

CLUTHA VETS SHEEP & BEEF FARMER NEWSLETTER



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Salmonella Strikes Local Sheep Farms

Andrew Roe

The salmonella outbreaks that swept through dairy herds in Southland and South Otago during the last nine months have been well publicised. Now, unfortunately, it seems to be the turn of our sheep flocks.

A number of sheep farms across the region experienced ewe losses from enteric (gut) salmonellosis in the last three to four weeks. Most have been in Southland, but we have already seen several outbreaks in our patch also.

The start of winter is a common time for the disease to strike, and it's not only because the weather is getting colder. As mating comes to an end it is normal for mobs to get mixed together, feed allocations to get a little tighter and stocking rates to increase. All of these management changes, while necessary, come with the risk of triggering a salmonella outbreak. A proportion of the ewes in most local flocks will be harbouring the salmonella bacteria in their digestive tract, and it may only takes a small change in feeding levels or dietary composition to allow these bacteria to multiply rapidly and for the ewes concerned to become infectious.

A typical scenario is to find several dead ewes in a mob, and a number of others clearly sick. Usually it is ewes that are in pretty good condition. More may die over the following days. Being a gut infection, some of the affected ewes will develop a scour, but this is often hard to spot, presenting as a small amount of yellow-green faeces on the wool around the back end.

While some farmers are confident in making their own diagnosis of salmonellosis, we encourage you to get in touch if you suspect your flock is affected. We have already seen a case of enteric listeriosis in ewes this winter; another gut infection which very closely resembles salmonella, so it is important to carry out some post mortems +/- lab tests to be sure of what we are dealing with.

If confirmed as salmonellosis, the vaccine, Salvexin+B, is very effective at stopping the outbreak, as long as you get onto it early. Despite earlier concerns about shortages, Clutha Vets has plenty of vaccine on hand.

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Clinic News

Annie Jackson

With the first few frosts and some stormy weather behind us, it's been a gentle reminder that winter is here. Now is the time to make sure all our wintering systems are ready to go.

Autumn has been exceptional this year, and for the first time in many seasons, there's an abundance of feed heading into winter. With lamb and beef prices looking stronger than they have in years, there's a quiet sense of optimism in the air — it's fair to say, it ain't all bad!

On the staffing front, things are looking very stable. Our veterinary team is in great shape, and after a few well-earned winter breaks, we'll be heading into spring with a full crew of talented vets, ready for the busy season ahead.

A big thank you to everyone who attended the recent pregnancy testing awards dinner. It was a fantastic turnout, a chance to recognise some impressive results, and a great opportunity to catch up with neighbours and share a few laughs.

Hopefully, some of you will manage to sneak away for a well-deserved break — perhaps to a warm island — before spring rolls around and the cycle starts anew.

Sheep Farmer Meetings

Clutha Vets are excited to be hosting our winter farmer seminars in late July and welcome all local sheep and beef farmers, and their staff to come along.

Venues:

- Balclutha Golf Club; evening of Wednesday 23rd July
- Lawrence Golf Club; the afternoon of Thursday 24th July

Topics

Kim Kelly, veterinary advisor with MSD Animal Health will address the following, commonly asked questions

- With many farmers now vaccinating their lambs at tailing, is it still necessary to give the ewes a "5 in 1" before lambing?
- What are the benefits, if any, of using Campyvax4 in mixed age ewes?

Further topics, presented by the Clutha Vets team, will round out the event. Keep an eye out for further details, including start times, the full list of topics, and ways to register your interest.

RVM Consultations

Quite a few of the animal health products commonly used on sheep and beef farms are classified as "restricted veterinary medicines" (RVMs). Examples include;

- All antibiotics, regardless of what form they are in (injectable, oral, topical or intra-mammary)
- Most vaccines; an exception is "5 in 1" vaccine
- Some trace element products such as injectable iodine and copper preparations as well as most oral trace element boluses that contain copper.
- All injectable pain relief, sedatives and anti-inflammatory drugs.

It is a legal requirement that, before you purchase an RVM, you have a consultation with a vet. We are not permitted to dispense these products without a veterinary consult. If unprepared, these requirements can lead to a degree of frustration as well as a lot of inconvenience!

Thankfully, there is a provision in the rules, that allows you (and us!) to meet these RVM requirements in an easy and convenient way. By catching up with your vet once a year and going over your anticipated animal health requirements, we can then "forward authorise" your RVM usage for the following 12 months, saving you the need and inconvenience of speaking to a vet each time you require a particular RVM.

The winter months are often a good time to get your RVM consult done. Things tend to be a little less busy (for you and us) in the winter, and, with many of the RVMs that are needed on sheep and beef farms used over the lamb and calving period, it is helpful to have your RVM authorisations up to date before the spring.

Also many of our clients have recently found out that, as part of the regular NZ Farm Assurance audits, carried out on behalf of your processor, you are likely to be asked to provide evidence that you have had an RVM consultation in the last twelve months.

If you've not had an RVM consult in the last year, why not book one in now, before things get busy over lambing. And remember that an RVM consult is also a great opportunity to discuss any other animal health and productivity questions or concerns with your vet.

Lameness in Sheep

Alisa McDonald

With the wetter autumn and more feed around we have seen a bit more lameness in sheep recently, sometimes with large numbers of ewes affected. We have fielded plenty of calls from clients asking for advice around treatment and prevention.

There are a few different presentations of lameness in sheep; following is a brief outline of the main three conditions;

Foot Scald

Scald (ovine interdigital dermatitis) occurs when wet conditions cause maceration and trauma to the skin between the claws. This allows a bacteria (*Fusobacterium necrophorum*) to invade the skin leading to inflammation and tissue death.

A large number of sheep can be affected, they will be lame, and the skin between the claws is red and swollen, often covered by whitish material.

Mild cases of scald will often heal by themselves, especially if sheep are moved to dry pasture. If this is not possible or there is prolonged wet period, regular foot bathing (2 – 4-week intervals) with zinc sulphate in a 10% solution (10 kg to 100L water) can reduce the occurrence of scald. Ideally, after foot bathing, sheep should be stood on grating to let the zinc dry on the feet.

For situations where there are not many affected, topical sprays, such as Tetravet Blue aerosol can be used.



Foot Rot

Foot rot is due to a bacteria called *Dichelobacter nodosus*: it works with *F. necrophorum* to cause separation of the horn of the hoof. Foot rot has a characteristic smell, and underrunning of the wall or sole of the foot is present.

Under New Zealand conditions, foot rot can occur at most times of the year. All ages of sheep are

susceptible. Merinos are more susceptible than other breeds, and susceptibility to the disease is heritable.

Treatment usually involves paring affected feet and then applying an antibacterial treatment (zinc, formalin or tetravet spray, depending on the number of sheep affected).

Often injectable antibiotics are required. Cure rates vary but are usually >80%. Sheep need to be kept in a dry area (woolshed grating) for 24 hours after injection. Ideally treated animals should be identified and culled once recovered.

There is a vaccine (Footvax) which can be used to prevent foot rot. One dose will give short term protection and can be targeted at key times (eg pre-mating in rams), while two doses, followed by annual boosters will give ongoing protection against the disease. Footvax should not be used in sheep previously treated with injectable moxidectin (Cydectin, Eweguard etc).

Foot Abscess

Foot abscesses are commonly caused by infection with *Arcanobacter pyogenes* or *F. necrophorum*. Abscesses develop as a complication of interdigital dermatitis (scald). Abscesses cause acute lameness, usually just in one foot. Often there is pus between the claws, and swelling extending up above the hoof. Unlike scald and foot rot, foot abscesses do not affect a large proportion of the flock.

Foot abscesses require antibiotic treatment, usually 2-3 injections, and these can take a couple of months to fully heal. Infection can affect the joint cartilage, leading to arthritis. Once lameness resolves, culling affected animals is recommended.

When treating lame sheep, especially rams or those affected by foot abscess, pain relief with an anti-inflammatory, such as Reliven, should be considered. Pain relief reduces pain and lameness, and gets animals grazing again, which reduces production loss.

Another thing to remember is that lame sheep cannot be transported. Under the welfare regulations, a sheep not weight bearing on one or more limbs when moving or standing, or which has difficulty walking or is holding its head below its backline almost continuously cannot be transported to the works.

If you have large numbers of lame sheep in your flock, please come and have a chat to one of the vets about how we can help manage it.

Changes to Welfare Code

MPI is in the process of reviewing and updating the Code of Welfare of Sheep and Beef Cattle. A draft update has been prepared and was recently released for consultation.

We encourage you to take a look at the proposed changes, which have been posted on MPI's website. Go to www.MPI/consultations, and then click on the "animal welfare" box.

You will find a document which lists each of the proposed changes, alongside the relevant section from the current code, for comparison.

Some of the new proposals take into account new technologies and updated science, and also include new standards related to dairy sheep.

If you are not happy with any of the proposed changes/additions, or would like to suggest alternative wording, you have until 15th July to make a submission to MPI. Alternatively you can send your feedback to Beef+Lamb NZ who will be making a submission on behalf of sheep and beef farmers

Bionic is Back!

In our April newsletter we announced that Boehringer Ingelheim had resumed manufacture of Bionic Plus slow release drench capsules, in the hope that the product would be on the shelf in time for pre-lamb this year. We can now confirm that, yes, we will have Bionic capsules available to treat ewes and ewe hoggets ahead of this lambing season.

As always we discourage whole flock treatment, due to drench resistance concerns. Instead we urge you to target those animals at the most risk of being impacted by worms during late pregnancy and lactation. Examples include pregnant hoggets, multiple bearing two tooth and triplet bearing ewes, as well as ewes that are in light condition.

There have been a couple of changes since Bionic Plus was last available. Not surprisingly the price has increased a little. And the meat withholding period has been extended out to 135 days.

If you are considering using Bionic capsules this season please give us a call to advise us of your requirements.

Retail Ramblings: June Promos

Healthy Ewe RTU

Liquid Sunshine! A boost when they need it. Now with **15% members discount**, on both Standard and Hi Selenium options (15 litres)

Black Hawk Working Dog 20kg

For June & July Receive a huge **20% members discount** when you purchase in June and July

VetMed Drench Range

Purchase any VetMed worm drench, including Triplemax Low Dose & Cervidae Oral, to go in the draw for a **De Walt Petrol Water Blaster**.

Zolvix Plus

Buy 2 x 5ltr packs and get a **FREE Gun and Backpack Set**.

Triple Combo Sheep Drenches

Grab a **free shirt** with every 20L drum of Matrix or Boss Triple (limited stock)



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
Rebecca Everingham	BVSc
Michael Sole	BVSc, BSc

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

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