



EWES NEWS



Dave Robertson
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Comment

Recently the comment has been heard that "there is no money in sheep". The only time I will agree with this is when they are dead behind the farm gate, and yes when we post mortem any lambs or ewes during these investigations I have never found any loose change or currency of any kind within their organ systems.

Despite all the gloomy talk last year, lamb breeders and traders have done alright this year. Even dealing in cast-for-age ewes, getting 1.3 lambs out of them has been more profitable (on a kgDM basis) than dairy support or cow grazing. The upshot is sheep are worth the effort to prevent deaths, ill thrift and invest in profit drivers, such as how to optimise lambs inside ewes and in feeds that will maximise lamb growth. Just make it a goal to tell others that sheep farming is OK, and don't let others glibly tell you otherwise.



Duncan & Anna McLachlan who farm Otewai Holdings near Duntroon are taking daughter Charlee to the USA for life changing surgery for her Cerebral Palsy. The Veterinary Centre team had a lot of fun raising money for Charlee with a wild hair day on St Patricks day. Charlee came in to judge the competition winner and chose Meriana Ovens. Well done team!

New to the team - Eleanor Barton

Eleanor is from a rural beef and sheep area in the Scottish Borders, UK and studied to become a vet at Nottingham University. She has travelled across the world to settle in New Zealand. Now, she is working with us as a mixed animal veterinarian and is looking forward to getting involved on farm and learning more about the Kiwi production systems. She has a particular passion for reproductive management and lameness in sheep. Outside of veterinary matters Eleanor likes to get out into the great New Zealand outdoors and go tramping, road cycling or rock-climbing. She is also a keen scuba diver and photographer. Eleanor is looking forward to getting to know the local area and meeting the Veterinary Centre's sheep and beef clients.



- Veterinary Centre Oamaru**
- Veterinary Centre Waimate**
- Veterinary Centre Palmerston**
- Veterinary Centre Glenavy**
- Veterinary Centre Kurow**
- Veterinary Centre Omarama**
- Veterinary Centre Ranfurly**

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Sheep Production & Profitability Dave Robertson BVSc, BSc



Dave Robertson
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Preventing Deaths

I have had many conversations with lamb finishing operators recently around the frustration of lamb deaths. For every dead one the profit is gone on another 4 live ones. There are multiple reasons for these losses; red gut, pulpy kidney and pneumonia among these, and we must never over-look the obvious and the basic. 5 in 1 vaccines are the most effective option for eliminating a major cause of sudden deaths. It just needs to be done twice 4 weeks apart to be effective.

The other niggle that can look like pulpy kidney is red gut. This occurs in lambs that are on a lucerne or clover dominant pasture. A crude explanation of the disease is due to the high quality of the feed and low fibre content, the rumen capacity shrinks and large bowel does more of the processing, thus expanding and making the gut prone to twisting up. The disease process can be mitigated



Rocket type feeds such as lucerne or brassicas increase the risk of redgut

by provision of fibre (straw/hay) or grazing on pasture 2 of 7 days. Mowing and wilting a few rounds of your lucerne prior to grazing also may help. Using 10in1 Covexin vaccine has also been reported to be effective with stopping deaths on rocket fuel feed.

Autumn Lice Michael Lilley BVSc Veterinary Centre Ranfurly



Michael Lilley
BVSc

We are beginning to see some early lice issues in the Maniototo. Last season was a good one for lice breeding and we ran into multiple situations in late winter/early spring with lousy sheep leading up to shearing.

Factors to consider when autumn treating

Factors to consider when autumn treating

- Breed- Fine wool breeds are more prone to developing large lice burdens and less flexible when it comes to shearing time.
- Ewe condition - Light sheep are more likely to get higher lice burdens.
- Biosecurity- How much mixing with

other sheep has occurred or have any purchases been made?

- Shearing time-If shearing pre-lamb this is still a long way away!

If a small number of lice are present now they have time to breed up to a large number over winter. Treatment now will buy time to get through until shearing where a pour-on treatment can provide further control. Many options are available however Extinosad applied now through a shower dip or jetter now will kill all lice stages including adults at an economical price. If fly pressure still exists Cyrex or Fleecemaster/Zenith are options.



Who says sheep farmers aren't a happy bunch! Paul Toomey (left) is visibly over the moon after his wife Alayca, brought Eukanuba farmdog last month and won a Husqvana chainsaw. Congratulations also to John Anderson (below) of Omarama who won the 2nd Veterinary Centre exclusive chainsaw.



The market and feed supply mean that 2017 should be marked down as a year for the beef breeding system to thrive, or at least it should be hard not to make improvements in cow wintering condition, calving spread and weaner live weights. I have recently enjoyed farmers reporting about calf weights and growth rates. It is also the point of year for the cows where they should be nearing peak body condition, and with bull sale catalogues starting to arrive for the up and coming sales there is plenty to discuss around what is the genetic direction of your herd.

Giving weaner calves the best start

Whether that's home bred or bought in ones there are some basic animal health and husbandry that can make a considerable difference, **Yard weaning:** The idea of yard weaning is to get calves used to humans and

minimise stress during weaning. The process involves leaving the calves in yards for 5-7 days providing water and reasonable baleage (or other supplements) in feeders for 5-7 days and making sure you walk among the calves each day and the cows are out of sight. This results in:

- Cattle that are easier to handle over their lifetime.
- Reduced chance of damage to people or equipment.
- Increased chance of superior early weight gain.
- Cattle that are likely to adjust more quickly to feedlot or cell grazing systems, improving the chance of superior weight gain.

In New Zealand trials the yard weaned cattle were 10kg heavier at the end of the week, and the paddock mob had not gained any significant weight all.

Weaner calf Animal Health

At weaning give a combination worm drench orally or Eclipse E injectable or Eclipse pour-on. Whilst calves are on their mothers' milk based diet internal parasites do not cause many issues but once weaned it is a major handbrake on pasture based growth rates.

Minerals for weaners: it is hard to go past long acting selenium (Selovin LA) as a way to reliably sustain levels for the next 12 months. Copper is also important. Copacap copper bullets are longer acting, but Coppermax injection is a good alternative going into the winter, especially if wintering on brassicas.

Covexin 10 in 1 (or at a minimum Multine 5 in 1) vaccine is well justified at weaning and again 1 month later. These vaccinations are critical if going onto to fodder beet.

Summary

- Recommendation at weaning: 1 x drench, 1 x mineral (selenium), 1 x vaccine (1st covexin),
- 5 weeks later: 1 x mineral (copper), 2nd covexin and drench if required.



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Veterinary Centre – By the Big Blue Cross



The beef cow

April is the peak of our beef cow pregnancy testing. It is also a time to review BVD plans and get bull requirements sorted for the next season.

When booking in your PDs ask about getting a BVD monitoring and mineral check done at the same time. If you book it with the office staff they can allow the vet a bit of extra time to ensure it gets done.

This season we are continuing with our commercial beef cow performance monitoring for the farms using the extra level of information recording. We can capture all your beef cow records digitally and email results and summary graphs back to you. I am expecting the condition score monitoring we did last year to look slightly different this year...



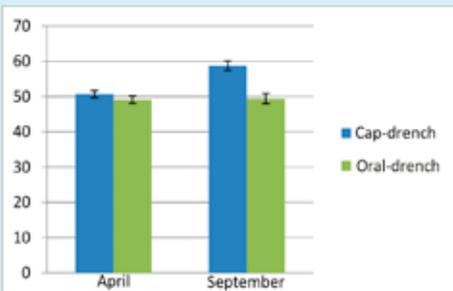
Science and Research Update

It has been a busy few weeks meeting deadlines for our research papers so we thought we'd share some of the interesting points before the official publishers get a hold of it.

Dave Robertson
BVSc, BSc and the
Veterinary Centre
Sheep & Beef
Production team.

Bionic Pre-tup Capsule Trial

The Bionic pre-tup capsule trial wanted to see if there was any benefit to long acting worm control in a tough season on 2 tooth ewes that had not reached target live weights pre-mating. The results showed that yes a bionic in 2 tooth ewes did result in them being 8 kgs heavier at the pre-lamb stage compared with ewes orally drenched.



Graph 1.
2 tooth live weight change from April (pre-tup) to September (pre-lamb)

Pre-tup capsuled ewes were 8kg heavier pre-lamb (September 24) compared with orally drenched ewes run in the same mob.

We're not suggesting that every 2 tooth will need or benefit from a long acting drench at this time, but this was a surprising result. There is more to this story which will be revealed at a latter relevant stage.

Ovary Scanning Project

I have been mentioning this ovary scanning business for a while now, as it has consumed a fair amount of my time. It is a project pushed along by Neil Sanderson and Beef and Lamb Genetics. Hamish Newton and myself have collected and collated the data. It has involved ultrasounding ovaries of beef heifers to see if the number of follicles present has an influence of pregnancy outcomes. A main question was: Does antral follicle count influence the chance of a heifer being pregnant or empty? From our findings shown in the graph below it would appear that it does.

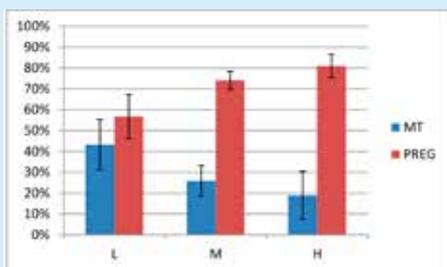


Figure 3:
Pregnancy rates by AFC category

The percentages pregnant were 81%, 74% and 57% for the High, Medium, and Low

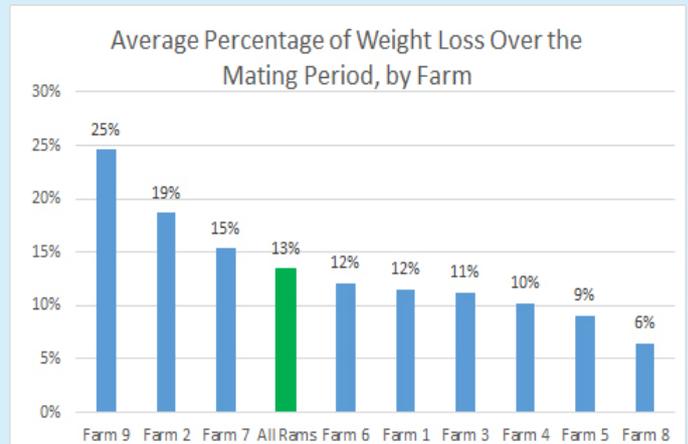
AFC categories respectively. The percent pregnant was significantly higher in the High AFC heifers than the Low AFC heifers ($p < 0.01$).

The Veterinary Centre Ram health and husbandry study

(Funded by Beef and Lamb Genetics)

The results are in and some interesting findings have dropped out of this study. It is a first for New Zealand, and there are also a number of new avenues and questions arisen. There will be aspects of this study that will benefit breeders and commercial farmers.

What started it all was a mixture of farmer frustration and anecdote over rams not lasting. This study of over 500 commercial rams has put some numbers around how much condition is lost over mating and what areas contribute to culling and loss.



This is a breakdown of the average amount of body weight (as a percentage) rams lost over mating. Some of the interesting bits were that there was no statistical difference between terminal and maternal type rams. Rams that lost more than 20% of body weight over mated tended to have higher culling rates. If rams went out lame they had ~50% chance of remaining in the mob by December. In the survey most farmers reported abscess as the main hoof problem, but the majority of lame rams we examined had footrot!

A lot the findings are basic husbandry things that if done will ensure that you can cull rams for genetic improvement sake, as compared with problems that could have been avoided.

When I explained these results to a shearer/farmer he commented "so we just need to look after our rams better... and think about their well-being for more than 2 weeks of the year" which is a fair-enough summary.