



Jeff Spillane,
Commercial Manager

By now most would have heard that our own Dave Robertson was recently awarded the New Zealand Veterinary Association Sheep and Beef Veterinarian of the year. Those who know Dave will not be surprised he has picked up such an award based on his passion for the industry. What I would like to say on behalf of Dave to our farmer clients, is thank you for giving our team of vets the opportunity to work with you on your properties and with your livelihoods. Your confidence in our team is where it begins and it is something we do not take for granted. We will continue to set objectives based on your

success rather than ours. We know one can only follow the other. We also know we are in a great position to achieve this with a team of vets of Dave's quality on the frontline.

We have held a few of the community quiz nights to date. These have been great nights that we have enjoyed as much those who came along. Weather interrupted some events and we have rescheduled these. See the insert inside for some of the photo's of those held so far and the dates of the ones to come.



This picturesque shot tells the story of recent weather events

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Sheep Production

Shearing in the Winter – Why do we do it?

Shearing is THE most stressful event on a sheep in their production cycle and wool is a great natural insulation against the cold so how do we justify the practice. Something I find myself having to do when talking farming with townies.



Dave Robertson BVSc, BSc

Lamb survival
NZ field trials have shown twinning ewes that are shorn mid pregnancy (@ 50-100 days into pregnancy) will have 3%

reduction in lamb losses compared with unshorn ewes. The main driver of this increased lamb vigour is from having heavier lamb birth weights, with more fat reserves for heat production in the first critical hours after birth.

In order to get the positive benefits out of mid pregnancy shearing there are some key management decisions that revolve around timing, feed and fat.

- Shear ewes between 14 and 7 weeks before due date. Too close to lambing and heavy pregnant can suffer from metabolic diseases from the extra physical, nutritional and thermal

stress that shearing can bring. A storm after pre-lamb shearing can sap precious fat reserves leaving less fat reserves in the developing lamb and udder, ultimately effecting lamb survival. That's why they say a storm pre-lamb can have a bigger negative impact that one during lambing.

- Extra feed requirements. Freshly shorn ewes need 10-30% more feed for at least 2 weeks to maintain themselves (and more the colder it is). Most farmers now are pretty good at conserving sheltered paddocks of green feed or upping supplements post shearing.

- Body condition. Ewe body fat is required to get the positive lamb birth weight effect. Shearing skinny ewes is unlikely to yield the lamb



vigour effect, and may make their ride through the winter worse.

Timely Reminders

- Give sheep a lice treatment off-shears
- Review your drenching plan for the pre-lamb period with your vet
- Book in your conveyer for pre-lamb capsule, clostridial vaccination, and drench treatments
- Carry out a pre-lamb feed budget for twin bearing ewes
- Carry out a footrot inspection to reduce the pool of infected animals present during the lambing period

Other benefits of shearing mid pregnancy

- Bearing rates have been shown to reduce when shearing twinners mid pregnancy. Why? The abdominal fat is burnt off? They are more mobile with foraging? Presumably the lambs will be bigger. The mechanism for this is unclear but studies show it helps.
- Less cast ewes (reduced ewe deaths) and improving wool quality (colour and tensile strength) are obviously the main reasons for the practice. Pre-tup belly crutching, and therefore leaving a bit more insulation on the ewe when shorn pre-lamb has its appeal. I have heard udder development is better when the belly is left on.

OTHER JOBS TO ORGANISE

Shearing time is one of the busiest periods for the big operations, with many other things to consider along with the mustering and shed flow of stock.

- Vaccinating and drenching.
- Lice control.
- Feet checking. Last chance to remove footrot infection before set stocking.
- Removing lighter ewes for preferential feeding.

These are big decisions if they under taken and a planning session with us at the Veterinary Centre can ensure sound choices are made with respect to the type and timing of products. We have addressed some of these issues in greater depth in this edition.

Vitamin E Supplementation Pre-lamb



Naomi Barret BVSc

Vitamin E is an antioxidant that protects against damage caused by free radicals, which are generated during times of stress and infection. It also

plays an important role in maintaining a healthy immune system.

Deficiency in ewes often manifests as white muscle disease in lambs, with weakness and sudden death from heart failure being key findings. Lamb losses due to inclement weather may be aggravated by Vitamin E deficiency as the lambs do not have sufficient vigour to survive.

Winter feeds are all low in Vitamin E, particularly brassicas, which contain none at all, yet are frequently used as a sole feed source at this time of year. Late pregnancy is also a very stressful

Lice pour ons

- Michael Lilley BVSc
Veterinary Centre Ranfurly

Lice pour ons have obvious benefits from an ease of use perspective and flexibility of use. To achieve the best results ensure the correct applicator, dose rate and application technique are used.

Zapp Encore - Convenience of a pour on and dual action power to provide fast knockdown and long acting control of lice. To be used off shears with fine wool but also has a longer wool dose rate available for flexibility with coarse wool breeds.

Expo - Spinosad pour on. Spinosad is unrelated to other chemical compounds so Expo can kill lice that are resistant to other compounds, ideally used off shears but can be used up to 3 months wool in coarse wool breeds. Nil milk and meat withholding.

Vanquish/Wipeout - Synthetic pyrethroid pour ons that provide long acting protection against re-infestation. Vanquish can be used as an "emergency" treatment in an unexpected outbreak as it can be used in long wool lengths.

time for ewes. Poor weather conditions, mustering for pre-lamb treatments and shearing are all significant stressors that can drain Vitamin E reserves.

Supplementation of ewes with Vitamin E in late pregnancy has been shown to improve lamb survival and lambing percentages. Treated ewes are quicker to stand and tend to their lambs and

their lambs take much less time to stand and suckle. Vitamin E supplementation has also been associated with better survival rates in ewes and hoggets.

A dose of Vet LSD given at the same time as your pre-lamb vaccination/drench will effectively raise Vitamin E levels at this crucial period. Alternatively an injection of Hideject can be given 6-8 weeks prior to lambing.

Wairarapa pre-lamb drenching trial



Ryan Luckman BVSc,
Veterinary Centre Waimate

You may have heard the recent discussion in the media about a trial carried out in the Wairarapa looking at the economic returns of pre-lamb drenching. The main section of the trial looked at the use of Bionic Capsules, and highlighted some variability in returns. Consistent with previous trials the ewes were heavier at weaning (+3.2kg) and mating (+2.5kg), and the lambs were heavier at weaning (+1.55kg). The variability that has been reported by the authors comes about mainly from a large variation in lamb survivability across the 14 trials (which were performed with twinning ewes). The authors calculated a "kg of lamb weaned per ewe" figure for the analysis, which saw a range from -\$15 to +\$45 in returns. Approximately 70% of this variation was attributable to the survival rate of the lambs.

It is unlikely that the administration of a capsule would directly decrease lamb

survivability, instead this difference probably came down to chance events. With only 70 ewes in each treatment group the death of a few lambs had significant effects on the "kg of lamb weaned per ewe" figure, as seen above with the \$60 range in returns. The authors' main point here was that there are other factors (particularly lamb survival) that affect the economic viability of pre-lamb treatments. Note that overall the capsules still showed an average advantage of +2.1kg weaned per ewe.

This trial offers some great food for thought in the balancing act between farm production and the risk of developing resistance. Before making your pre-lamb decisions this year it would be prudent to sit down with one of our Blue Cross vets and discuss your options in the context of your whole farming system. Points such as your farms' resistance status, feed availability, ewe condition, lambing percentage, flystrike risks, ability to get lambs drafted by weaning, autumn larval peak, and refugia practices are just some of the factors that should be taken into consideration.

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Pre-lamb Parasite Management Strategies

Client Case Studies Dave Robertson BVSc, BSc

There's nothing like a bit of controversy to stir some discussion. It has been fantastic the recent coverage of pre-lamb drench treatments in the Wairarapa, and we welcome any questions from farmers about this trial. The wide variability in the numbers reported highlights the need for solid advice around what product to apply to your farm. Ryan Luckman has detailed some of numbers of the trial on the previous page and it is difficult to believe the dollar response to a pre-lamb bionic. Do you think a \$3 drench would cost you \$15 dollars or alternatively return \$45 profit? With specialist products such as controlled release capsules, or long acting drench injections, it is essential to select the right animals, and use the products in the right way, to get the significant production advantages they can offer".

Bruce and Denise Cameron - Dunback

Bruce and Denise Cameron run a productive flock of Romneys with majority bearing twins. Following a reduction test completed 3 years ago, they switched from injectable drench options to using BIONIC capsules strategically. The capsule is given to ~80% of the twin bearing ewes, the fatter twins and singles are given an oral drench of Matrix Hi Min, or not drenched at all. Bruce and Denise like the capsule option because it keeps the ewes in good order, dag free and ensures a minimal worm challenge to lambs in the spring. Being a double combination drench with a more consistent payout of drench for 100 days, capsules are more potent than other options. A constant trickle of Selenium and cobalt is also a bonus. By leaving some ewes un-capsuled it is felt that some susceptible worms are maintained in the system. Denise would like to follow-up with another reduction test in the future to assess whether the assumptions around worm refugia are correct. When asked about the main benefits of long acting pre-lamb drenching Denise said their focus is on drafting as many lambs as possible at weaning but Denise also confessed "Bruce just hates dealing with daggy sheep".



Bruce and Denise Cameron

Grant MacGregor - Oamaru

Grant MacGregor, who runs a productive Romney flock near Oamaru, heard about "this long acting jab" from another farmer "that stops the ewes getting shitty". After some discussion about applying this drench option to get the best productive benefit, and how to use sustainably, Grant injected the twinning ewes and in-lamb hoggets with EXODUS LA last year, tagging every 20th ewe with a blue 'refugia' tag. Grant doesn't see himself doing a reduction test with the excuse being something to with his age, but "reckon the EXODUS LA was the best thing he ever did" for his ewes pre-lamb. He likes it for the convenience, in that he can do it himself at his own pace and is much easier than oral drenching or giving capsules. The visual absence dags on ewes at weaning is a real benefit. Grant did get a lot more lambs away at the weaning draft than he has done previously, which is always hard to attribute to one thing, but good worm control will be part of it.



Grant MacGregor

Dave and Lisa Anderson - Bog Roy Station

Dave and Lisa Anderson, Bog Roy Station, run a high performing merino flock. A lot of emphasis has been placed on monitoring stock health, body condition and improving feeding of capital stock. The nutrition of multiple bearing ewes pre-lambing and post lambing has been improved, largely due to the implementation of rye-corn and lucerne grazing systems. This emphasis of feeding and condition, along with regular monitoring of faecal egg counts had given Dave and Lisa the confidence not to use long acting drench products pre-lamb, instead giving an oral drench of Matrix Hi min with the 5 in 1 and LSD pre-lamb. "Any dead lambs are autopsied. Everything is drenched again at tailing." The lucerne system has inherently less worm burdens, and well fed stock do not suffer from checks from parasitism the same.



One of Grant Mac Gregor's refugia tagged ewes.



Bog Roy Station