

Rural round-up



Angela Butcher
Mixed Animal Vet
(West)

After a challenging few years for many sheep and beef clients, the past 12 months have brought a welcome lift in confidence, with stronger schedules, improved returns and a brighter outlook helping shift the mood on-farm. It has been genuinely good to see smiles on faces again when we're out and about in the community.

Predictions for the next season remain positive, too. As we look ahead to spring and lambing, many farms are going in with a good base behind them. A favourable growing season has helped build feed covers, and we've been hearing of some really encouraging scanning results. If the weather plays ball, there is real hope this lambing season can build on the positive momentum already being felt. There will, of course, always be challenges, but one thing we continually notice is the resilience of our farming community.

Now is a great time to catch up with your vet and make sure animal health plans are ready before the busy period hits. Faecal egg counts (FECs) can help guide a targeted parasite plan, check drench performance and support good lamb growth, while protecting drench efficacy for the future.

It's also worth thinking ahead about lamb post-mortems. When losses occur, timely post-mortems can provide valuable information about what is happening on-farm and help identify issues.

There is plenty to be positive about as we head into spring. Here's hoping for kind weather, healthy lambs on the ground and another season that keeps those smiles coming!

Spotting sleepy sickness

by Angela Butcher

By now, most of you will have scanned your ewes and know what's on board.

We've seen some encouraging scanning results across the region, but with more twins and triplets comes a higher risk of sleepy sickness.

This metabolic disorder, also known as pregnancy toxemia, is most common in multiple-bearing ewes during the last few weeks of pregnancy, when their energy demands are at their highest. It can affect thinner ewes that aren't getting enough feed, but it can also occur in well-conditioned ewes if they're put under stress, such as prolonged bad weather, pre-lamb shearing or crutching, or illness that reduces feed intake.

Early recognition is key. Watch for ewes that have separated from the mob, seem dull or slow, stop eating, stagger, appear blind or don't react normally to



people or dogs. A characteristic feature is 'wool pull', where the wool plucks easily.

The sooner treatment starts, the better the outcome. We recommend treating with Glucalpos, Ketol and Metacam, while keeping the ewe with the mob to encourage her to keep eating. If she's close to lambing, a caesarean may be the best option to give both the ewe and her lambs the greatest chance of survival.

If you're unsure whether a ewe is showing early signs of sleepy sickness, or you need advice on appropriate treatments, give you KeyVet a call. Acting early can make all the difference in these cases.

ON-FARM FOCUS



DAIRY



- Provide trace elements to support cows post-calving and as they move into peak milk production.
- Ensure calves get 3-4L of Brix-tested >22% gold colostrum within 6-12 hours of birth.
- Keep up good hygiene practices around the calf shed.
- Have you signed up to our Complete Calf Care programme to cover trace elements, drenches and vaccines?
- Book us in for disbudding your calves and metrichecking your cows.
- Keep an eye out for spring mastitis.

BEEF



- Transfer off crop pre-calving.
- Does your herd need a clostridial booster vaccination and are they vaccinated against BVD?
- Consider a pre-calving lice drench.

SHEEP



- BCS ewes – increase quality and quantity of feed offered, as energy requirements lift towards lambing.
- Test for selenium if you haven't in last 12 months. It's essential and deficiencies are common.
- If required, supplement with selenium (check dose rate on product).
- Supplement ewes with iodine to avoid unnecessary lamb deaths.
- Vitamin drench close to lambing.
- Are other pre-lamb drenches required? Check in with your KeyVet before committing.
- Get your lambing supplies sorted with our Spring Order Deals!

DEER



- Test dry hinds at the works for copper and selenium – is there enough on board for your stock?



Nipping it in the bud

by Kayley Linden

With calving season getting underway, it's time to start thinking about one of the key jobs for your spring calendar: disbudding. While it may not be everyone's favourite task, doing it early and doing it well makes all the difference for calf welfare and long-term management.

Removing the buds while calves are between 2-6 weeks old means they won't grow sharp horns as an adult, helping prevent injuries to herd mates and handlers. It's much easier on the calf getting them done young and means you don't have to worry about

it later down the track. We'll happily pop out to your farm a couple of times as different groups of calves reach the right age.

Here at VetSouth, we're proud to recommend 'gold standard' disbudding. This includes sedation and a local anaesthetic, followed by Metacam (meloxicam) for ongoing pain relief after the procedure. This combination doesn't just make the process easier, it significantly improves calf wellbeing and recovery.

Research shows that while local anaesthetic effectively blocks the immediate pain of disbudding, inflammation and discomfort continue once it wears off. This is where the nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), Metacam, comes in.

NSAID use significantly reduces pain-related behavioural changes following disbudding, with calves showing less head shaking, ear flicking and head rubbing. It's also proven to increase feed intake post-disbudding and improve growth rates in the weeks afterward, compared with calves that receive local anaesthetic alone.

A little extra pain relief goes a long way towards producing happier calves that recover more quickly!

While we've got your calves sedated, it's the perfect opportunity to do a few other jobs. We can administer Covexin 10 (a 10-in-1 clostridial vaccine) at the time of disbudding, giving calves excellent early protection against clostridial diseases and helping them get off to the best possible start. It's also an ideal time for tagging, DNA sampling, and BVD testing, reducing the number of times calves have to be handled. Ticking multiple jobs off the spring to-do list at once is great!

Think about what standard of care you'll give your calves this season – with gold standard disbudding, you're investing in better welfare, healthier calves, and a stronger foundation for the future. Call our Farm Services teams for help tailoring a disbudding plan to suit your needs this season, and book your sessions now.



We ran our popular annual Winter Workshops for dairy farmers again this July in Winton and Gore, with topics covering lameness, spring triage, calf rearing, milk quality, and Johne's disease.

Here's a group in Winton practicing hoof knife skills on real cow hooves and taking a look at the anatomy of a cow's foot.

Thank you to everyone who attended – hopefully the knowledge you gained will come in useful, even if it's just one little tip or trick that stuck in your mind.

Two decades of dedication



Our West team's large animal Clinical Head, Georgette, celebrated 20 years with us in July. Below is an excerpt from a piece by Mark Bryan about her – scan this QR code to read the full story!



Georgette came to Southland from the Netherlands, after a stint in south Taranaki. She was looking at a few jobs down here, and I remember ringing her boss, Hoppy, in Hāwera (who I knew) and quietly asking him if she was worth employing. "Bloody hell, grab her as soon as you can," he said, which was all I needed to hear.

No sooner had Georgette arrived in Winton than she got down to business. She is nothing if not organised, and that capability to see what needs to be done and just get on with it is second only to her incredible capacity for work, and

particularly juggling multiple aspects of a ridiculously busy life.

She became a VetSouth shareholder early in our journey – from memory our first female shareholder. Her pioneering capability in a profession that, 20 years ago, was moving reluctantly from old male domination, undoubtedly made the pathway easier for others.

Whatever Georgette has turned her attention to, she has always been both energetic and effective. She's super supportive, whether helping clients navigate through challenging times, mentoring younger vets, or providing leadership for our support staff.

Her enthusiasm has shown no sign of dimming over the past 20 years, and I'm sure it will continue for the next 20. VetSouth is very lucky to have her. Happy anniversary, Georgette!

Wearable tech health alerts

Do you have wearable tech on your farm (collars, ear tags, or boluses)? If you're not sure what to do with your health alerts over spring, we have helpful flowcharts available. Just ask and we can get one to you. This provides a framework for you and your staff to work through, giving you confidence to manage the sick cows your tech is finding. However, if she doesn't get better or you think there's something quite serious going on, call your KeyVet!



Clostridial diseases – “It just dropped dead!”

by Chanté Kritzinger

Does this sound like a familiar phrase? Clostridial diseases are one of the most common causes of sudden death in stock.

With activities such as disbudding and tailing around the corner and stock prices looking positive, it's worth having a quick refresher on the topic.

What are clostridial diseases?

There are numerous strains of clostridial bacteria, which are abundant in the environment and even in the guts of healthy animals.

Disease occurs when the right conditions are met, and the bacteria start producing toxins. For example, trauma during handling or fighting (black leg), overeating on starchy feed, or deworming without vaccination (pulpy kidney), sudden dietary changes (enterotoxaemia), wounds (tetanus and malignant oedema), etc.

Since animals die so suddenly, the only protection available is prevention via vaccination.

What vaccines are available?

Ultravac 5in1 comes with a range of formulations that may include small doses of selenium and vitamin B12.

Ultravac 7in1 is essentially a 5in1, plus cover for two strains of leptospirosis.

Covexin 10 is the only vaccine that offers protection against all of the clostridial strains found in New Zealand.

When should I vaccinate?

An initial dose is given, followed by a booster four to six weeks later and then once annually.



Protection for lambs can start as a pre-lamb vaccination in ewes, or they can be vaccinated at tailing time.

Calves should be vaccinated as soon as possible after four weeks of age.

It is wise to assume that beef finishers have not been vaccinated and give them two injections with a broad spectrum clostridial vaccine as soon as they arrive.

You will reap the benefits if you can save the cost of losing even a single animal!

You're welcome to get in touch with your KeyVet for an in-depth discussion about clostridial protection.

Pre-lamb drench use



by Donna Hamilton

Times have changed, and we know our advice has also changed... we get that, but we are seeing farmers understand why this is the case, and it is leading to some great shifts in farm systems to favour the stock, not the parasites.

One big change is less use of drench in adult stock – throughout the year and especially around the lambing period. We are seeing farmers feeding their stock better and having more condition on them, enabling them to better handle the parasite pressure that comes at this time of year.

At times, ewes will still need to be drenched. If there is a feed shortage, and/or their condition is light, then a drench may assist them.

If this is the case, you have the choice of short or long-acting products. The short-acting oral drenches will get rid of the parasites that they have carried

from autumn. The long-acting drench options (bolus or injection) will also do this, plus continue to kill incoming larvae for an extended period (the timeframe is dependent on the product used).

It's important to use a drench that is working on the parasites on your farm! It may be worthwhile having a chat with your vet for a product recommendation.

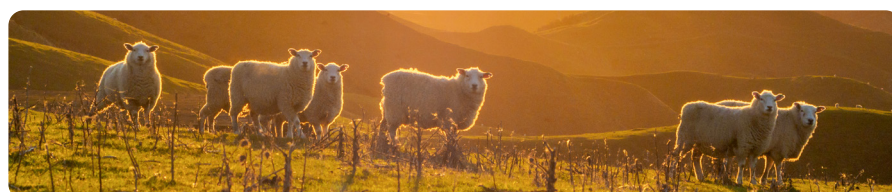
If you are using any long-acting products, we suggest these animals are lambed on paddocks that will be turned over for crop later in spring. If this can't happen, make sure they are mixed with undrenched stock for lambing. A faecal egg count 60-80 days after administration is essential to see how effective the treatment was and if it is a viable option to use in the future.

We are very happy to have a chat with you about this important part of the season. Ring your KeyVet to arrange a time that suits.

Trace elements and parasites

All of our grazing animals are under additional stress during the spring. Feeding them well and ensuring that they have adequate trace elements is essential for them to manage the stress and keep parasite effects low.

Cattle, sheep, deer and horses all need to have good selenium levels. Cattle and deer also need copper. These levels are easily tested and can be done at any time. If your stock have not had tests for these recently, then consider a quick check before the spring pressure comes on. Give us a call to make it happen!



Managing springtime stress

by Rachael Buckingham

As we all know, farming workloads and pressures in spring can feel overwhelming, and with Super El Niño conditions expected this season, there may be a few extra challenges thrown into the mix.

While we are a resilient bunch down south, it's important to remember to look after yourself, as well as your cows, ewes and newborns. You can't do it all, and you certainly can't do it without sleep, support, or decent kai to keep your energy up!

Whether you yourself struggle during this time, or your staff members are feeling it more than usual, it is important to carve out some time for self-care whenever possible.

When you can feel burnout coming, do twice as much of the things that help you stay positive, if you can.

To quote some great advice we heard from Sir John Kirwan a few years ago,



when there's too much going on and you don't know where to start, just DOT - Do One Thing, and then DAT - Do Another Thing. Take it one thing at a time and break larger tasks down into small steps.

Some of his other key tips, which you may find useful, included:

- Do something everyday to switch off the "monkey" in your head, such as watching TV, reading, exercising, cooking, doing a hobby, etc.
- Compartmentalise your responsibilities and relationships (work, partner, kids, clubs, spirituality, etc). Think about which 'box' needs you most right now throughout each day.

- Connect with nature (an easy one for farmers) and with people (family, friends, or neighbours) – even if it's just flicking a mate a text to check in.
- Check in on your employees. Care for the whole person, not just the skills you need from them. This is performance care.
- As a leader, remember you can show you are struggling too!

This is the toughest part of the year on-farm. We're here for any animal health support you need this spring. You can call us for a hand with emergencies 24/7; our experienced vets have got your back, day or night, rain or shine, weekday or weekend – simply call 0800 VETSOUTH.

SPRING ORDER DEALS 2026

LAMBING: ON UNTIL 9 AUGUST

Save on supplies for spring. Shop at your local clinic or fill in an online order form, and be in to WIN a \$500 VetSouth voucher!

*T&Cs apply.



Scan while deals are on to order online and get an extra entry to the prize draw

Clinic corner

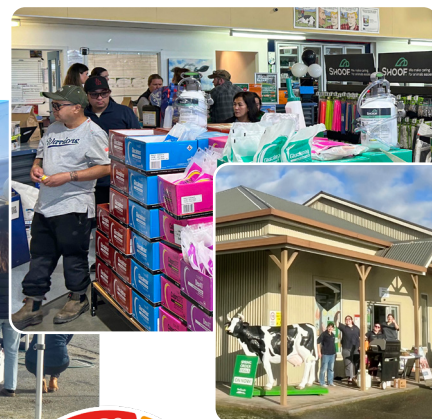


Celebrating calving Spring Order

It was great to have a yarn with those of you who came into clinic during our calving Spring Order events in Winton, Gore, Tapanui and Balclutha in July.

Thanks to everyone who took advantage of our deals by placing product orders (in-clinic and online), and to those good sports who got involved with the competitions.

We're looking forward to seeing our sheep clients at our lambing Spring Order events at the start of this month. Come along for a hot cuppa and a snack, a chance to pick the brains of our vets and supplier reps, and discounts on everything you need for spring!



Working with you

Keep your animals happy and healthy with our expert teams in **Winton, Gore, Invercargill, Tapanui, Balclutha, Otautau, Lumsden, Clydevale & Milton**

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