



VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

NOVEMBER 2017



Time to check your drenching gear

Emma Scott

With lamb and calf drenching starting, give your drenching equipment the once over to prevent poor performance.

Check that the guns are drawing properly, that the rubber seals are not perishing and that the draw off tubes and connections fit the backpack you will be using.

Calibrate your gun to check the volume the gun is delivering. An easy way is to deliver a number of squirts into a cup and suck the expelled drench back up with a syringe. Measure the volume and divide by the number of squirts you made.

Clean gear well and do not mix drenches. Squirt the unused drench back into the original container, then wash through with warm water and mild detergent. Lubricate as per recommendations and dry well before the next use.



Weaning to mating

Mark Eames

The period of life from weaning until mating is critical to get right, if a replacement heifer's maximum lifetime production is to be achieved. It also can be a time where these valuable replacement animals get neglected or under-prioritised.

By far the most important aspect of this period of life is nutrition – Quantity AND Quality! Young stock require high quality feed to grow to their full potential. Clearly, this is not the class of stock to be cleaning up after others, rather they should be getting the best feed available.

After nutrition, the next most important barrier to optimum growth rate is parasitism. Where possible, try to reduce exposure naturally with grazing management, but in the majority of cases a routine drenching program from weaning until mating is required. Selection of drench product is very important so get some advice from your veterinarian.

Ensure that vaccinations are carried out in a timely fashion. In most cases the minimum requirements are clostridial (5 in 1 or 10 in 1) and leptospirosis, but also worth discussing is use of Bovine Virus Diarrhoea (BVD) vaccine. Maintain good records to ensure boosters are given when required and animals gain the full benefits.

Monitor trace element status and take supplementary action if required.

Consider facial eczema (FE) and consult with your vet to work out the most practical, efficient and cost-effective FE prevention strategy for you.

Regular weighing is the only failsafe way to monitor progress and get an early indication of things going wrong. The industry targets of 20% mature liveweight at three months old (weaning), 30% at six months, 40% at nine months, and 60% at 15 months (mating), are figures most farmers are aware of, but how these figures are interpreted can vary. There is a significant difference between a group of heifers that average these targets and a group in which these targets are the minimum weights! As a rule, try to have 85% of a group being at or above target at each weighing.

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Avoid dangerous drenching

Emma Scott

All cattle and sheep worm drenches (anthelmintics) can be harmful whether they are an oral, a pour-on or an injection.

It can be particularly dangerous to drench calves under eight weeks of age and lambs under four weeks of age. Animals rarely need drenching pre-weaning (while on milk). Those that are sick or debilitated should be drenched with caution.

Anthelmintics can be fatal to your animals if label recommendations are not strictly followed. Always dose to the weight of the heaviest animal in the group. However, do not overdose, and be aware of the dose when drenching the 'poor-doers'. Ensure you have a system for identifying the animals you have already drenched to avoid multiple dosing.

Check that your drench gun is delivering the correct dose by squirting a dose into a syringe before you begin drenching the herd or mob.

Anthelmintics that also contain copper and/or selenium should not be used in conjunction with other products e.g. vaccines, containing copper and/or selenium.

Please talk to your vet if you have any queries about the product you are using.



Looking ahead

Potential animal health issues, tasks to consider and reminders for **November** include...

DAIRY

- **Clinical mastitis** – monitor cows and be aware of rising bulk milk somatic cell counts
- Stay sharp on **heat detection** as you move through the mating period
- **Lameness** may still be an issue after a soggy October so monitor cows daily to prevent large numbers creeping up
- Keep on top of **bull management** – remove lame or sick bulls ASAP
- Book in for **early pregnancy testing** – ideally six weeks after mating finishes
- Ensure excellent **weaner management** – drench regularly, weigh to monitor growth rates, potential trace mineral supplementation, allocate adequate good quality pasture – **see article page 1**

Pneumonia in lambs and hoggets

Courtney Tartelin

Pneumonia in young sheep is a multi-factorial disease involving both pathogens and external factors such as stress, environmental changes and concurrent disease.

The main bacteria involved in hogget pneumonia are *Pasteurella* species and *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*, as well as different viruses and non-infectious causes of lung damage, such as dust from mustering.

Factors such as stress, whether it be from mustering, yarding, drenching or changes in feed, contribute greatly to the development of pneumonia, and the ability of the lamb or hogget to fight the disease without developing chronic damage to the lungs. A few specific husbandry procedures have been linked to the development of pneumonia, notably:

- Shearing lambs on the day of weaning.
- Increased average slaughter age of lambs, due to increased stocking rate and density as feed becomes limited in the late summer.
- Cold shock following shearing or handling.

- Following dipping, both shower and plunge, with signs of pneumonia developing four to seven days after.
- Concurrent development of facial eczema.
- Transport of sheep.
- Mustering in dry, dusty conditions.

In acute cases sheep may be found dead, or found lagging behind the mob displaying signs of respiratory distress. In groups of young sheep where pneumonia has developed, many sheep may be seen or heard coughing, and some may develop chronic ill thrift.

The economic losses due to pneumonia can be significant, whether it be from the direct loss of stock on farm, or downgrading of carcasses at slaughter. Studies also show the weight gain of lambs affected by pneumonia to be 50% less than that of a healthy lamb, meaning the time to finish a lamb to slaughter weight may double. Preventing hogget pneumonia is crucial in reducing losses on your farm.

Minimising the predisposing factors for pneumonia is key, and avoiding any unnecessary stress on the lambs or hoggets. Avoid mustering in the dust and heat, and yarding stock for longer than necessary in close confinement. Maintaining stock health over risk periods is also crucial by ensuring adequate feed and appropriate drenching.

If you have concerns about pneumonia in your sheep, please contact us to discuss ways to mitigate the risk and prevent widespread losses.



- Continue to use calf meal with **coccidiostat** for one to two months after weaning to avoid coccidiosis commonly seen at this time of year

SHEEP and BEEF

- **Barbers pole** – weather dependent, sheep may need specific drenching for this parasite sooner rather than later; signs to look for are pale gums, depressed, exercise intolerant, increased breathing
- Ewes at weaning – monitor **body condition** and udders

- Lambs at weaning – **parasite management**, vitamin B12 testing, fly strike control
- Ensure finishing cattle are vaccinated with 5 in 1 or 10 in 1 to avoid deaths from **clostridial diseases**, these often occur when animals are growing well on lush pasture and can be hard to distinguish from bloat

DEER

- Plan preparations for **develvetting** – see article page 4
- Keep an eye out for **ticks** and treat accordingly

EQUINE

- Temperament changes and neurological signs (increased sensitivity to stimuli, wobbly gait etc.) may indicate **Ryegrass staggers**.
- **Allergic airway disease** – look out for a dry cough, rubbing of nose/head, discharge from eyes/nose, fast breathing with increased effort
- Continue regular **drenching** of young animals, particularly yearlings – as a general rule treat six weekly through to the end of summer.



The non-cycling cow

Steve Harvey

Non cycling cows are a common problem in New Zealand dairy herds. They reduce the reproductive performance of the herd as well as the financial performance of the farm.

Non-cyclers are either:

1. Cows that have ovulated (i.e. ovaries are 'cycling') but not shown a heat.
2. Cows that have not even started ovulating since calving.

Those cows in the first group may have had a "silent" heat. It has been found that about 80% of cows will not have a heat at the first ovulation after calving. Cows in the second group are described as true non-cycling or "anoestrus cows". This is the most common form of infertility in New Zealand herds.

Most herds have some non-cycling cows that need treatment each year. These may be treated either before the planned start of mating or after mating has started. The longer treatment is delayed, the fewer non cyclers will need treating. However, delaying treatment will also result in a poorer six week in-calf rate and is not effective at treating a non-cycling problem.

Following calving, the first visible post-calving heat should be seen around six weeks provided the cow had an uncomplicated calving. A second heat may occur eight to 12 days later in 30% of cows. After this, heats should be at regular 18-24 day intervals. This is important as cows are a lot more fertile on their third and fourth heats, hence it is ideal to mate to these heats.

Causes of the non-cycling problem:

Calving to mating interval is vitally important but other factors are significant as well, these include:

1. **Inadequate heifer management.** Under-weight heifers have a longer interval to first heat and at least a 10% lower submission rate.
2. **Young cows.** First calving heifers need an extra 10 days to start cycling compared with an older cow. This is the reason why you should mate your 15 month replacements a week or two before the main herd. This should help reduce the number of first calving heifers being treated.

3. More **Friesian** heifers are treated for non-cycling compared to Jersey or crossbred cows.
4. **Body condition score (BCS).** This is extremely important. Thin cows take longer to start cycling and have lower three week submission rates compared with cows at adequate BCS. It's recommended that cows calve at a BCS of 5.0 and heifers at 5.5. Body condition loss from calving to mating and condition score at mating also affect the incidence of non-cyclers. There should be no more than 15% of cows below BCS 4.0 at mating and cows should be gaining condition. First calving heifers losing excess condition may need preferential feeding or placing on once a day milking. This should be started at least one month before planned start of mating.
5. **Abnormal calvings and uterine infections.** Cows with assisted calvings, twins, caesarians and uterine infections are more likely to be treated as non-cyclers. Metrichecking should be done ideally in four weekly intervals after calving so that cows with uterine infections can be treated early. Herds will need more than one lot of metrichecks and some cows may need two treatments to completely clear an infection. Research has shown that all 'at risk' cows should be treated with a Metricure®, and the sooner, the more likely they are to conceive.

The buttons are dropping!

Emma Scott



Develvetting is just around the corner. We have covered the new regulations on deer sheds, associated facilities and velvet hygiene in September's newsletter so here are a few important reminders for stag welfare.

Protrusions like gate hinges, gudgeons, bolts/nails/wires should be cut flush where practical to avoid injury.

Sheds require adequate ventilation and light. Stags exposed to ambient temperatures greater than 22°C during develvetting may suffer from heat stress. The risk primarily exists during develvetting, when stags are sedated with xylazine, but problems can also occur afterwards. Even when reversal is used, sedated stags may fail to seek shade. If they happen to sit down in an exposed area of the paddock, they can quickly become heat stressed which is likely to be fatal.

Early morning when it is generally cool, or later in the afternoon, when the stag has the entire evening to recover, are the best times to develvet. Ideally stags should be drafted into

mobs weekly as they drop their buttons. Mob size should be relative to the facility size as most stress and potential for damage to velvet occurs through overcrowding in the yards, particularly at first yarding. Once drafted, stags should be left alone to settle. All those not being develvetted should be released. If there is only one stag to do then try and leave a companion with him.

Following velvet removal and reversal from the sedative, stags should be released to a nearby paddock with good water supply and a cool shady area for the observation/recovery period.

Check the stags within one hour after develvetting and at regular intervals thereafter. Look out for stags lying on their sides, excessive bleeding (spurting for more than 30 minutes after tourniquet removal), prolonged lack of alertness, continued wide based stance or unsteady gait, laboured breathing or bloat. If your observations can not be quickly rectified, such as by applying a tourniquet or getting the stag to his feet, then call your vet immediately.

CHRISTMAS HAMS available on selected drench products this festive season!

Come in and see us in store at **Totally Vets** and **Tararua Vets** for great drench deals and for more information.