April 2018

EWES NEWS

Merino Awards/Stud Merino Tour Dinner

Michael Lilley of Veterinary Centre Ranfurly recently attended the Merino Awards/ Stud Merino Tour Dinner in Queenstown. The event is held jointly by the Otago Merino Association and Central Otago Stud Merino Breeders. It has been a great event for the Veterinary Centre to be involved in and by attending has given our team the chance to catch up with many clients and high performing Merino farmers in the district. Digging deeper into the event's history I recently spoke to Bevan McKnight, one of the key organisers behind the scenes and he said the dinner and fleece competition has been going for some time now, measurable in decades rather than years. Farmers are invited to donate a fleece which can either be entered in one of the competitive categories or simply donated with proceeds going to the very worthwhile charity of the Child Cancer Foundation. Many of the services to run the competition, the prizes, judging, etc are given freely. Bevan estimates near enough to $300,000 would have been donated to the Child Cancer Foundation since the event began and this year was again very successful. And because even in charity it is good to have some competition we have included the results of the fleece competition.

Results of the NZWTA Child Cancer Fleece competition

- Medium (17.9 micron and over): Craighurst (Nick & Kim Richards) 1, Olrig (Elliott and Nikki Heckler) 2, Catherine Field (Mark Ivey) 3.
- Fine (16.9-17.8): Gidding Downs (Peter, Margaret and Simon Hore) 1, Cornaig (Peter, Margaret and Simon Hore) 2, Benmore (Bill and Kate Sutherland, Andrew and Deidre Sutherland) 3.
- Superfine (15.9-16.8): Otematata (Hugh Cameron) 1, Glenshee (Peter, Margaret and Simon Hore) 2, Ben Ohau (Simon and Priscilla Cameron) 3.
- Ultrafine (15.8 and under): Matarae (Will and Emily Jones) 1, Northburn (Bevan and Tiffany McKnight) 2, Matangi (John and Mary-Liz Sanders) 3.
- Overall champion: Gidding Downs.

Anton Gibson and Allan Paterson look over some Armidale merinos on the recent stud tour.

Product Update

- Multine B12 – this product is available again. We have product in stock and access to more. We do not expect any further interruptions in supply.
- Eclipse E injection plus B12 and Selenium – this is an innovative development of the precursor Eclipse E injection. The mineral/trace element component is equivalent to what the animal would receive from a single injection of short acting B12 and Selenium. A very convenient option and at $2 per 140 kg of live weight is in the same ballpark price of using a pour on and giving the selenised B12 separately.

- Flexidine is available again. Bayer have been able to get production underway and although it is slightly late it should be able to be worked into most farmer users schedules. This means we will be able to supply the full quota to those who require it. Contact your Territory Manager to confirm.

VETERINARY CENTRE

Dave Robertson
BVSc, BSc

Beef Production

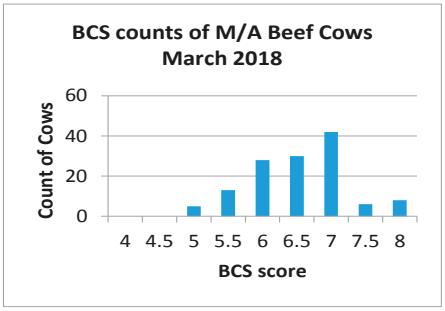
Dave Robertson BVSc, BSc

Beef Cattle Performance

We have done a fair chunk of beef cow scanning now and there are some impressive results coming in. Identifying cows into cycle groups really highlights those top performers. 1st cycle conception rates are consistently in the 60's for most beef herds that have cows in good order and calving spread had not drifted too much in the previous year. Empty rates are generally less than 5% so far. Twinning rates are up to 10% in some herds.

High performing local beef herd - conception rate data

Preg Status	Count	%
1st Cycle	109	87%
2nd Cycle	11	9%
3rd Cycle	1	1%
Late	0	0%
Dry	4	3%
Total	125	



This farm has had an exceptional 1st cycle conception rate. Cow condition was optimised at over BCS 6, the herd screen for BVD showed no exposure, no issues with bulls observed and were rotated after 1 cycle (not that there was much to do!). Long acting selenium is given annually. Knowing that next season the cows will be having a condensed and early calving is a great bit of data. It highlights that this beef system will be optimised and the feed required in the spring can be allocated with more accuracy. They can look forward to a very even and well grown line of weaners.

Does Artificial Insemination Stack-up?

AI is not a new thing, but is not widely done in a commercial beef setting. It will not replace the need for good service bulls, however for farmers wanting to tap into specific traits (such as marbelling) finding proven genetics through AI can be a viable option.

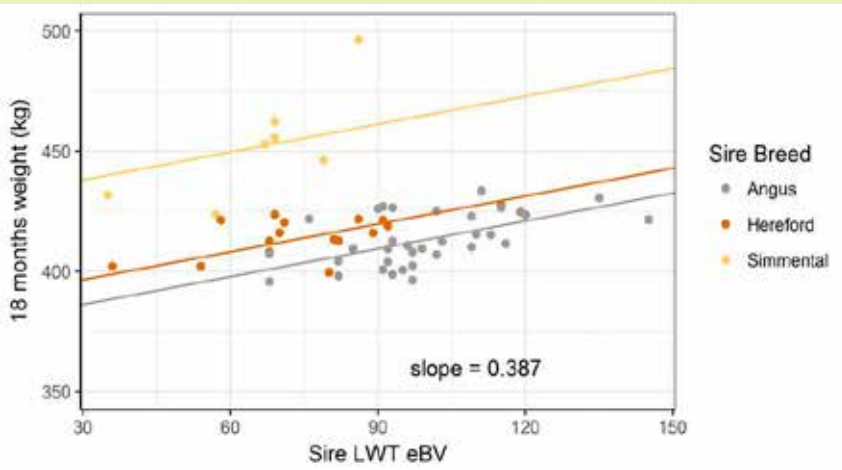
Recently I have pregnancy tested some larger scale commercial beef herds using our Veterinary Centre beef AI service and we have achieved very good results.

With fixed timed programming the AI is done on one morning with no heat detection. In one example 153 commercial hill country cows we recently recorded 113 (74%) AI pregnancies with some very exciting genetics. The dry rate was less than 2% at 64 days mating. The Beef & Lamb Genetics Beef Progeny Testing herd (***www.blnzgenetics.com/progeny-tests***) has also achieved over 70% conception rate with fixed time AI.

The Value of Breeding Values

From the Beef and Lamb progeny testing program it has been proven that choosing bulls with better values will enhance profitability significantly across a line of calves.

Yearling weight vs Sire LWT eBV graph



This graph shows yearling weights (400day) against sire breeding values for the trait. The prediction is for every 1kg of eBV it is worth an extra 0.5kg liveweight to the progeny.

In the 5 commercial beef herds around New Zealand where these progeny were produced and tested the prediction was very close. 1kg of bull eBV = 0.47kg of progeny live weight on average.

In other terms a 25 kg difference in yearling weight would be seen in calves born to 2 different same breed bulls one with 400 d Wt eBV of 70 and another eBV of 120...or you could just use a terminal sire bull to really increase 400 day weights (see the few Simmental plots).

[data supplied by Max Tweedie, Beef and Lamb Genetics] Contact Dave Robertson if you want to discuss this further.

Bull Soundness

Coming up to bull sales it is a good time to service test the existing bull team, especially for those bulls still under insurance. The service testing works well on farms that do it routinely each year. Bulls that were sound last year are not always sound the next. 5 year+ bulls are the age group with the most problems with servicing. If you have an aging team, it would be worth having them checked.

Angus Gibb in Ranfurly has completed a service bull collection course and we can offer A-V collection of bulls during service testing which allows the evaluation of semen quality from a natural service.

Worm Control this Autumn

WEANER BEEF CATTLE - Autumn calf animal health programme
Eclipse E +B12 and Selenium combination product.

Weaning April (2 injections)	1st covexin and Eclipse E Se+B12 injection
May - 5 weeks later (2 injections and a pour-on)	2nd covexin and 2mL Coppermax and Eclipse pour-on (for lice and worm control)

Agronomy & Animal Health Autumn Fertiliser Application

Nick Reed BSc

So far this autumn throughout our practice area we've had a lot of rain, and days that have been 17 degrees or more, so pasture is growing. This gives farmers a better chance of reaching their BCS targets in both ewes pre-tup and beef, but as soil temperatures tend to drop in late April/early May it's a good time to start thinking about Autumn Fertiliser applications.

Used strategically, nitrogen can help build a feed reserve, while you have good growing conditions in autumn.

Nitrogen-boosted pasture is the cheapest form of feed, and sheep and beef farms are generally very responsive to applied nitrogen. It's common to get a 20:1 response on hill country – 20 kilos of Dry Matter for every kilo of Nitrogen – so applying 30-40 kg N/ha will lift available feed considerably.

Choosing the right product is vital. Autumn rainfall can be fickle, with urea you need that all-important 5-10 mm of rain within eight hours of application to reduce nitrogen loss from ammonia volatilisation. Products like SustaiN (Ballance) or N-Protect (Ravensdown) give you more leeway with that timing, reducing losses by 50%.

Free BVD Screening with Beef Pregnancy Testing

A reminder of our current beef pregnancy testing special offer where we are able to provide BVD screening for the herd, free of charge to the farmer. In recent seasons Dave and the team have focused on gathering information around the key drivers of beef pregnancy outcomes in our area and this information will be an important piece of the jigsaw puzzle of the contributing factors to good and poor beef reproduction performance.

Questions About Flexidine Use

There are several questions coming up frequently when now discussing the availability of a full supply of Flexidine to farmers after having initial plans to work with half the required amount.

1. **What if I have already given a half dose to some or all of my stock?**

a. You can give the other half dose now and it will last through pregnancy. Alternately you can give the other half at the next practical opportunity such as shearing or pre lamb.

2. **How close to putting the ram out can I give Flexidine?**

a. The recommendation is 1 month before the ram goes out. This is so the slow release iodine can be at optimum levels for benefits during ovulation. The closer Flexidine is given to the ram going out the less of the positive benefits will be realised for ovulation.

3. **What if I have given a dose of Vet LSD to my stock but now have access to a full dose of Flexidine?**

a. It takes a significant overdose of iodine to cause toxicity. An oral dose of Vet LSD combined with a full dose of Flexidine would be nowhere near enough to cause issues. So it is possible to give the Flexidine following an oral dose of Vet LSD and know the iodine supplementation job is done for full term. However if it is too close to the ram going out then it might be just as well to wait until pre lamb and give the half dose of Flexidine.

JUST A REMINDER OF OUR FREE DELIVERY SERVICE

Orders made before 10am - delivery that day.

Orders phoned in after 10am – delivery the following day.

Trading Lambs and Ewe Hoggets

Novel drench families are not new. But we REALLY HAVE TO START USING THEM. Talking to my Wormwise veterinary collegues around the country there are reports of triple drench failures. We don't want that to happen here. Triple drench is the most effective combination drench and together with some level of refugia (undrenched population on farm e.g. m.a. ewes) is an effective and sustainable worm control option. Using the novel drench families once-a-year in the autumn will further enhance this worm control system. A clean out with Startect or Zolvix plus is an effective way of eliminating any resistant parasites that may have accumulated in stock prior to going into the winter. Farmers that have done a reduction test and have identified emerging resistance have seen the value in slipping a new drench family into the system. Novel drenches also have value after a LA injection or capsule program.

The main thing this April is not to relax your drench intervals. It is prime conditions for egg hatch, larval development and parasite consumption on pasture. Stick to 28-30days between drenches in hoggets/trade lambs.

Omarama Lamb Sale

Michael Lilley
BVSc

Ranfurly Update

Clik Extra

During the Central Otago Merino Stud Tour at Matangi Station, Elanco had the launch of their new product Clik Extra. As most farmers are finding out Clik is very effective when it comes to reliavble long term fly protection. Clik extra adds to this by having 30% extra of the active ingredient Dicyclanil. This extends the protection time to 14-26 weeks. This length of protection will provide significant management gains on farm. Ewes treated pre lamb or at tailing can be provided with fly protection through the summer. Also lambs treated at tailing will be protected through the fly challenge period.

Nitrate poisoning

It is again the time of year when Nitrate Poisoning rears its ugly head. With the widespread excellent autumn growth conditions, many farmers are taking advantage of applying nitrogen to boost growth leading into winter. One thing we do know is that when plant growth is slowed by cold or overcast weather, plants will accumulate nitrate. The first sign often seen in livestock is sudden death so plant testing is essential before placing stock on any at risk crop or pasture. Drop samples into any of our clinics or arrange for our Territory Managers to come and sample. We can test within the hour at all of our clinics or if large numbers of samples are required to be tested we can provide a kit and training on how to undertake samples yourself.

Optigrow

Optigrow is the system where samples of liver tissue are collected at processing plants and tested for trace elements. It is a simple way to check the Selenium, Copper and Vitamin B12 (Cobalt) status of your flock or herd. These deficiencies when present are seriously sapping on production and can all be simply prevented. I have dealt with repeat cases of deficiencies of all of these over the past few years and it is great to now see the gains coming through in supplemented herds through improved weaning weights, growth rates and scanning percentages.

Contact any of our clinics to get an Optigrow request form which accompanies stock to the processor. If you have any questions about which stock classes across sheep and beef to sample contact any of our veterinarians for advice.