



Veterinary Centre EwesNews

The Dry

Dave Robertson BVSc BSc – VETERINARY CENTRE Oamaru

Ewes that have weaned good lambs can be in reasonable condition at weaning...or not. Cows that are in-calf early and have a roll of fat on their tail have something to buffer themselves on, those that look like dairy cows in March are in trouble.

With little autumn growth in prospect the bean counting and rationing mode is likely to begin early – with a weary sigh. We can ignore it and perceive nutritional value in brown tag, or part of that sigh, can be a deep breath to focus on who needs what and where priorities lie. With ewes March is the month to set up for next years' production. For cows it might be to switch off the milk earlier and feed or sell R1s into a separate system. Grazing out hoggets, or ordering sheep nuts, getting some numbers around ewe body condition profiles, weighing some 2 toothers and knowing cow body condition and pregnancy status will all help to tune the reality of what is priority. Taking out some lighter ewes for a barely program or a stepwise plan to get 2 toothers up to weight can give back some order and control. In farming there are many pitfalls that can snuff out the enjoyment, a sense of getting anywhere.

*"Aye the very temple of Delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine"*

With the struggle and variables of drought predicaments there must be hope for the future and a passion for it to continue. So, we might as well make a decent fist of protecting capital stock, scenario planning and talk with a chirpy outlook to more rational enthusiasts. Try not to be one of those:

*"Though seen by none
save him who strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine"*

Applying more maths than poetry to how we make decisions through these times is useful. No body is making you do it, but life without the gristle of problems and looming drought seems banal.

My favourite recent quote "we were going to go nuts...but have ordered 3 tonne of barley instead- it was much cheaper" **A. Bell, Haka Valley.**



LEFT – A Chirpy enthusiast of ewe BCS – ET (Ezekiel Turner) stock manager at Alt Holdings Middlemarch sees real benefit in a structured BCS ewe program at this time of year. "It really gets you focused on what you need to do to get ewes to perform for the season" ...

RIGHT – while Andrew Templeton looks on ...

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Consider Pregnancy Testing your Beef Cows early to beat the Dry Season



Luke Smyth BVSc – VETERINARY CENTRE Oamaru

The country has dried out since Christmas and it's certainly apparent as I drive round the countryside that soil moisture levels are well behind last year.

While many farmers have traditionally mustered hill cows for weaning and pregnancy tested for wet-dry late in the autumn, this misses a significant opportunity in a dry season.

Early pregnancy testing isn't an onerous or slow process even when the cows aren't weaned and have calves at foot. In fact, I like to look at the calves to see whether they are a nice even line or is there a subgroup of small tail end stragglers that will have to play catch up.

Pregnancy testing can be as simple as leaving the 1st and 2nd cycle cows unmarked, a blue stripe across the shoulder of late/3rd cycle cows and a blue stripe across the hips of empty cows. I'm also a big fan of a fold over sheep tag going into the ear or the traditional method of trimming the switch off the tail of empty cows because these blue marks don't last forever. But increasingly we are using EID's and wands to identify cows and record aged pregnancy information.

For aging the foetus, the cow needs to be 35-110 days pregnant at the time of scanning.

Mating Time Frame	Optimum Scan Date for Aged Pregnancy Testing
Dec 1- Feb 1	March 10 – 30
Dec 15 – Feb 15	April 1 – April 20

In dry conditions you must plan and act early to look after cow condition heading into the winter. Pregnancy testing is important to determine which cows to prioritise and keep.

1. Get rid of empty and obvious lame or toothless cull cows as soon as calves are up to a wean able weight.
2. Identify late calving third cycle cows and graze as a separate mob, they can be the next cut of cows to go if conditions don't improve. This forced action can have significant benefits by lifting the system out a late calving rut and a far more even line of weaners in the following autumn due to a tighter calving spread. Third cycle cows are also more likely to end up as empty the following season as they have less time to prepare for the bull. Yes, it's true that late calving cows can be turned around but only if they are able to be fed well.

3. Skinny cows. These require a bit of thought, especially if you're looking tight for feed. Are you willing to buy supplement in, is this worth the investment? A sobering thought is that a beef cow should be at her fattest at weaning (BCS 5.5) to rear a decent calf next year.
4. Is it worth weaning early to stop condition being suckled off cow's backs.



TOP – Ryan Ambler pushing up Angus cows for pregnancy testing.

RIGHT – Luke Smyth scanning Angus cows in a great setup: a roof over the top, a long race and a nice working height to the catwalk and top rail.



"Time for a Dip" Ewes from Pig Burn Gorge Ltd (Mike & Jenny Newth) get a run through the shower dip.



Introducing

Tim Horton BVSc
VETERINARY CENTRE Oamaru

I was born in Upper Hutt where I spent most of my life before heading to Palmerston North to study. I have always been passionate about animals which drove me to become a veterinarian.

Outside of work I enjoy spending time in the outdoors, going for walks or bike rides as well as playing squash when the weather is not as nice.

Within the sheep industry I am particularly interested in parasite control and management but am excited to get stuck in to all aspects where I can.



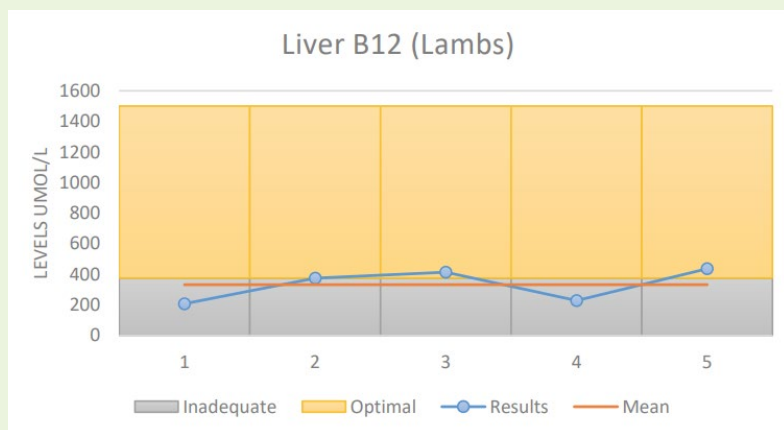
Is B12 holding back your Lambs Growth Rates?

Ryan Luckman BVSc (Dist) MANZCVS (Epidemiology) –



Low vitamin B12 levels in lambs cause a loss of appetite, leading to decreased growth rates and weight loss (even in the face of sufficient available pasture). Lambs are most at risk as they have a high energy requirement due to growth. Also, while B12 easily crosses the placenta to be stored in the foetal liver, it is less readily transported via the ewe's milk, meaning that even if a ewe has been supplemented with B12 pre-lamb, foetal stores can deplete within 5 weeks.

Optigrow liver samples from works lambs are an easy and effective way to understand what your farm levels are, and if additional B12 supplementation is required in your lambs. In the example below from a "West Timaru farm" 40% of the lambs had levels that would be considered deficient (and the others were marginal). Clinical trials have shown growth rate responses to supplementation at these levels (<280).



Of note is that regionally the testing laboratory sees 39% of livers sampled returning low B12 levels. If you haven't done recent testing you could be flying along in the dark unaware that B12 is holding back your growth rates.

To organise an Optigrow test please contact your nearest clinic prior to the day of trucking to the works. We will need information on the number of lambs in the line, trucking company, and destination of the works to fill in a submission form that will be emailed back to you to give to the truck driver at pick-up.



B12 Supplements include

Prolaject B12 1000 & 2000 (also with Se)
Smartshot B12 (also with Selenium)

Prolaject B12 1000 with Selenium ACVM A006170
Prolaject B12 2000 with Selenium ACVM A006903
Smartshot B12 Plus Se ACVM A009402



March Drenching – With the dry conditions, drench requirements are highly variable. Some mobs of lambs need it. Some don't. FECs have been very useful to stretch drench use.

Canine Parvovirus Out-Break

A significant outbreak of Parvovirus infections has occurred in Auckland and is now emerging in Wellington. Parvovirus has a history of sweeping through the country in "waves" so it is worth checking your dogs vaccination status.

- Our staff will be in contact with farmer clients with dogs and arrange a vet parvo vaccination visit if necessary.
- All our vets will carry chilled stock of vaccine with them on farm calls.
- To make sure your dogs are protected and don't get missed, please contact your local clinic.

Remember when you vaccinate your dogs you achieve two things ...

1. Protect your dog from the disease.
2. Reduce the spread by stopping the number of disease outbreak cases.



On the Move – Sheep being moved by Paul Murcott (RIGHT)

Courtney Glassford enjoys the view from her office, the Blue Cross Truck (left).



Keep your Tools Sharp

– Calibration of drench guns to ensure they are delivering the correct dose is important. Jenny Newth and Emma Mac are all over a drench gun make over. They are also the engine room of the Ranfurly parasite monitoring laboratory with fastest FEC results turn-around time Ranfurly.



Making decisions early about which ewe stays and which ewe goes.



John Macaulay of Tahrura Southdowns, Timaru sorting out rams. Always has a wise word or two about how to handle a dry season.

Ewe BCS going into Breeding



Lucy Cameron BVSc BSc – VETERINARY CENTRE Waimate

We all know the importance of having ewes at target body condition score at key times of the year – if they are at target at mating, they are more likely to conceive, thus improving scanning percentages, and more likely to be at target at lambing, which increases colostrum production, lamb survival, increases lamb growth rates and weaning weights and has many flow on effects. In a dry year this is even more important, as the feed needed to get ewes to target BCS is a rare and precious resource. This is why looking at the individual ewe BCS is so important, not the flock average.

Ewe BCS target = 3.0 all year round

Key times of the year to monitor this are:

- Weaning
- Pre-mate
- Scanning
- Pre-lamb

Some of these times are more convenient than others – for example if you're putting your hand on them to push them onto the scanning trailer, or giving pre-mate minerals. You don't have to monitor ewes at each of these times, maybe just a couple, and you don't have to condition score them precisely. **The key is to identify and raise the bottom percentage of the flock so that you can put extra feed resources into them, not into those already at target.**

1. There is a real benefit to lifting your lighter ewes

An increase of one BCS from 2.0 to 3.0 has been shown to increase scanning percentage by 15%, lamb survival 5%, lamb weaning weights 5% - analysis in 2010/11 gave an gross margin per ewe of \$13 (over summer).

2. There is a "law of diminishing returns"

You will get massive relative gains in ewe performance as individual ewes go from a BCS of say 1 ½ - 2 and so on. This trend continues, but the curve becomes less steep – once ewe BCS reaches 3 – 3.5, there is minimal increase in production, whether it be increases in conception rate, lamb growth rates, or other effects of improved BCS. This is why there is no advantage to feeding ewes to gain condition over target BCS.

3. Feeding fatter ewes is inefficient

In addition to this feed being essentially wasted, as it will not improve production, it is also used very inefficiently. It takes a lot more energy – 351MJ – to go from 3.5 to 4.0 than it does to go from 2.0 to 2.5 – only 71MJ. So you don't even have to put that many kg DM into those light ewes to bring them up to target, emphasising the importance of being able to separate them out and allocate precious feed to only those that need it.

Take home messages – putting precious feed into ewes at target will not improve production. Focus on lifting the individual BCS of lighter ewes at the bottom of your flock. Now is one of the key times you can do this to have a big impact on scanning, lambing, and weaning outcomes.

Abortion Storms

Two Diseases Two Vaccines



Toxoplasma is present on 100% of New Zealand farms, and Campylobacter on 88%*¹ – but both are equally important. These two diseases can cause abortion storms with losses up to 30%, or more, of lambs*^{2,3}.

Preventing them takes two vaccines. Maiden ewes require 1 dose of Toxovax and 2 doses of Campyvac4 ahead of mating.

An annual booster of Campyvac4 to mixed age ewes is required in following years.

ToxoVax

- ✓ Controls the risk of Toxoplasma. **Live** vaccine.
- ✓ Up to 8% higher lambing percentages (3% national average).
- ✓ Vaccinate at least 4 weeks prior to first mating.
- ✓ One shot gives a lifetime immunity.
- ✓ **MUST BE ORDERED AT LEAST 4 WEEKS IN ADVANCE OF TREATMENT** to ensure availability.

CampyVax4

- ✓ Controls the risk of Campylobacter.
- ✓ Increase lambing by an average 9%.
- ✓ Protect maiden ewes with TWO shots 4-6 weeks apart, or one booster shot in previously vaccinated ewes.

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1. Dempster et al (2011), NZ Veterinary Journal, 59:4 155-159.
2. Wilkins et al (1992) Surveillance, 19:4, 20-23.
3. Sahin et al (2017) The Annual Review of Animal Biosciences, 5: 9.1-9.22.



A day out with ... **Jo Sutherland** – Ranfurly Territory Manager

Strath Taieri Collie Club Trials



Competitors catch up while waiting to run their dogs on the Long Pull course at Strath Taieri Collie Club trials.



Lloyd Smith completes his run on the Zig Zag Hunt course

FEC Sample Collecting for the NEW Drench Performance Test



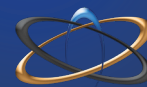
Jo Sutherland (top) helps collect FEC samples for a Drench Performance Test along with John Mathias – Stock Manager Littlebrook (bottom).



John Caley competing in the Zig Zag Hunt at Strath Taieri



Lloyd Smith competing in the Zig Zag Hunt at Strath Taieri



MATRIX



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PRICE PER 50kg (10ml) DOSE – **29c** +GST

Ram Palpations Caberfeidh, Hakataramea Valley

Ewan Penny BVMS - VETERINARY CENTRE Waimate/Timaru

Part of the Lonestar Farms group, Caberfeidh Station runs 14,500 ewes in the Haka Valley. Stock manager Carey Pawson-Edwards gets the 210 Mixed Age (MA) rams palpated every year, along side 10 Headwater 2th ram replacements. "It's good to know all your rams are fit pre-mating, make sure everything's right" Carey tells me.

Digging a little deeper, good ram fertility is highly important at Caberfeidh, particularly in dry years such as this. Teaser rams are put out for a full 17 day cycle pre-tup, with rams harnessed before being put with the ewes. Carey expects 50-60% of ewes to be marked within the first 10 days of breeding.

These ewes are then drafted out and put to the hill with chaser rams, to save the better feed to flush ewes not yet mated. After changing the colours of the crowns after 10 days, 85-90% of ewes are marked within 17 days.

With mobs of 1800+ at tupping, one sub-fertile ram could be masked by the rest of the team. However, Carey says you'd really start to notice a sub-fertile ram in smaller mobs mated with 4-5 rams. Good fertility also avoids ewes which have not conceived (ie mated to a ram with poor fertility) being "marked" as pregnant – particularly important when ewes are drafted out to poorer feed.



Sorting out rams in March is an essential job. Veterinary input can ensure they are sound and all the important vaccine, mineral and animal health jobs are ticked off before they go out.

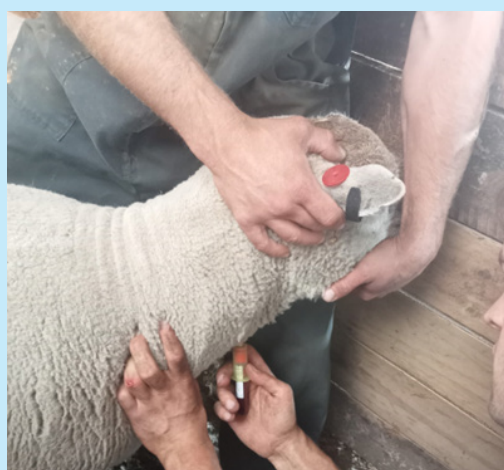
Darren Sinclair, stock manager of Little Awakino making the best of the conditions.



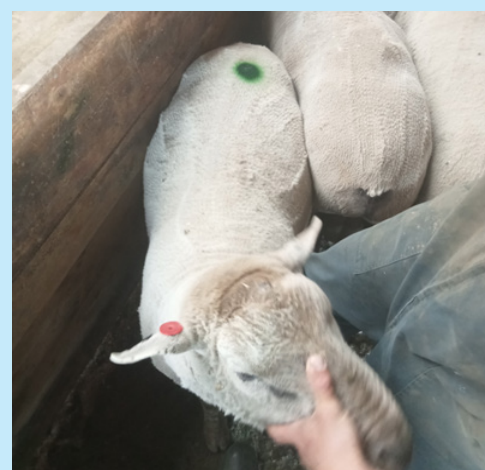
LEFT – A clearly identifiable teaser ram
RIGHT – A teaser ram with a broken tag. Teaser with no tags can be mistaken for infected rams!

Ram palpations/examinations comprise; removing all lame rams; removing rams below BCS 2; palpating ram testicles and blood sampling any with testicular lumps. Any rams to cull (light, lame) are marked red and removed. Any rams with testicular lesions are marked green, their tag number written on the tube and bloods sent off for B. Ovis. Results can be matched to rams this way, and culling decisions made accordingly. Note that lumps and bumps often result from vasectomy surgery and, if not identifiable, teaser rams can be mistaken for breeding rams affected by testicular disease.

Ram palpations are yet another tool in the box to make sure your ewes reach their full potential this mating.



LEFT – Blood sampling of the suspects.



RIGHT – Rams with testicular lesions are blood sampled for Brucellosis. These are clearly marked (as above) and tag numbers written on blood tubes can be matched up with drafted rams when results are back.

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