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Tararua Vets Clients & Staff Christmas BBQ's!

Tararua Vets would like to thank you as our clients and invite you to join us to unwind for Christmas. Come and join us:

Pongaroa:

Thursday 8 December - From 5.30pm

Pahiatua Clinic:

Friday 16 December - 4.30-7.30pm

Dannevirke:

Look out for a date in February

We look forward to catching up with you there.



Salmonellosis in sheep

Rachael Fouhy

Enteric Samonellosis is a disease we see regular cases of in our area and every four to five years tend to see widespread outbreaks also occurring.

While losses due to Salmonella can occur anytime, the majority of our cases occur during the February to May period. Problems tend to be worse in years with good grass growth as this provides a food source for the bacteria to replicate in the gut.

Deaths from Salmonella are classically in well conditioned mixed aged ewes. Often, but not always, affected animals are found near a water source such as dams, creeks or troughs and, if not simply found dead, are obviously sick and have profuse khaki green smelly diarrhoea. Deaths tend to occur in one of two patterns - either five or so sheep dead at once OR a slow trickle of deaths over a week to 10 days. To quote one of my farmers "normally you don't see dead sheep as they die in the gullies, but when you have Salmonella they are dead in the gateway".

As a general rule Salmonella is uncommon in two-tooths and younger stock. Diagnosis is commonly made by post-mortem (PM) examination and is best done on freshly dead (within six to 12 hours) animals. The classic PM signs include a very red and inflamed abomasum combined with watery contents in the large intestine and rectum.

Annual vaccination of two-tooths (AND rams) helps to minimise the impact of Salmonella on a property. Two vaccinations four to six weeks apart are required and are best done over the December to January period. This timing works well in our area as it ensures vaccinations take place prior to pre-tupping vaccinations. Delayed action can result in having to vaccinate during mating which is not ideal as there is potential for impact on reproductive performance. Vaccination can, in some cases, make sheep go off their food for a few days and be not right for up to a week, so I recommend that rams are left out for an extra 10 days... however a slightly longer mating period rather than increased ewe deaths due to not vaccinating is preferable in my mind. A dry ewe is worth more than a dead ewe!

For further information don't hesitate to give your vet a call.



Looking ahead

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

Dairy

- **Clinical mastitis** – monitor cows and be particularly aware of rising bulk milk somatic cell count. Maintaining milk quality at this time is important – **article P3.**

Save the date for our Joint Milk Quality Workshop - "Will you control mastitis or will it control you?" – Shannon/Foxton Tuesday 15th November, Rongotea/Sanson Thursday 17th November, Tararua Tuesday 22nd November. Contact your nearest clinic for further details.

- **Lameness** – may become an issue as ground hardens so monitor cows daily and take action quickly at the first sign of a problem. Early identification and treatment goes a long way to help ensure a positive result.

Theileria alert

There has been an increase in both suspect and diagnosed cases of Theileria, particularly in the Manawatu, in the past couple of months. It is likely that the stress of calving and some changeable weather has acted as a trigger factor for this spike.

Be mindful of biosecurity and be sure to inspect new cattle for ticks PRIOR to introducing them. Ideally treatment needs to be at least FIVE days PRIOR to transport to minimise the risk, but bear in mind that treated cattle still potentially carry the parasite in their bloodstream.

Stay vigilant for signs such as cows lagging behind, increased respiratory rate/effort, pale mucous membranes, non-responsive metabolic disease etc.

If you suspect Theileria, or would like further information, then don't hesitate to call your vet.

Ram preparations

Hamish Pike

Having rams checked out to help ensure that they are in top notch shape in the lead up to tugging is a prudent decision and the cost to do it is far lower than the costs involved if the rams don't work!

Sperm production in the ram takes eight weeks therefore all sperm present at mating have developed prior to the mating period. Fever or stress (from any cause) can reduce sperm quality and/or quantity. For this reason ram body condition should be assessed and they should be checked for health problems and, if required, treated at least ten weeks prior to mating. Wounds, flystrike, genital health problems and foot problems are all common troubles. Two we often find are:

- Footrot (and/or other causes of lameness) can reduce feed intake and hence sperm production.
- Scrotal (chorioptic) mange can cause infertility by raising testicular temperatures due to skin thickening. Rams with moderate to severe scrotal mange can be considered temporarily to permanently unsound. Mild to moderate mange will need to be treated immediately. Those rams with severe lesions (active or inactive) may be permanently unsound and should be replaced.

Following ram palpations, those that are identified as "temporarily unsound" will need to be rechecked prior to introduction. Additionally, rams in full wool should be shorn around the scrotum and crutch to reduce scrotal temperature, however full shear should be avoided within eight weeks of tugging.

Brucella ovis is a disease that may also be identified when palpating rams and we still see outbreaks occurring in our region. Traditionally rams have always been checked just prior to mating but the problem with this is that, if an issue is identified, there is often insufficient time to test and cull rams and ensure a *Brucella ovis* free flock prior to mating. The disease can then spread like wildfire during tugging, which can have dramatic effects on scanning percentages causing an increase in dry ewes and a resultant protracted lambing season. The important things to remember are:

- Always purchase rams from a *Brucella ovis* free source.
- Avoid sharing or borrowing rams.
- The disease is not carried from season to season in the ewe flock, it is venereal disease spread by rams.
- There is no treatment so prevention is key.

Finally, if you plan to use teasers, ensure they are vasectomised early enough to allow them to rest, for ideally at least six weeks, prior to tugging to prevent any unwanted pregnancies.

Plan ahead and book in your rams to be checked in adequate time prior to mating – it's a wise investment and an excellent start point to help ensure a successful mating.

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- **Ensure excellent bull management** – rotate bull teams regularly and remove lame or sick bulls as soon as possible.
- **Ensure excellent weaner management** – monitor for coccidiosis at weaning (**article P4**), drench regularly (as a general rule, depending on your farm system and management, do approximately every six weeks with an oral combination), weigh to monitor growth rates, consider trace mineral testing and supplementation, allocate adequate good quality pasture particularly if hot dry weather.

Sheep and Beef

- **Ram preparations** – plan and book in ram palpations, Brucellosis testing and organise teasers – **article P2**.
- **Weaning** – check ewes' body condition and udders, check lambs' needs for parasite control, vitamin B12 testing/ supplementation, and fly strike control.

Deer

- **Velvetting begins** – ensure facilities are prepared.

Equine

- **Stay alert for any spring grass related issues** – high sugar levels can alter behaviour and even precipitate episodes of colic.
- As the weather heats up the ground will be starting to harden so maintain sport horses on joint supplements such as NV Halo Injection or Equinate™ Injection to aid in preventing joint problems.
- Continue regular drenching of young animals, particularly yearlings – as a general rule treat six weekly through to the end of summer.



Maintaining milk quality

Ryan Carr

In terms of milk quality (mastitis and somatic cell count) we like to think of two distinct times, “calving time” and “the rest of lactation”. Considering we are now into “the rest” how can you go about controlling or reducing mastitis in your herd today and through to the end of the season? Below are some recommendations.

MILKING TECHNIQUE

A calm, consistent milking routine will allow cows to be relaxed and relaxed cows let down faster, reducing cup crawl and total milking time. Cup quickly and carefully to minimise air rushing into cups. Too much air entering the cups can cause vacuum fluctuations which can lead to cup slip and cause “impacts”.

Impacts occur where residual milk in the bowel of the cluster shoots up and contacts teats, taking bacteria with it and spreading infection. Similarly cup removal is a risk for creating these impacts. The correct way to remove cups is to kink the long milk tube to stop the vacuum and allow the cups to start dropping off before you pull the cluster away. Avoid over-milking cows. Over-milking causes teat damage which can greatly increase the risk of mastitis. Avoid machine stripping (applying weight to the cluster or individual cups). This has been shown to increase mastitis whereas leaving a small amount of milk in the udder has been found not to.

TEAT SPRAYING

Correct teat spraying is the single most effective thing you can do to reduce mastitis in your herd. Mix up teat spray to the manufacturers guidelines and only make up enough to last three days or less. Teat spray needs to cover every part of the teat that the cup liner touches, not just the tip, to kill bacteria that has contaminated the teat during milking. The volume required to achieve good coverage is 20ml per cow per milking, for manual sprayers and 30ml per cow per milking, for automatic sprayers.

Do a quick calculation and see if the amount of teat spray you use per milking is enough to ensure correct teat coverage.

PICKING UP AND TREATING CLINICAL CASES QUICKLY

Use the presence of hard, swollen quarters, spikes in bulk milk somatic cell count (BMSCC) and clots on the filter sock to monitor for clinical cases. Mastitis can be hard to cure at the best of times - finding and treating them early is your best chance. Drum the importance of looking out for mastitis into your staff (and yourself!). If your BMSCC is getting out of control consider routinely stripping cows before cups on. A stripping plan could be something like:

- If BMSCC is greater than 250,000 cells per ml strip one quarter every milking (alternate through each quarter so every quarter is checked after four milkings)
- If BMSCC is greater than 350,000 cells per ml strip every quarter, every milking

Many of these are common sense, and you have probably heard of all of them before, but achieving excellence in milk quality is the sum of doing all the little things right, consistently!

Coccidiosis in calves

Craig Dixon

Coccidia is a protozoan parasite that can cause severe intestinal damage leading to diarrhoea and weight loss in calves up to around 12 months of age, and it can have a prolonged impact on calf health and growth.

Common signs include straining/raised tails, blood/mucus in the faeces, abdominal pain (kicking at the gut), a rough coat and "pot-bellied" appearance. Such signs can often be mistaken for worms and treated as such – unfortunately worm drenches do NOT work against Coccidia!

Up to 100% of calves on a property may be affected. Disease outbreaks are often precipitated by the stress of weaning and/or

inclement weather, hence it's commonly seen in the late spring/early summer, but it's also possible for the disease to occur in calves as young as two to four weeks of age that are still being reared indoors.

Diagnosis is easily determined by microscopic examination of the faeces (similar to worm faecal egg counting) looking for coccidial oocysts (eggs).

As with most things, prevention is always better than trying to cure! Tips to help include:

- Use strategic grazing management – paddocks used year after year for calves will likely have high levels of contamination. From weaning, put calves on a grazing rotation - moving them regularly onto fresh breaks to help limit exposure whilst they build immunity.
- Avoid overstocking of calves in and around the calf shed, particularly in the late spring if weather conditions are warm and wet, as such an environment is highly favourable for oocyst (egg) survival.

- Most calf meals/pellets contain a coccidiostat (anti-coccidial drug) such as Rumensin™ (monensin) or Bovatec® (lasalocid) which will be protective provided they are eating an adequate amount – generally speaking at least 1kg/ calf/day. Reduce meal feeding gradually after weaning to allow calves to develop resistance to Coccidia - feed meal daily at weaning, then reduce to alternate days, then out to once weekly feeding (which is still beneficial).

- If using a milk replacer consider using one that contains a coccidiostat, such as Deccox® (decoquinate).

However, coccidiostats are NOT the complete answer to prevention - management practices that allow for over-crowding, dirty environments, manure build up, feeding at ground level, faecal contamination of feed and water etc all contribute to the challenge, so should also be addressed.

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