

Festive season is upon us

Another year nearly done and dusted and the festive season is here to be enjoyed.

All of us here at V.E Vets hope you will have an enjoyable and relaxing time over Christmas and New Year.

With AI finished, maize and turnips planted, there is probably only some hay-making coming up that might get in the way between milkings or time off from the farm at some stage over the summer.

Dogs and Cats

The flea season is here now so prevent unnecessary itching and scratching by using Frontline or Advantage.

Summer is the predominant time we see most cases of Parvo and Distemper outbreaks so ensure your dog is up to date with its inoculation. If your dog or cat is going to spend some time at a boarding cattery or kennels during the holidays, then they will need a current vaccination certificate before they will be allowed onto the premises.

Clinic Hours

The flea season is here now so prevent



Fly strike in sheep

Blowflies are attracted to sheep by odours, urine, faeces, bacterial rot. Within hours of laying eggs, maggots hatch and grow to full size in 3 - 4 days. These first invaders produce odours to attract more flies. Untreated the animal could die, but not before it has nurtured anything up to half a million maggots.

Successful prevention of flystrike in a flock of sheep requires attention to a variety of factors.

Animal Husbandry

Reduce flies being attracted to sheep by paying attention to:

- dagging/crutching
- docking - wounds attract more flies.
- treatment of strikes
- Dermatophilus ("Fleece rot" or "Lumpy Wool")
- fleece length (time shearing so the sheep has short wool at fly time)
- footrot

Reduce scouring or illthrift by:

- grazing management
- worm monitoring and drenching when/if necessary

Reduce flock susceptibility characteristics by:

- culling (tendency to fleece rot or frequent strike/mushy wool/breech wrinkles).
- selective breeding (to avoid above features).

Dipping

This is one of the most technical procedures undertaken on the farm.

Preparation:

- empty sheep (faeces absorb chemical)
- use technique appropriate to wool length, age of animal, and required protection (plunge, shower, jet, low volume spray or pour-on)
- check equipment function (nozzles clear, boom rotating etc) - know exact volume of sump or plunge dip and supply tanks.



- select chemical (short or long term, cheap or expensive, plus lice treatment or just fly)
- read label (dilution, replenishment, wool length, saturation times, safety and associated procedures)

Technique

- pump at appropriate pressure
- timing/saturation/thorough wetting; one minute per week of wool growth; check with blotting paper/cigarette paper/water activated pencil
- clean dirt traps regularly (absorbs chemical)
- reduce draining time - stops further contamination and dilution
- empty sump regularly (keeps dip clean and concentration consistent).
- replenishment/reinforcement - keeps dip concentration consistent (check label for rates)
- use protective clothing
- dispose of dip waste in a way that reduces risk to stock, micro-organisms, and human safety

Early pregnancy testing

Early pregnancy testing done during January gives good information on which cows will calve early and late, enabling better management decisions regarding dry-off dates and wintering strategies. With the need for correct calving dates for potential induction cows, knowing these animals are not in calf in the first 6-8 weeks of calving is important.

Toxoplasmosis in sheep - the hidden abortionist

With research indicating that toxoplasmosis is now found in all major sheep breeding areas in New Zealand, vaccination against this problem makes more sense than ever before.

Not only does toxoplasmosis sometimes go unrecognised as a cause of abortion in sheep, also missed is the financial cost to the farmer. The loss of a lamb through an abortion is only part of the cost, the other is when fertile ewes (because of an early undetected abortion) are culled because they are assumed to be barren.

A single vaccination against Toxoplasmosis gives ewes a lifetime protection - it's that simple. Field trials have also shown that vaccination can increase lambing percentages by up to 8% (average national increase of 3%) and decrease the incidence of dry ewes by an average of 13.5%. It has also been confirmed that lambs are more viable with heavier birth weights.

Facial Eczema

Depending on the location that your farm is in and the type of weather we experience, this disease can start becoming a problem from sometime in January onwards.

Zinc can be administered by drench, water troughs or the boluses. The beauty of the boluses is that they last for 6 weeks before requiring another.

The fungicide Mycotak used to spray over the pasture works well and the general comments from clients who use it is that the animals appear better than those at a different property that are only dosed with zinc. If the weather is poor when the second application is due, ie too windy or wet, animals will need protection with zinc until the next spray can be put on. This scenario did happen last season and Murphy's Law being what it is, coincided with the peak challenge of the facial eczema spores.

Neosporosis abortion in cattle - risk reduced

Intervet Ltd has developed the first and only vaccine in the world used to aid in the reduction of abortions caused by Neosporosis.

Neosporosis was first isolated in 1988 by which time it was having significant effects throughout the world, New Zealand being no exception.

It is a parasitic disease that can trigger spontaneous abortions in cattle - sometimes a few isolated cases but at other times abortion storms will move through a herd causing huge losses. The infection, caused by the coccidia *Neospora caninum*, primarily affects the brain and nervous system of the developing calf causing the foetus to be either aborted or born with abnormalities. Cows may abort at any stage of pregnancy,

but most *Neospora* canine-induced abortions occur at four to seven months in both beef and dairy cattle. Calves that are carried full term don't always show signs of the disease but it is estimated that 80% of healthy calves born from infected dams are also infected.

The vaccine protects against the vertical transmission from cow to calf. It is given as early as possible in the first trimester of pregnancy followed by a second dose three to four weeks later.

A two-dose revaccination is recommended for subsequent pregnancies.

Young Stock Management Tips

Your newly weaned calves are in a relatively delicate state after weaning.

They are susceptible to a range of diseases and animal health problems that older stock are more resistant to. Right now they need good husbandry, good nutrition, good parasite control and vaccinations so that the risks they face are largely overcome. Over the next few months you need to pay attention to the following:

Parasites

Regular effective treatment combined with the use of "safe" pasture from weaning until first winter is the key. Points to consider are drench family, application system (pour-on, injection, oral or sustained release bolus) and level of worm contamination on the pasture. Consult with your vet to determine

the best programme for your property. Start your drench programme. Worms are the main production-limiting factor in young stock.

Ask us about the appropriate products to use.

Feeding and Grazing

- Aim for continuous growth throughout the whole period.
- "Scatter grazing" 2 - 3 calves per paddock. Very effective at producing even well grown heifers and with minimum need for parasite control.
- Mob stocking - very effective if calves are moved daily, preferably in front of the herd.
- Concentrates may be used strategically to maintain growth rates above target levels.

Vaccinations...

BVD - This is a viral infection in many herds in NZ. Causes poor growth, and immune suppression such that the calves can be susceptible to other disease. Calves can be protected by a vaccination programme that starts when they are about 3-4 months old (i.e. now) with a booster after a month. If you are going to send your calves off to a grazing company we recommend that you vaccinate them first.

Clostridial Diseases - ie blackleg and tetanus etc. Blackleg can be a cause of sudden unexplained deaths in a mob.

Leptospirosis - To prevent animals becoming infected, which may result in abortions. Also to prevent farmers, vets and other stock handlers contracting the disease (a serious OSH issue).

Pinkeye - a vaccine is available and is effective if the cause is due to the cattle strain *Moraxella bovis*. However it can also be caused by the sheep strain *Mycoplasma ovis* for which there is no vaccine. We recommend that a swab is taken from a couple of affected animals before they receive any treatment to determine if the organism is due to the cow or sheep strain.

Is a very contagious infection that is already occurring on some properties at the moment. This is characterised by weepy eyes, light sensitivity, and eye ulceration (eyes may become creamy or opaque). The infection is painful, and may cause permanent blindness if not treated. Treatment involves identification and isolation of affected cattle and treating with suitable antibiotics.