

SHEARING CHALLENGES

With the intense rainfall events we have experienced in the last 12 months, some farmers have been confronted with exposure episodes for shorn sheep, mostly lambs.

Whenever shearing is taking place managers need to have a plan for adverse weather events. There are a few points worth noting when considering weather threats.

Rain with wind is much more challenging to shorn sheep than rain alone. Even in quite mild conditions intense rain with strong winds can be life threatening. Hence the need for good shelter, ideally with topography which will cause sheep to drift into shelter rather than being forced to walk into more exposed areas. Sheep don't walk into wind to find shelter!!

Empty, hungry sheep are most prone to exposure. If conditions are at all threatening, ensure sheep are let back on to good feed as soon as possible after shearing.

Getting wet then dry greatly enhances a shorn sheep's tolerance to the cold, whether or not a cover comb was used. A trick used by old timers was to hose down sheep after shearing if threatening weather was expected in the next few days.

Don't be scared to bring sheep back under cover unless they are heavily pregnant when metabolic issues become a threat.

If you are ever caught in an exposure event the best course of action is:

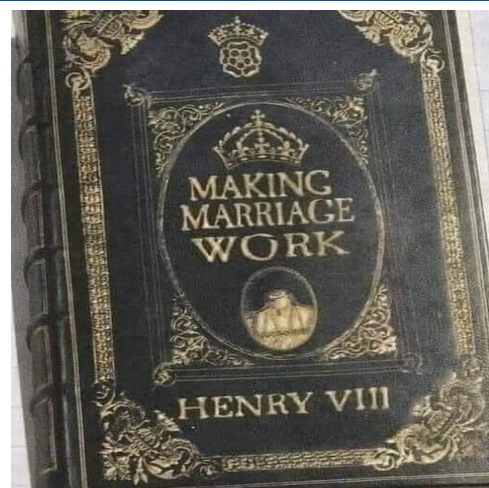
- immediately move sheep into the best shelter possible (ideally covered yards). If stock are already in the best possible shelter, do not disturb them.
- Don't focus on sheep that are already down. These animals have severe exposure and are likely to die. Concentrate on slow moving, lethargic animals that you can still move to shelter or a shed.
- For very cold animals that are down, covering with blankets or wool / dags can help to stop heat loss. If an area can be heated with outdoor heaters, even better! These animals can then be treated with an energy supplement like Ketol, but don't expect miracles!!

With today's weather apps and rain radars most challenging weather can be predicted and planned for!!

Rumour has it we are heading into winter, although if it wasn't for the mud it doesn't feel that way when the sun is out!! Early lambing ewes are being scanned now and initial results are generally very pleasing so here's hoping the trend continues over the season.

A reminder about our Golf Tournament for members on Thursday June 29, and the Dairy Farmer Seminar Tuesday July 11.

Talking about seminars, on Wednesday I attended Beef and Lambs 'Feedback Meeting' in Hunterville. Six farmers, that's right, 6 farmers showed up!!! So I guess I'm pretty much alone trying to sink the waka and you all believe you should contribute 20% of your profitability helping 5 million people save the planet, while 2 billion Chinese and Indians don't give a toss. (Not that I blame them!!) Let's not think about farm environment plans, winter grazing consents, SNA's, etc!!



RAPID REINFECTION

Normally, once we head into May, worm challenges are less intense and drenching intervals can be extended for lambs. Lambs with good genetics for worm resistance / tolerance also start to display an ability to deal with worm challenges.

This year's wet summer and autumn has been a paradise for worms and their life cycles. The numbers of infective larvae on pasture are still very high on many properties. Lambs are still getting rapidly re-infected with worms post drenching .

Don't extend drench intervals without assessing the worm challenge on your property. This can best be done by taking faecal samples 28 days after drenching for a faecal egg count.



Bilingual road signs seem to be the topic of the month. Here are a few that could be considered...



SELENIUM ISSUES

We have recently confirmed severe selenium deficiency in 2 lines of lambs. These lambs had disappointing weight gains despite recent drenches with Zolvix and Startect.

The problem is neither Zolvix or Startect have selenium in them like other combination drenches that are normally used. We can not add selenium to Zolvix or Startect. So if you are using Zolvix or Startect for two or more drenches in a row you may need to consider options for getting selenium into your lambs.

COPPER DEFICIENCY

It's that time of the year again when the temperature drops (usually), and grass growth slows (typically). I'm not sure what season this year's Autumn is trying to emulate but winter will be upon us soon enough. With winter just around the corner it is important we discuss copper supplementation. Copper is essential for the almost every body system in sheep and cattle. Low copper can result in ill thrift, immune suppression, anaemia, diarrhoea, rough looking coats, poor growth rates and poor reproduction (higher empty rate). Adult cattle in late pregnancy, and growing calves, have higher requirements for copper and are more prone to copper deficiency.

Sheep are not as susceptible to copper deficiencies as cattle. Quite a few drenches contain copper as an additive but this is of very limited benefit. Sheep are more susceptible to copper toxicity. Assessing the flock's status is crucial before supplementation with an injectable form.

Copper deficiencies are caused by either not enough copper in feed, which is very rare; or by an increase other elements found in soil which prevent copper being absorbed in the rumen. These elements are molybdenum, sulphur, iron and zinc. Molybdenum levels in the pasture are highest and copper levels are lowest in winter resulting in winter being the biggest risk period for copper deficiency.

Testing copper levels in late autumn is the perfect time as over winter and spring is when the amount of copper in pasture is lowest and when the demand for copper is highest (late gestation). This can be performed via liver biopsy or blood tests. Liver biopsies are the best sample to see if copper stores are about to run low in both sheep and cattle. Liver samples can be collected via liver biopsy or through cull cows at the works, please contact the clinic prior to truck coming so a form can go with them and the works can be notified.

Copper supplementation can be achieved through long acting injection or copper capsules. Copper capsules slowly release copper over a few months and are ideal for use in weaners in Autumn. The copper injection is perfect for boosting copper levels in adult stock prior to winter and can be repeated in late spring. Copper level in the grass is usually adequate over summer so supplementing during the summer is not advised unless the animals have been tested. Do not give a copper injection within 6 months after a capsule unless the animals have been tested first. All injections must be under the skin only and never into the muscle.

Copper toxicity is a risk using injectable products if an animal inadvertently gets two doses or is dosed too high for its weight. Be cautious when using these products. Also, if feeding out PKE, this feed naturally has high copper so please ask a vet prior to supplementing.



CANINE INFECTIOUS RESPIRATORY DISEASE (AKA KENNEL COUGH)

We all know how frustrating an outbreak of kennel cough can be, resulting in lost days at work for your dogs, missing out on dog trials and just the sheer frustration of having sick and coughing dogs.

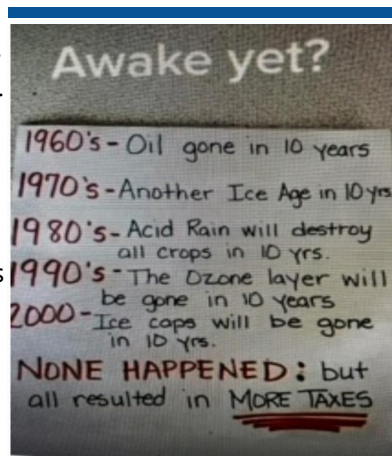
Like colds in people, it can be caused by multiple different viruses and sometimes bacteria. It has an incubation of 2-3 days, sometimes up to 10 days depending on the pathogen.

Dogs often present with a high-pitched and hacking cough. Retching and gagging may occur at the end of the cough and be mistaken for something caught in the dog's throat. Dogs may also sneeze and have eye and/or nasal discharge. Signs are usually self-limiting and recovery is complete in about 10 days. As the disease is usually of viral origin, antibiotics are infrequently used unless there is the likelihood of a secondary bacterial infection (i.e. pneumonia which is rare except in puppies and old dogs).

Vaccination is key to controlling kennel cough; however, it is important to note that vaccines do not exist for several of the pathogens responsible for kennel cough.

Vaccination against the pathogens does not produce complete (sterilizing) immunity. Vaccinated dogs can still become infected, transmit, shed microorganisms, and develop clinical signs; however the clinical course and severity of the disease is usually much reduced.

Just like if you had a cold, it is important to rest your dog. Isolate it from healthy dogs and if they are unvaccinated, call us as we may be able to vaccinate the rest of your crew with an intranasal vaccine to try and prevent severe/long lasting disease spreading through your kennels.



AFTER HOURS VET

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Monday to Friday

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