May 2023

Veterinary Centre
EwesNews

A Rugged Hill Country Herd Quietly Performs

Dave Robertson BVSc BSc – **VETERINARY CENTRE** Oamaru

Hill Country beef cows don't always get a lot of attention or TLC, but it's a great thing to see some of these herds perform well this year. The hard hill cows must endure many seasonal challenges in generally marginal areas. This year many have emerged after weaning with adequate condition to winter and achieving some good 1st cycle conception rates with minimal empties.

Ben Douglas at Dome Hills like many of you has a fair bit going on in a complex sheep and beef business, but has got organised enough to tick off the fundamental aspects of making hill cows perform. It hasn't always been easy for cows in the Kakanui tussock country, and gains in one area can be unravelled in another. For the Dome Hills team focusing on the basic areas of beef cow production has resulted in a 5.7% empty rate and very few 3rd cycle cows. "Nailing that 1st and 2nd cycle in-calf rate make such a difference to the line of weaners you'll have for next year".

Animal health (e.g. BVD, selenium, copper, magnesium); **B**ull Soundness; **C**alving spread from the previous year; the right **G**enetics for your system and country; looking after the **Y**oung stock (R1, R2 and R3 heifer management) and cow condition and **N**utrition optimised at the critical points of the year (e.g. the month before the bull goes out through to end of 2nd cycle) are the basics.

On the surface this appears a brief and simple list, but in reality there is a lot of complexity and nuance. A good November – December period of grass growth had given many herds a lift for mating this year, but you still are required to line up all the other bits throughout the year to capture the gains in the good seasons and buffer the bad ones. With bulls sales coming up this month it is a great chance to discuss these areas in their infinite depths, and for me, momentarily escape the miasma of drench resistant sheep worms.

Last week I had a 15 year old school student Ashleigh Howard with me doing work experience. She asked many good questions and would make a great vet if she chooses to take the path. She memorised the **A.B.C.G.Y.N** code for beef cow performance. Be great see if in a few years she can refine it and put it into practice so I can retire…

Dome Hills herd heading back to the Kakanui Hills.

IN THIS ISSUE

Pub Talk

Add to your calendar!

"I hear there are no capsules this year – what do I do?"

Listen to Dave Robertson outline a strategy for on farm parasite control and management this season with Bionic Plus capsules not available.

Friday 26 May – 3pm
Omarama Memorial Hall

Friday 26 May – 5.30pm
Kurow Hotel (top pub)
RSVP to **events@vet111.co.nz**

Dougall McLachlan (Veterinary Centre Waimate) checking out some velvet antlers with Alan Weir

Doing deliveries to Hawkdun Station (St Bathans)

FEC time at Stoneburn Station

NEWETRITION

Lucy Cameron BVSc BSc – **VETERINARY CENTRE** Waimate

Feeding to Fight Worms

There are many tools to use in the fight against worms, aside from just drench, and it's very important to use a combination of methods to reduce the risk, or impact, of drench resistance. Focusing on stock nutrition is a very effective method to enhance drench sustainability, and help animals cope better with a parasite infection.

The main ways that worms have a negative effect on the stock they infect are by:

1. Triggering their immune system which **reduces the amount of feed they eat**
2. Damaging the gut and thus leading to **protein losses from the gut**

Both these effects increase protein requirements: when a young lamb infected with worms is eating a limited amount of protein and has to prioritise how to use it, first it gets used to keep it alive (maintenance), then it is used to help its immune system fight the worms, and replace the proteins getting lost from the gut. This means that the other really important use for protein in young lambs – growing their bones and muscles – gets neglected. A Lincoln University study infected weaned lambs with 2000-3000 larvae per day – and they did fine until they established immunity against the parasites – but the cost was a 40% loss of production. In reality, the larval challenge from many of our pastures is likely to be much higher than this, with a much greater impact on growth rates.

Feeds usually **high in protein** include chicory, plantain, herb-clover mixes and well-managed vegetative lucerne. Brassicas have moderately good protein levels, rape and Raphno will generally be higher than kale. Well-managed green leafy ryegrass has good protein levels, but is also likely to have higher levels of larval challenge than some of these other feeds, depending on grazing history. The time of year will affect what is available to you – good quality silage lucerne or pasture silage is an option too to increase protein levels in the diet. **Low protein feeds** include fodder beet, and cereals such as green-feed oats or triticale.

Another option is feeds that contain **condensed tannins** – these compounds directly increase protein supply to the animal, and are found in lotus, sulla, and **chicory** – which is unfortunately dormant over winter – but something to consider for next summer!

A New Way to Drench Lambs

Ewan Penny BVMS – **VETERINARY CENTRE** Waimate

I've had a couple of discussions about turning lambs out on to dirty pasture for 2-3 days before shifting onto clean crop or re-seeds etc. Whilst this remains good advice with regards to delaying drench resistance, some farms will be unable to put this into practice for legitimate reasons (big distance between dirty/clean paddocks, no need to shift mob twice etc.) Drenched lambs will leave behind them only worm eggs resistant to the drench used, so when turned onto "clean" pasture, the paddock will build up a population of resistant worms. A technique known as **Targeted Selective Treatment (TST)** is a means of reducing this risk associated with "drench and move."

What is Targeted Selective Treatment (TST)?
TST is a drenching strategy. It requires identification of the lambs still achieving good growth even though they're due to be drenched (ie. identifies the most worm resilient lambs), simply by weighing them and working out a growth rate. Hopefully 10% of the mob can be left undrenched, whilst the rest are drenched as normal. This allows non-resistant worm eggs to be carried on to the new pasture, whilst maintaining production.

How is it implemented?
Usually TST requires an automated calculation of average daily weight gain, with electronic weigh cells and an EID tag. Animals at or above the TST growth rate target are drafted out and left un-drenched. The remaining lambs are drenched as normal before moving to clean paddocks.

How do we calculate the desired weight gain?
The most practical method would be to weigh roughly 70 lambs, calculate the Average Daily Gain (ADG), then sort the rest of the mob according to this figure. Some farms might already know their target lamb growth rates and decide to use these, however the actual growth rate will fluctuate from month to month according to feed, weather etc., so would be best recalculated. You will know quite early on in the day if the figure needs changed – e.g. if the first 20 lambs in the mob are not to be drenched, the weight target is probably too low.

What are the benefits?
The single biggest benefit is that it will prolong the useful life of drenches on your farm. You may also be able to identify your most worm resilient hoggets to keep as replacements. Reduction of drench use/costs will also bring a modest saving.

What are the downsides?
Set up costs for weigh cells/tags, and the additional time required to weigh/sort the mob are considerations – these may however already be in place for ewe lambs in some stud flocks. The technique is unlikely to be appropriate for; Merino's due to their worm susceptibility and; times of year when larval burdens on pasture are particularly high (Autumn). However, TST is a practical tool to prolong the life of our remaining drench actives, whilst genetics for worm resilience are brought up to the task.

Nitrate Test Kit

- For checking nitrate toxicity in crop or pasture.
- The kit provides for on farm analysis of nitrate levels in at risk crops.

RISKS

- Slowed plant growth caused by cold and cloudy weather.
- Excess Nitrogen uptake in crops following fertiliser application going into winter.

PRICE

Full Kit $198.40 incl GST
(25 tests = $7.94 per test).

Testing Strip Refill only
$129.50 incl GST per Pk/25

It's the Lousy Time of the Year

Aroha Te Hiko BSc – **VETERINARY CENTRE** Waimate

If the start of autumn is any indication for the winter ahead we are likely looking at having a large lice population by the time the lice peak of the season rolls around. With lice infestations on the rise across New Zealand sheep flocks a small lice population now will have a lengthy amount of time to multiply before winter shearing.

Lice rely on their host for their whole life-cycle. Separated from their hosts, lice can survive in yards or on fences for up to five days, or just a few hours in direct sunlight. High UV light exposure reduces lice numbers this is why lice populations are at their highest in winter. Lice spread through close contact between sheep, for example ewes can spread lice to their lambs within 24 hours of birth.

So what can be done now?

- Monitor: Checking 10 sheep with lower body condition for infestations now will help get an idea of the lice status of your flock, start by parting the fleece 10-20 times per side of the individual, working from the neck to the rump.
- Ensure sheep are well conditioned going into winter - poorly conditioned or stressed sheep are more susceptible to higher lice burdens.
- Biosecurity: Secure boundary fencing. Quarantine dip any brought in sheep and keep them separated for 2 weeks before introducing them to the flock.

You've found lice on your sheep, what now?

Treatment:

- Muster each paddock thoroughly to ensure all sheep are treated on the property at the same time.
- Shearing reduces lice populations by up to 80%. Best practice is to treat with chemicals off shears when the lice population is at its lowest. But if this is not possible apply a long wool salvage product now (this will not eradicate lice but reduce numbers) and use a different chemical group for the off-shears treatment.
- Check effectiveness of products: pull out a handful from the treated mob at least 2 weeks after to confirm efficacy.

Which chemical to use?

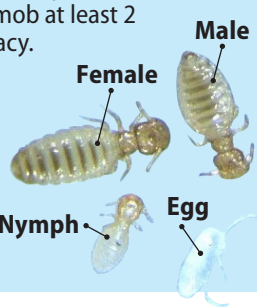
Saturation Products: **Extinosad**, **Cyrex** (not generally needed unless flies are also an issue), **Seraphos**.

- Follow good dipping practices, check saturation after dipping. A lot of issues occur with jetting races leading to less effective treatment due to not being able to saturate the skin.

Pour-on Products: **Zapp Encore**, **Expo**, **Wipe-out**, **Magnum**

- These products are best when used within 24 hours of shearing - when applied directly to the lanolin layer on the skin the active ingredient will better spread all over the body.

To discuss the pros and cons of these products and your situation, contact our vets to help decide on a lice treatment and control plan that's best for your farm.



noslam Dung Beetles

11 May 11am

"It's so dirty, it would be unacceptable to a dung beetle who had lost interest in its career and really let itself go." (Blackadder)

Whilst Blackadder often joked about Baldrick and his association with dung, there may be a serious case for NZ agriculture to look at the missing link in our Ruminant ecology.

NOSLaM are putting on a session with guest speaker **Dr Shaun Forgie** from **Dung Beetle Innovations** to explain everything Dung Beetle.

Some of the claims attributed to dung beetles are that they:

- Reduce bacterial and nutrient run-off in water ways
- Improve amount of clean grazable area available per hectare
- Improve soil fertility & reduce need for synthetic fertiliser
- Reduce parasite challenge to livestock

Come along to the seminar to hear if these claims can be a reality in NZ farming systems

Where: Weston Hall, Main Street, Weston
When: 11 May 2023, 11am - 12.30pm
BBQ lunch to follow.

Kennel Cough

Anna McLeod BVSc – **VETERINARY CENTRE** Waimate

Canine Kennel Cough is a highly contagious respiratory infection, that can significantly affect the health and performance of working dogs - is your pack at risk?

Outbreak situations of KC often occur sporadically throughout the country, and in recent weeks we have seen a surge of reported cases in the North Otago region.

Much like our common cold, KC can be caused by a combination of different viruses and bacteria, with environmental factors like stress and dust also contributing. KC is spread from dog to dog via direct contact (sniffing), air droplets (coughing), or contaminated surfaces (shared water bowls). This can easily happen between dogs on farm when working together, kennelled, or chained near each other.

The common symptoms of KC include a harsh persistent cough ('goose-honk'), sneezing and runny nose, sometimes with a fever and lack of energy. Affected dogs can remain symptomatic for several weeks, and contagious for over a month.

At particular risk of KC infection, are any dogs venturing off farm, or those exposed to dogs outside their normal working pack

Dog trials – large numbers of dogs converging from all over the region, and sometimes country, makes dog trial events the perfect environment for spread of KC.

Casual contractors - outside dog teams bought on-farm during busy times of the year with mustering, tailing, crutching or shearing etc.

Hunting dogs - mixing with dogs from multiple properties on hunting trips

Dogs require an annual KC vaccination to decrease the risk of infection and severity of disease, but in an outbreak situation a 6-monthly booster may be recommended to increase protection.

To discuss vaccination of your pack, or if any are showing suspicious symptoms, contact your local Veterinary Centre clinic.

Selenium Supplementation – *the current situation*

Luke Smyth BVSc – **VETERINARY CENTRE** Oamaru

We find ourselves in a very challenging farming environment. Our clients are making significant strategic animal health decisions every day to manage animal production.

Ensuring that breeding cows and ewes are well supplemented through winter and leading up to calving/lambing, will maximise the transfer of trace elements through the placenta and milk. Sheep mainly require selenium and vitamin B12, while in cattle the priorities are copper and selenium.

Selenium is an essential trace element for normal growth and fertility of livestock. The Selenium content of NZ pastures ranges from 0.005 to 0.070mg/kg DM and these concentrations tend to be lowest in spring when pasture growth is greatest. For this reason, Selenium is often supplemented in the autumn/winter period to ensure adequate levels over the spring period.

Unfortunately, there is currently an issue with the availability of Selovin LA, a long-acting Selenium injection.

We are optimistic that The Veterinary Centre will be receiving an advance allocation of Selovin LA in mid-May and hopefully by July things will be back to normal with the ongoing supply of Selovin LA.

Selovin LA contains Selenium as Barium Selenate, when injected under the skin it forms a slow releasing depot of Selenium. This is effective for 10-12 months.

The dose rate is 0.5-1mg/kg, this means that we can strategically give beef cows 5ml's/head in the autumn. Selenium levels will stay elevated during pregnancy, calving, lactation, and the next mating, plus the calf is born with good selenium reserves.

There is currently no supply chain issue with the shorter acting Selovin-5 injection or the combination products containing Selenium: Prolaject B12 + Se, Multimin or Marksman injection. These products contain Selenium as Sodium Selenate or Sodium Selenite. When injected under the skin it produces a rapid increase in blood selenium concentration which gradually declines over 6 weeks.

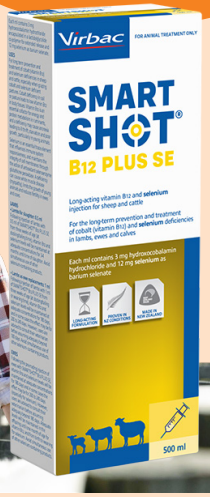
Selpour, a short acting pour on Selenium product is now a deleted product line.

There is likely to be supply pressure on Smart shot B12-Se injection in late winter/early spring with prelamb demand and the current unavailability of Bionic capsules. Giving Smart shot B12-Se to ewes prelamb provides adequate B12 for 180 days and selenium for 300 days. Ewes should be given 1.5ml's at the same time as long acting Moxidectin injection.

SMARTSHOT® B12 PLUS SE

Product of the Month

A long-acting, vitamin B12 and selenium injection for cattle and sheep, providing supplementation of Vitamin B12 for up to 6 months in sheep, 3-4 months in calves and selenium for at least 6 months in both species.



1.5ml Dose
$1.98 Excl GST

2ml Dose
$2.65 Excl GST

2ml Dose delivers same amount of selenium and cobalt as a bionic capsule.

Sheep Trace Elements

Anna Macfarlane BVSc
VETERINARY CENTRE Oamaru

Autumn's a good time to consider your flock's trace elements status (selenium, cobalt, copper and iodine) as these decrease over winter. Checking now enables us to correct deficiencies and have adequate levels for winter and leading into lambing maximising the transfer of trace elements into the milk.

With no capsules or Selovin LA currently available some of our common methods for providing long-acting selenium and cobalt aren't an option this year.

To find out your flocks trace element status options include having a vet perform liver biopsies (x5) and blood samples (x10) from mixed age and 2-tooth ewes.

If you have cull ewes or lambs going to the works you can utilise the **MineralCheck** system where the works takes some liver samples. Your truck driver will need to have a completed copy of an **MineralCheck** form which you can get if you contact your vet.

Understanding your trace element status enables you to make informed decisions on if supplementation is needed and furthermore what product will best suit you to give your ewes adequate levels going into winter.

Pub Talk

Add to your calendar!

"So, I hear there are no capsules this year – what do I do?"

We have had some good discussions around ewe flock health without bionic capsule technology this year.

The 100-day slow release devices were a simple solution to a complex animal health challenges. They have served us well in many ways, but the parasite drench resistance thing that exploded everywhere has meant they couldn't continue to be used in the same way anyway.

The pub talks we have recently hosted in Strath Taieri and the Maniototo have been well attended on this topic. They were a chance to address farmers questions and untangle this complex issue into components that we can address in other ways.

Do all ewes need sustained worm control? Do your sheep need the Cobalt and Selenium? What are flock levels of minerals? What is the best way to monitor minerals and what are the practical options for supplementing ewes. Will long acting Moxidectin be an effective replacement? And if you're up for it we can discuss what are the longer term strategies for breeding, feeding, avoiding worm challenge to live stock…

Do a Mineral + Moxi-check this May!

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Omarama Memorial Hall

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Kurow Hotel (top pub)

RSVP to **events@vet111.co.nz**