On** – get a 6lt Air fryer with a 5litre drum.



Your Vets

Balclutha Clinic

Jason Darwen	BVSc
Hamish Moore	BVSc
Catherine Copland	BVM&S
Peter Heslip	BVSc, MVM
Steven Butler	BVSc, PGDipVSc
Andrew Roe	BVSc, MANZCVS
David Exton	BVSc
Darius Tan	BVSc
Anneke Muller	BVSc
Wing Szeto	BVSc
Hayden Linton	BVSc
Chase Jordan	BVSc

Milton and Lawrence Clinics

Annie Jackson	BVSc
Martha O'Connor	MVB
Bevan Topham	BVSc
Anna Burrell	BVSc
Alisa McDonald	BVSc
Sam Lewis	BVSc, MSc MANZCVS
Sam Looney	BVSc
Emma Shaw	BVSc
Keira Reynolds	BVSc

Pre-Mating Ewe Management

Alisa McDonald

Body condition scoring (BCS) is a quick, low cost tool to help improve productivity and profitability in your ewe flock. It enables you to target feed where it is needed, so that you can use feed available more efficiently.

By identifying the lighter ewes (those less than a BCS of 3) six weeks pre-mating, and preferentially feeding them, you can improve their condition score and lambing percentage. On the other hand, feeding heavy (BCS 4+) ewes more than maintenance is not efficient and will not result in significant production gains.

"Your biggest jump in scanning percentage will come from reducing the number of poor condition ewes at mating" Paul Kenyon, Massey University

A condition score equates to roughly 7 – 9 kg of liveweight. To hold condition on ewes takes 1 – 1.3kg DM/day of reasonable quality feed. It is more efficient to maintain liveweight than to lose then regain condition.

The light ewes can be given supplementary feed if feed quality is not adequate for weight gain. It is also a good idea to check their trace element status and worm burden (via a faecal egg count) and respond accordingly.

It is also worth identifying the lights so that you can cull repeat offenders: lack of teeth, Johnes disease and intestinal tumours won't respond to increased feed!

We recommend checking your flock's selenium levels pre-mating. Most of our area has selenium deficient soils. The selenium in drenches and vaccinations provides 3 – 4 weeks of selenium at most. If you are not using long acting selenium injections (Selovin LA) or applying selenium prills annually, then your ewe flock will probably need a pre-tup selenium top up.

Adequate selenium levels are vital for good ewe reproductive performance.

Free Ewe Selenium Testing

Clutha Vets are doing our bit to try and improve the selenium status of flocks in our area. While on farm for ram checks this autumn we will collect blood samples from your ewes at NO CHARGE. You just need to have six ewes handy. And the only cost to you will be the laboratory charges.

Autumn Farmer Meetings

Clutha Vets would like to invite you along to one of our autumn sheep and beef farmer seminars, being held in the last week of February.

The main focus of these informal catch-ups is getting your ewes in the best shape for mating, to maximise conception rates and, ultimately, lambing percentages. But we will also cover other aspects of animal health relevant to this time of year

Topics include:

- Getting selenium supplementation right; why are we still seeing selenium deficient ewe flocks?
- Worm management in adult sheep; to drench or not to drench?
- Is iodine deficiency impacting your conception rates and/or lamb survival? Why some supplementation strategies may no longer be fully effective.
- The importance of good body condition on ewe reproductive performance. The benefits go well beyond a good scanning percentage.
- The impacts and control of BVD. How well are we doing in South Otago?

Where and When:

Please choose from one of the following three venues:

Outram

- Outram Hotel
 - Wednesday 26th February
 - 3:30pm—5:30pm
- Concluding with food and refreshments

Owaka

- Owaka Golf Club
 - Thursday 27th February
 - Starting with lunch at 12:30
 - Presentations 1pm to 3pm
- Concluding with refreshments

Balclutha

- Balclutha Golf Club
 - Thursday 27th February
 - 7pm to 9pm
- Concluding with supper and refreshments

We'd love to catch up, so hope that you can make it along to one of the above meetings. Please contact your local Clutha Vets clinic to register your attendance

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 toothed) 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 have found several infected flocks in recent 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.

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, especially if they have not had any supplementation for four weeks or more. Similarly, for those people using a half dose (0.5ml) of Smartshot (long acting B12) at tailing, the benefit gained will be wearing off about now. If keen to check the B12 status of your lambs, please give your nearest Clutha Vets clinic a call and we can arrange to have some testing done when your next draft of lambs heads off to the works.

Checking the effectiveness of your worm drench

You may have read in our December newsletter that we have detected a worrying level of triple drench resistance on our clients' farms in recent years. In light of this we urge all sheep farmers to carry out a post drench check to see how the drench you are using this season is performing. The recommended time to take a look is 10 to 14 days after drenching. All we need are ten faecal samples (about a heaped tablespoon each) from the lambs in question, which you can drop into your nearest clinic. To assist with the process Clutha Vets are offering a free faecal egg count with every two drums of drench purchased this season. Why not take advantage of this offer to check on your drench's performance?

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 velvetting adult stags. There is a specific section of the drug record book to record spiker velvetting episodes where NaturO rings are used.