

Rural round-up



Fleur Barker
Senior Large Animal
Vet (East)

I've been a production animal vet for coming up 30 years now, but I still always love this time of year.

For sheep farmers, lambing time is the culmination of all that hard work you've done throughout the year on feed planning, parasite management and generally maximising ewe condition. How many lambs you get on the ground is ultimately the single biggest factor influencing your financial results for the year.

Thankfully, we're starting the season off with some positives. Scanning has been markedly improved across the region, so, we've got a lot of lambs in ewes and now we just need to get the little buggers on the ground and keep them alive!

On the flip side, some farmers feel their ewes aren't in as good a nick as they would like going into lambing, and pasture covers aren't at ideal levels for spreading out. In these instances, it pays to check your ewes' worm burden and have a yarn with us about the best plan to manage body condition going forward – ideally, FEC testing and body condition scoring mobs, which can lead into some targeted drenching.

We know it's head down, bums up for sheep farmers in the throes of lambing, but do consider bringing in some dead lambs for testing, if you get a chance. Post-mortems can provide some great information to help with next year's planning.

Good luck for a successful lambing this year and well done on being such a tough, resilient bunch in what continues to be a challenging time for sheep farming.

Catching mastitis early

by Angela Butcher

You're a few weeks into lambing and just starting to get on top of your workload, when some ewes start limping around the paddocks and those bright, healthy twins they have are getting hangry. Sound familiar?

Post-lambing mastitis in ewes is a common problem that could be costing you dearly. This infection of the udder causes swelling and inflammation and, if left untreated, can result in the ewe losing her udder, or even death.

Ways to help identify ewes suffering with a mastitis infection include:

- Sitting/lying down more often;
- Not eating or chewing her cud;
- Her lambs may be hanging around her looking hungry and not being tended to;
- Limping on one of her hind legs;
- Swollen, red, lumpy, or saggy udder (it may initially be red/purple and hot to the touch, but will feel cold and hard once chronic);
- Poor body condition.



Once you have caught the ewe, milk her teats to check for any discolouration of milk. Mastitis may only be present in one half of the udder and may produce pink/bloody milk, or sometimes a thick/lumpy substance.

Some treatment options include stripping/milking-out the teats and injecting her with a brown antibiotic and an anti-inflammatory. Some mastitis-causing bacteria are resistant to many widely-available antibiotics, rendering a complete 'cure' unlikely. However, you can often save the ewe if you catch the infection quickly enough.

It is also important to investigate the whole flock post-weaning to look for any udder damage. We recommend waiting until at least one month after weaning to do this.

ON-FARM FOCUS



DAIRY



- Ensure calves get 3-4L of Brix-tested >22% gold colostrum within 6-12 hours of birth.
- Schedule your metrichecking, disbudding and pre-mating PP+ trace element tests.
- BCS cows ahead of repro (aim for a 4.5 average).
- Prep your pre-mating heat detection – what aids and systems are you using?
- BVD test/vaccinate and fertility test bulls at least 8 weeks before mating.

BEEF



- Watch out for 'down' cows and 'crawler' cows after calving.
- BVD tests/vaccinations and clostridial booster shots for bulls.

SHEEP



- Consider a post-mortem on stillborn lambs to check for iodine deficiency.
- Record ewe deaths and cause to get idea of wastage trends.
- Order tailing supplies early to benefit from special pricing on scabby mouth and clostridial vaccines.

DEER



- Sort stags into velvetting mobs and priority feed for velvet growth.

WORKING DOGS



- Feed a high protein and fat diet to support endurance and recovery.
- Consider a jacket for those typical 'Southland spring' days and nights.

Getting repro ready

by James Benstead

With repro season quickly approaching, here are some important things you can be doing once cows have calved to get them ready for mating:

Metrichecking

This picks up on any 'dirty cows' with evidence of endometritis, which can occur post-calving and damage the uterine lining, leading to impaired fertility. Identifying and treating affected cows will help improve in-calf rates. We recommend all cows are **metrichecked 10-14 days post-calving**. For most herds, this means getting us out 2-3 times to pick up on different groups of cows (early and late calvers).

Body condition scoring (BCS)

It is important to monitor BCS pre-mating so you can identify any light cows/heifers early and preferentially feed them or move them to once-a-day milking. Aim to get the majority of cows at a **BCS 4.5** to enhance reproductive performance.

Trace element testing

Several trace elements have been proven to affect fertility and reproductive function, including selenium and copper. Use blood and



liver tests pre-mating to **monitor your herd's trace element levels**, identify where any deficits lie and whether any supplementation is required.

Pre-mating heat detection

Heat detect 4-5 weeks before mating to identify any non-cycling cows and intervene to get them cycling again by planned start of mating.

Focusing on all of these elements and ensuring your numbers are right coming into repro season will set cows up with the best chance of getting in-calf, and hopefully improve your submission and conception rates.

If you have any questions, give your KeyVet a call and have a yarn about how these factors can impact your goals this year.

MULTIMIN EVOLUTION provides an essential trace element boost ahead of repro. New in NZ, it has 50% more zinc than other injectable trace mineral products to enhance the immunity and fertility of high-producing cattle. It also contains copper, selenium and manganese.

Spring jobs

Disbudding

It's easiest to disbud when calves are between 2-6 weeks old, so you may need to book us in for a couple of visits, when different groups of calves are at the right age.

While calves are sedated, we can also blood test or ear notch for BVD and you can complete other routine work, such as checking navels, vaccinating, castrating, or removing extra teats.

Bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD)

Around 80% of dairy and beef herds are exposed to BVD. As well as blood or ear notch testing, you can also do a bulk milk test to give you an indication of your herd's exposure levels. Vaccinate bulls now and cows three weeks prior to mating to help prevent the spread of the disease.

Ask your KeyVet about a BVD management programme for your farm.

Scan to learn more about BVD



Easier vet access to collar data



by Christine Utting

We have a new tool in the box for analysing your herd data! AllFlex has recently launched DataLive, a vet consultancy tool that streamlines and standardises data from its cow collars to provide various reports and key indicators that make it easier to review the performance of your farm.

The new system will help us to better engage with you about the information your collars are gathering, including:

- Rumination – daily minutes, variability, feeding consistency, transition rumination, and eating time.
- Health – alerts, trends, and heat stress.
- Mating – number of heats, and number mated.

DataLive also enables comparisons between different groups on the same farm and between separate farms.

It can produce summary reports on various topics, such as transition rumination, which looks at rumination and health events on a weekly basis over the transition period, and fertility, which looks at all aspects of fertility and benchmarks a farm's performance against all other AllFlex farms across New Zealand.

This tool will save your vet time finding key information and means we can give you more meaningful advice when you need it. If you are interested in signing up, talk to your KeyVet.



Animal health audits

by Donna Hamilton

Over the past few months, we have had various requests for animal health information from farmers having their audits. We checked with QCONZ on what you need:

- 1. Drug chart:** We will email all details of Restricted Veterinary Medicines (RVM) drugs after your annual consult. Any RVM products not covered in this consult will be sold with a form providing the necessary information. Please let us know if you didn't receive one.
- 2. Animal Health Plan:** OviGold members will receive an updated AHP after their annual consult, but we can do these for anyone.
- 3. Dog dosing:** We will have this on your AHP. If you do your own, remember to include these records.
- 4. Velvet records:** Books are to be up-to-date and available at audit. QCONZ will contact us if we have your book.
- 5. Fitness for travel certification:** Any "Works Certificates" we have provided must be available.
- 6. Disbudding certification:** If you do your own disbudding, you will be given a docket as proof of visit.
- 7. Out of date disposal:** Product disposal can be managed through AgRecovery.
- 8. Needle disposal:** Needles are to be collected in a suitable container (it doesn't have to be registered). Needles should be disposed of with vets or AgRecovery.

Feeding guidelines for orphan lambs

by Rachael Buckingham

So, you've got your shed all set up for orphan lambs, but how do you feed and look after them for optimum results?

What to do on day one

We recommend **tube feeding 3x250ml of colostrum** within the first 24 hours (assume every orphan lamb needs it).

If the lamb is weak or comatose, **inject dextrose into its abdomen** – this must be done before warming the lamb up. It's also important to **spray every navel** with iodine and treat swollen ones with penicillin.

Scratch every lamb ONLY IF scabby mouth is present on-farm, or you have previously used the vaccine.

How much milk do they need when inside?

Lambs need **10-15% of their body weight of milk** daily.

They should be fed at least 3x a day until around 2 weeks old, then can be reduced to 2x a day.

Lambs should also have **access to meal/muesli**.

Transitioning to feeding outside

Once lambs are consuming a certain amount of meal per day, or have reached a good enough weight, you can start to transition them off milk.

Here's a guide:

- 100g of meal/d (usually around 3 weeks of age): Lambs can go out to grass.
- 200g of meal/d (or when 10-12kg, or 4-5 weeks old): Lambs can be weaned.
- 400-700g of meal/d (or when 20kg, or 8-10 weeks old): Lambs can move to a high-quality pasture diet only (this must not be less than 1600kgDM/ha).

The estimated total feed per reared lamb is 5kg milk replacer and 20kg meal.

Scan to discover more about rearing orphan lambs



A Wormwise update



by Donna Hamilton

Over the summer and autumn, we saw many of you at the Beef and Lamb NZ Wormwise events held across Otago and Southland. As a facilitator, I really enjoyed getting to know our hosts and their systems when out on-farm.

The field days gave farmers a chance to add to their parasite management knowledge, while 'Part B' sessions delved further into the details and how to apply the principles to real life situations. We also led technical sessions for southern vets and rural professionals.

If your discussion group, catchment group or farm team are keen to learn more about farming healthy, high-producing animals, without ill-effects from parasites, using minimal drench inputs, then please get in touch with either myself or your BLNZ extension manager Claire Tutenburg to organise a local Wormwise session.

Avoiding resistance, and farming with resistance, is possible – we just need to be smart about how we do it. The earlier you're on the journey, the easier it is!

Top tailing tips

- ✓ **Add a multi-clostridial vaccine** to your tailing plan to prevent any sudden deaths. Bacteria can enter the wound around the tail after docking, leading to tetanus.
- ✓ **Vaccinate against scabby mouth** Infection rate can be as high as 90% in sheep mobs! Talk to your KeyVet about the best live vaccine option for your farm and ask about our early-bird specials.
- ✓ **Boost up your lambs with B12** An injection at tailing helps to ensure each lamb has the right amount to thrive.



Working dogs in spring

by Hugh Hasselman

With spring on its way, your working dogs are going to be a crucial part of your team for the work ahead.

Here are some tips to keep them up to speed:

Feed for work performance

Dogs preferentially burn fat for sustained energy over prolonged periods. Pre-season conditioning with the gradual introduction of a high-fat, high-protein diet helps maintain good appetite and activates the metabolic pathways for using these energy sources.

There is also a reduced incidence of muscle and joint injuries in dogs fed high-quality protein diets.

Keeping warm

Having a warm, dry kennel and being fed a premium diet will mean there is more time to sleep and recover for the next day's work. Dog jackets will also help keep them warm at night.

Avoiding injuries

Check for potential hazards that could trap feet, such as gaps around the edge of quad trays. Injuries to bones, hips and stifle joints can often result from a dog's failed attempt to clear a fence or gate, running on heavy, muddy paddocks, or impacts from livestock.

Protecting feet

Maintain quality nutrition throughout the year for tough, healthy pads and nails. Carefully trim overgrown nails to reduce nail damage and nail bed infections. You may need veterinary attention to address foot problems.

Insurance

Several pet health insurance policies now offer cover for working dogs. Some

established farm insurance companies have also introduced a part-payment towards a working dog's veterinary care and rehabilitation back to work.

Other key points:

- Dogs with **osteoarthritis** should be examined and offered the appropriate multi-modal treatment to help them work well for you.
- **Canine Cough** is highly contagious. Check the vaccination status of your team. This can be especially important if you work across several properties or plan to have casual shepherds or contractors with their own dogs coming onto your farm.
- Stick to your dog **worming** plan and watch out for **fleas** as it gets warmer.
- **Clean up any sheep abortion material.** This may contain bacteria such as Salmonella or Campylobacter, which can cause severe gastrointestinal disease in dogs (and humans).

We know you take pride in the care of your loyal work mates. We can help with comprehensive veterinary care, emergency after-hours service, premium dog foods and advice to get the best performance out of your working dogs this season.

Clinic corner



Spring Order

Thanks to everyone who came along to our recent Lambing Spring Order days! There was a great buzz in the clinics and we enjoyed some good yarns. Pet lamb Rosco was a hit with everyone in Gore!



20 years of the Winton clinic

Time flies when you're having fun... we can't quite believe we've had two decades at our clinic on the corner of Great North and Welsh Roads in Winton. Thanks to all the locals who have supported us and to the awesome local businesses who provided some great prizes for our lucky winners during our celebration day. The chocolate wheel had a good workout!



Our clinics

Balclutha
Gore
Winton
Otautau

Tapanui
Invercargill
Lumsden
Clydevale

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