



Jeff Spillane,
Commercial Manager

Comment

This month's edition focuses on local information and best practice to help manage the dry period. Talking to farmers around the district many are philosophical, appreciating the game has changed for the moment. Lateral thinking is at a premium - one client spoken to was fencing off roadsides! New ideas are invaluable now and for future events.

Doing the basics right is critical. Prioritising stock, measuring body condition and continually assessing feed availability are the basis on which decisions can be made. Rams go out in less than 60 days for many ... action now is required to secure next year's lamb crop. Those making the tough calls on quitting stock, grazing out, or buying in feed will be best positioned for next season where pricing typically rises following a decrease in supply. Ensuring ewe condition is optimised and the necessary vaccinations/treatments are administered must be part of current planning.

Finally see inside the dates and locations of a series of catch ups Vet Centre Rural BBQ meetings being held in your area soon. We look forward to catching up.



Classic Maniototo - despite the dry climate it remains an impressive landscape

*“the leading light in
animal health”*

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Ph 03-434 5666
Ph 03-689 7213
Ph 03-465 1291
Ph 03-689 8118
Ph 03-436 0567
Ph 03-438 9868
Ph 03-444 1020



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Sheep Production

Managing the conditions



Dave Robertson BVSc, BSc

So Mr Brown has definitely over-stayed his welcome, and many of you have had to re-arrange things majorly on farm to accommodate the dry predicament. My Hawkes Bay mentors would say "make a plan...pick some key points in time, act...prioritise stock...don't deviate from the plan even

if a bit of rain falls...". Remember to keep (or start) talking to your neighbours in these tough times and we're here to help with feed budgeting and number crunching if you're stuck.



Body Condition Scoring Ewes

For breeding units the big thing looming is rams going out. I have banged on about condition scoring ewes for some time, but in these conditions extra monitoring is even more critical. It is hard to notice ewes losing weight, especially in the wool. It is much more efficient to hold weight than lose it and have to put it back on again (especially with brought in supplements). If ewes are condition score 3+ then they don't need extra flushing. Ewes 2.5 or less do need the treatment to get the lambs inside them. Body condition scoring the mob pre-tup is time well spent. Taking out bottom 20% seems good practice, these can have what better pick there is, or another 100g/d of barley. Light ewes can scan well if

you crank the supplements for 3 weeks before joining. Body condition scoring ewe mobs (record 50-70 ewes) each month up to and through mating will ensure you notice subtle BCS changes. If you're making the decision to feed supplements, you have to get the benefits (from multiple pregnancies) to pay for it.



Body condition scoring is vital for decision making

Replacement Ewe Lambs

Don't park the replacement ewe lambs in a corner, just because you've decided not to mate them. Drought hoggets do under-perform for most of their lives. Grazing out often stacks up much better than buying in feed. Do you remember any 'R' rolling tractor fanatics at boarding school that are now running the family farm in Southland...?

Veterinary Centre Rural Community BBQ Meetings

12 February Middlemarch

Middlemarch Bowling Club,
Middlemarch, Time 3.00pm

13 February Maniototo

Gimmerburn Hall, Gimmerburn,
Time 3.00pm.

16 February Palmerston

Ken Ferguson's Woolshed,
1097 Palmerston-Dunback
Road, Palmerston,
Time 3.00pm

Also 15 February Kurow

The Thirst Quencher at the
Kurow Hotel for North Otago
and South Canterbury farmers
- organised by the Waitaki
Wags and supported by the
Veterinary Centre.

Androvax

Androvax has had some more enquiries this year. It can be a valid drought modulating option to getting lambs inside ewes. Expect to lift scanning by 5-20%. Ewes that have never had it need 2 shots 8 and 4 weeks before lambing - so you need to get onto it now!



Supplementary Feeding

Grain feeding

Barley is a common supplement for sheep. If you're going to flush ewes on it order it now while harvest is on. Current price is around \$400/t. It is starch which is therefore high energy, with modest protein levels at around 12%. For sheep there is no benefit to crushed verses whole grain. Cattle require barley to be crushed. The transition onto grain feed is important. For sheep start with 50-100g/sheep/day. Build up to 300g/day after 2 week transition (that is about 1/3 of maintenance requirement). Ruminants need some roughage as well to fill up and stimulate saliva production.

Adding salt (3kg/100kg of barley) will help with palatability when getting sheep started. A figure '8' when feeding on the ground is the best way of exposing the whole mob to a ration. Grain strip should be 10cm wide and 4cm deep. There are some clever feeding bins now that do not allow sheep to ad lib without gorging in one sitting. It is low in some amino acids (lysine) and low in vitamin D and E.

PKE - Palm Kernel Expeller

In the North Island droughts, farmers got into feeding sheep and beef cattle Palm Kernel. It is not that palatable if stock aren't used to hard feed. Some found mixing it with water in the feed trough improved utilisation and stopped it blowing away.



For sheep to get onto it, it has been mixed with molasses, maize and/or barley. Current price is around \$250/t. (that's cheaper than anything else). ME level is 10.5 -11, with protein ~15% and higher in fat (5%). It is a fine brown powder so really needs to be fed in bins or trailers. Cattle will not get acidosis/grain overload with PKE, but the high copper means it can be toxic when fed to sheep (especially texel based breeds) in ad lib situations. Dairy cows eat around 3-4 kg per day. If feeding to sheep it shouldn't be more that 30% of diet (lambs up to 20%), that would be around ~300g/day. It can be mixed with barley. Ideally grains or pellets are a better feed for sheep rather than PKE due to the lower copper levels.

It could be a good option to get weaner beef cattle onto it in the yards the week after weaning. If your winter crops are not as flash this year PKE could be a very cost effective buffer for that.

Order now before the dairy boys gobble it all before winter. Store in a shed on a silage cover. If it gets wet it goes mouldy and causes issues.

Salmonella



Dougal McLachlan, BVSc

The summer / autumn period has traditionally been the time when sporadic outbreaks of enteric Salmonella occur in sheep

flocks. For those already experienced in this you will be aware how devastating it can be including the frustration associated with continual deaths as the disease smolders along .

The dry period and feed stress may be the catalyst to predispose stock to future Salmonella outbreaks.

Affected sheep develop a watery scour, show lethargy and dehydration. Eventually deaths occur.

Treating Salmonella is frustrating. For prevention Salvexin B vaccine can be used in the face of an outbreak to break the course of the disease once a diagnosis is made. For those already using the vaccine don't forget your annual booster.

Another precautionary note! We did diagnose the dreaded *Salmonella brandenburg* abortion in the area this year and protection from this disease is only by preventative vaccination. Once the disease takes hold vaccination appears to be of little value. Sheep will require a sensitiser and booster vaccination prior to risk period, that being the third trimester .

Check out our website

www.vet111.co.nz

Vaccinating 2 tooths - Scheduling pre-tup treatments

This is what a gold standard animal health programme for maiden ewes looks like (ie. not mated as hoggets). The ram joining date is April 1.

Apparently it is better to give several vaccines at once than staggered over 2 weekly intervals. The exception is with Salmonella (Salvexin B) and Footvax, which are best done separately if possible.

Ewe hoggets can receive abortion vaccines, then only require a Campyvac booster as 2 tooths.

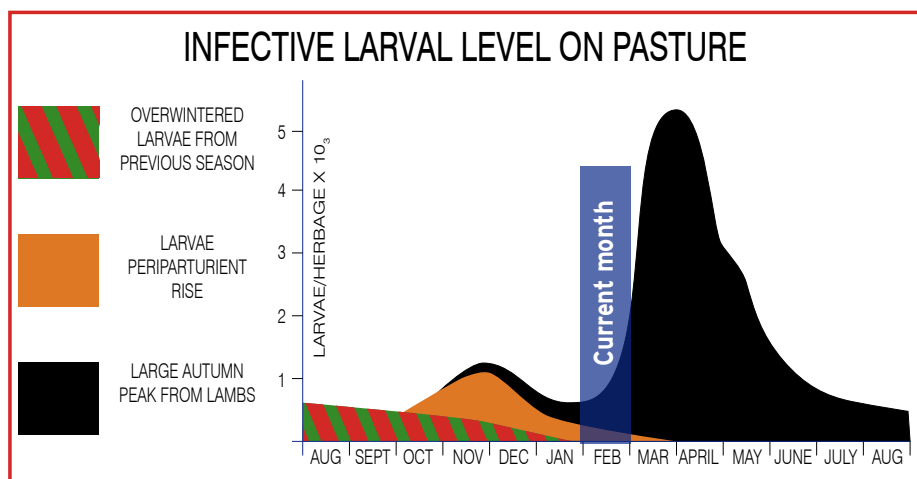
It is good to give ewes 'a rest' from needles 1 month before mating, but Campyvac and Flexidine can be done closer to mating if required.

Feb 1	March 2	April 1
Toxovax (1 only)		Mating
1st Campyvac	2nd Campyvac	
+/- 1st Androvax	2nd Androvax	
	Worm drench	
	+ Mineral boost eg. Flexidine or LSD	

Worm Watch

Dave Robertson BVSc, BSc

- Worm numbers on pasture are low hence the challenge is light. However stock will be eating close to the ground where 80 % of the larvae are. With pressure on condition and feed availability ewe resistance to worms may be compromised.
- Rain will bring a larval hatch that will pose a much greater challenge to stock due to the tight feed conditions.
- February is an ideal time to drench 2 toothed and lighter ewes prior to tupping.



Beef cow pregnancy testing *Dave Robertson BVSc, BSc*

Early preg testing of beef cows and aging the foetus is a fantastic management tool when the tough calls on beef operations are being made. I know many want to preg test in April with the TB test or weaning, but doing it a month earlier in March will give you much more information to make better decisions. If you can preg test cows between 5 and 15 weeks after mating they can be split into calving groups. Early calvers can be separated and “worked” less at the back end of winter, 3rd cycle cows can be sold or poked out the back. We are fast, accurate and are flexible. Call your branch manager to book for an early aged preg test with the beefies this year.



Ewesnews Farmer of the Month

Nick and Tania Anderson
North Otago

How are things looking right now?

Life is busy with the business crutching from North Canterbury to Millers Flat coming in, along with conveying of mainly lambs.

What are you doing now with respect the dry conditions?

We are holding tight on farm with stock numbers now at a conservative level. Also while travelling further for contracting in order to make everything work.

What is the outlook from now forward?

The bits of rain over the last week have been promising and beneficial both on and off farm. We are currently controlling expenses, maximising assets and hoping for the best.

What's happening off farm?

A lot of travel for crutching and the conveyor in Tyson Sheep Contracting is increasingly being utilised to maximise returns by ensuring good animal health applications.

Lameness in Sheep

The dry is the time to rid your flock of chronic footrot. If it has rained since writing this article and you've not tipped ewes, then you've missed a big opportunity.

A shipment of Micotil is on its way. Many farmers have pre-ordered. Talk to Dave Robertson if you're interested in the Micotil footrot program.

