



# VET notes

YOUR TOTALLY VETS NEWSLETTER ALL ABOUT ANIMALS ON YOUR FARM

OCTOBER 2017



## Be on guard about leptospirosis

**Emma Scott**

Last month the New Zealand Society of Sheep and Beef Cattle Veterinarians released some disturbing leptospirosis (lepto) figures that has implications for farmers and agricultural workers.

There has been a substantial increase in reported lepto cases for the first half of 2017 compared to the same period in 2016 (91 cases this year compared with 33 in 2016). Two thirds of people infected required hospitalisation and many will suffer long term effects. The demographic has also changed with females representing 18% of cases for 2017 (6% in 2016).

Lepto is a well-known workplace hazard in the agricultural sector, many of the reported cases are farm workers or have had contact with livestock. People can become infected from contact with animal urine and contaminated water. Contact with rodents and floodwaters are also showing to be increasingly important in disease transmission and clusters of lepto cases have been found following exposure to these.



Symptoms of lepto in humans can be a minor flu-like sickness but may also make some people seriously ill with severe head and body aches, fever, sensitivity to light, redness of the conjunctiva or a rash. They may be off work for several months, have lasting kidney or liver damage, and may suffer long term fatigue and depression.

Vaccination of our animals is the best prevention we have against lepto. When used correctly is it very effective against the vaccine strains.

It is recommended that calves are vaccinated as soon as possible, generally around four to eight weeks (this may work with disbudding). They need two vaccinations four to six weeks apart followed by an annual booster which is often administered prior to the autumn rainfall (the greatest risk period for contracting lepto). If the main herd is vaccinated in the autumn, then the spring born calves should be boosted then, even though they may only be six to seven months old. The interval between annual boosters can be no longer than 13 months and timing the vaccinations in this way brings them in line with the rest of the herd.

**Please discuss lepto with your vet to ensure you have a solid prevention plan in place to provide the best protection for your animals, family and staff.**

**A reminder to dairy farmers:**

## Mycoplasma bovis outbreak

Please take time to fill in the survey that we have recently emailed to you on behalf of the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI).

The information that you can provide to MPI is crucial to show whether the spread of mycoplasma bovis is still limited to a few farms in the South Island. The more information they can get about dairy farms that were not directly linked to the outbreak is of great help.

**If you didn't receive the email please use the link below and answer a few questions about your farm.**

[www.surveymonkey.com/r/mbovis](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/mbovis)

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## Looking ahead

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

### DAIRY

- **Weaner management** – plan your strategy for weaning and know what criteria you will use, the two primary ones to consider being calf weight and meal intake. Assess the risk

of coccidiosis, need for parasite control and ensure excellent grazing management.

- **Non-cycler management** – cows that have not yet cycled leading up to the planned start of mating are a key group and need to be a management priority.
- **Lame cows** – take time to observe, draft and treat lame cows early to avoid large numbers creeping up in the weeks ahead.
- **Bull preparation** – the start of natural mating is only a month or so away so it's time to make a move to select and

## To B12 or not to B12? That is the question...

**Ginny Dodunski**

A common treatment given to lambs at docking is Vitamin B12 injection... Is it necessary? Is docking the right time?

### Is B12 necessary?

Vitamin B12 contains the trace element cobalt; a lack of this causes poor appetite, with resultant poor lamb growth, even wasting and death in severe cases. Contrary to popular belief, B12 on its own is not an appetite stimulant (unless you are deficient).

- There are well-established areas of the country where cobalt is deficient in the soil all the time, and lambs require cobalt to grow properly. The pumice soils of the central plateau are the classic example.
- In most other areas, deficiency (if it occurs) is less severe and may vary from year to year. This can make the decision of whether to supplement or not a bit tricky. In an ideal world we would monitor every year before deciding what to do, and arguably monitoring for this more marginal type of deficiency is best done just prior to weaning.
- A recent review of the research on B12 in young lambs highlights that B12 levels do not change much between docking and weaning. If B12 is sufficient at docking, it will be OK through to weaning. It is from weaning onwards that lambs are most at risk of poor growth from low B12.
- The best tissue to check is liver – this is the organ where B12 is stored. Livers from your first draft of lambs are probably good enough, but it is often argued that they may not be reflective of the lambs left on the farm.
- Blood samples for serum B12 are OK as long as lambs are over eight weeks of age, and the samples are taken from lambs that are straight off feed. An hour or two off feed is ok, four to six hours is not.
- If you need to supplement, you have the option of short acting injections, that last around four weeks, or Smartshot™ which, if given at docking, will give lambs six months sustained B12; this can be a great option for maternal ewe lambs and stud ram lambs.

**Talk to your vet about appropriate monitoring and cost-benefit of B12 in your situation.**

## Coccidiosis in calves

**Ash Mellow**

Coccidiosis is a parasitic disease that affects calves usually after weaning.

It causes diarrhoea and weight loss, and may be a cause of scouring in calves as young as four weeks of age if the environment is contaminated enough. Mild weather conditions during the late spring favor the build-up of infection on pastures.

### Signs of disease and diagnosis

The severity of signs varies with the level of infection, but the worst affected calves will have a very watery diarrhoea that can also

contain mucus and blood. These calves may be sunken in the eye from dehydration and have faecal staining over their hindquarters and hocks. The disease can be diagnosed by taking fresh faecal samples and examining them for eggs under the microscope.

### Treatment

Coccidia are quite different to other cattle parasites. They are a protozoa so the common cattle drenches are ineffective against them!



prepare your bull team to help ensure a successful mating.

## SHEEP and BEEF

- **Docking time** – if not done already, make a plan for docking to help ensure important tasks aren't missed - from clostridial vaccination to drenching, make sure you've got all tasks in hand at this busy time!
- **Calving** – have a "calving kit" prepared and ensure it contains at least a five litre container of lube – it is often the difference

between getting a calf out successfully or not! Maintain regular checks on pregnant animals and act quickly at the first sign of any trouble.

## EQUINE

- **AI/mating** – with the daylight hours starting to increase, mares will begin cycling. Plan ahead and prepare well for mating, including sire selection and overall mare health – teeth, feet, parasite control, trace mineral status (particularly selenium), nutrition etc.

- **Foaling** – many mares will have foals already at foot. For those yet to drop, ensure they are now in the paddocks in which they will foal. Also, make sure they have had their pre-foaling vaccinations (primarily tetanus and strangles, possibly salmonella) four to six weeks before their due date.

## DEER

- **Ticks** – depending on your farm history consider the need for tick control in the coming months. Talk with your vet about options for treatment.

# Helping the lame cow

Greg Smith

Lameness is a bit like stale bread it might not be your least favourite thing but it is probably a close second.

Since the start of lactation there has been significant wear and tear on the hooves due to the increased activity after the dry period and the wet conditions that usually prevail at this time of the year. As a result the hooves will be thinner and softer than normal and more vulnerable to damage.

To avoid such damage, remember these basic principles:

- 1. The quality of the race determines the walking speed not the pressure you put on the herd.**  
On a good surface the herd will move at three to four kilometers per hour, but only one to one and a half kilometers per hour on a bad surface - so allow extra time when negotiating a bad section.
- 2. The least dominant cows walking at the back of the herd are very reluctant to put pressure on the more dominant cows ahead of them.**  
The pressure you exert at the back is a significant cause of lameness as these cows will be pushing hard to find space and will not be able to see where they are putting their feet.
- 3. The walking order is not the same as the milking order.**  
Once the herd is shut on the yard allow

time and space for the herd to settle. Wait 10 minutes before starting to milk and don't move the backing gate until two or so rows have left the shed.

- 4. The backing gate is best used to take up space not force cows forward.**  
As for pressure on cows in the race, the backing gate has most impact on the cows immediately in front of the gate and the same negative interactions occur.

The good news is that the cows showing early signs of lameness will respond to a period of rest. Early intervention by drafting affected cows into a lame mob or with the colostrums will reduce the number that need to be treated and spare a thought for the first calvers as they are particularly vulnerable to lameness during their first season.

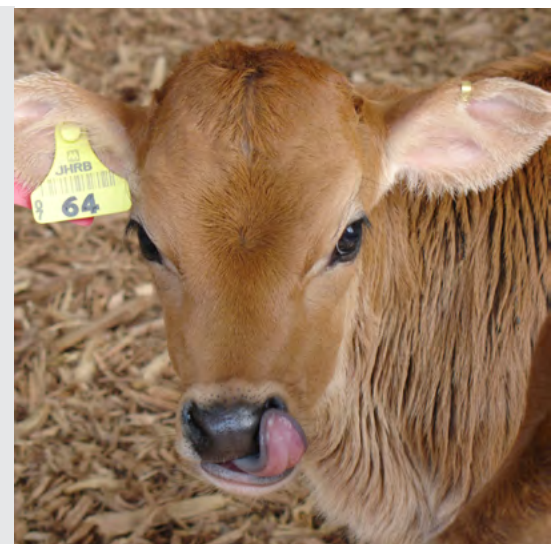
There are products, such as Baycox® C, that are effective at treating calves after they are diagnosed with coccidiosis.

### Prevention

A much better option than treating calves already scouring! If possible, avoid grazing your calves in the same selection of paddocks year after year. Coccidia can accumulate in these paddocks if regularly used for calves, especially if the stocking rate is high.

Many of the meal products for calves contain coccidiostats which will prevent infection if the calves are consuming enough meal daily. Feed meal especially after weaning as the stress of weaning can reduce immune function in calves and leave them vulnerable to developing coccidiosis.

**Early intervention is best so contact your vet if you see signs such as these in your calves.**



# A new product for preventing fly strike

Chris Carter

StrikeForce-S® is a new weapon against blowfly strike in sheep.

StrikeForce-S® contains dicyclanil, the most effective active for the prevention of fly strike. Unlike cyromazine, the other main active used for strike prevention, dicyclanil is highly fat-soluble, so once the product is applied to the sheep it is rapidly taken up by the lanolin and it is the lanolin the first fly larval stage feed on. The dicyclanil ingested by the larvae prevents these larvae from progressing to the more aggressive second and third fly stage.

StrikeForce-S® is unique in that it is a water-based solution rather than a suspension. The result is a product that does not need to be shaken prior to use, is easy to apply, and the applicators can be washed out using water.

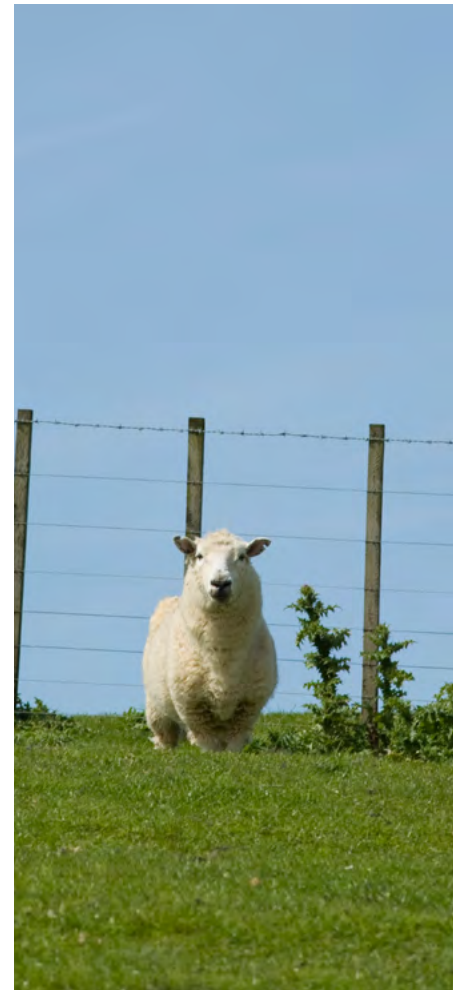
StrikeForce-S® is bright red, so easy to see on the wool.

The unique solution means that the meat withholding period of StrikeForce-S® is only 14 days, in all breeds of sheep and regardless of wool length at time of application.

StrikeForce-S® spreads rapidly through the wool providing protection over the sheep's entire body. It is proven to last after periods of rainfall, and field studies have shown that it is just as effective as other currently available dicyclanil products (CLiK® and CLiKZiN®).

Early season application of StrikeForce-S® will provide up to 18 weeks protection for your flock, and will help in reducing the number of flies that can affect the flock over a period of time. This is because once flies emerge from the soil at the start of the season, the eggs they then lay on the treated sheep are unlikely to reach the pupal stage of the lifecycle, and so subsequent fly waves in the season will have lower numbers of flies.

**If you have any questions about StrikeForce-S®, or flystrike in your flock, contact your nearest clinic.**



## STRIKING BEFORE FLYSTRIKE

NEW



StrikeForce-S® spray-on provides season long blowfly strike protection with the flexibility of a short 14 day meat withholding period.

15L \$732.00

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Prices subject to change without notification.

CLiK™ is a ready to use spray-on which will give you long term residual protection (up to 18 weeks) against flystrike.

20L \$945.00

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