HVC
YOUR CLUB
Nov 2026

Nothing Changes??

It is Monday morning and after weeks of promises and talking things up, aided by a little split voting, it appears we have a government where nothing has really changed! I guess we should be grateful that ridiculous promises and costings didn't end up swaying the population and a new party that stood for a whole lot of things and then didn't, appears to have made it into the Beehive but not in a king maker role.

The next few weeks will be interesting as Whinny no doubt gets up to his normal tricks and Luxon again attempts to herd stray cats and keep his job. At least the farming gods continue to treat us well, so I guess we keep the country afloat for the next few months and watch the circus performance in Wellington.

Early Weaning



With current very strong fat ewe prices, I have had enquiries about the best time to wean lambs. There is plenty of NZ data that indicates lambs can be very successfully weaned at around 70 days of age, weighing 20+ kgs. By this time ewe milk production is dropping significantly and continued good growth rates in lambs is dependent on high quality feed and its availability.

If you have limited high quality feed available, weaning lambs so they are not competing with ewes for this feed can be a good option. It also allows you to take advantage of the strong mutton schedules that occur before works ewe availability also ramps up. Having lambs weaned gives greater flexibility in terms of reacting fast as store lamb prices and schedules can alter quickly in the lead up to the New Year. Lighter conditioned ewes at an early weaning date are easier to build back up again. That same good quality feed that makes lambs grow pre Christmas will also maximise condition gains on light ewes, a task that can be very difficult to do post Christmas if things turn dry and challenging, or feed quality is lost.

Beating Worms

Many of our clients do not routinely drench their ewes pre-lamb (or any other time of the year for that matter), rather they now opt to target drench light ewes only.

Where we are involved in the monitoring of ewe flocks, it has been interesting to follow, the changes in faecal egg counts. Where ewes were well fed over winter pre-lambing FECs were generally low. Egg counts in ewe flocks did rise considerably over lambing and up to docking. This is consistent with what we know about the loss of ewe immunity to worms as they lamb and lactate.

What we also know, is that where ewes are well fed over lambing, they can regain immunity rapidly and suppress worm burdens and egg output. In the good spring that we have had, this has certainly occurred and many well bred ewe flocks are once again showing low levels of egg shedding.

On a different topic, we get a lot of questions around pre-weaning drenching and whether it is necessary. The answer varies from farm to farm depending on ewe stocking rates, sheep to cattle ratios, genetics, and anything else that can affect worm challenges on pasture at this time of the year.

What we do know is that maintaining lamb growth rates to weaning is a very important factor in determining farm profitability. For many of you, minimising any worm challenge that could affect lamb growth rates is probably a good idea. An effective worm drench 3 to 4 weeks out from weaning is likely to be warrented. Doing FECs from lambs now will be a useful tool in your decision making process.

Christmas Hams

Hams will be available this year with purchases of Elanco dips and drenches. Contact the clinic to order yours while stocks last.



AGM Thanks

Thanks to everyone who attended our AGM on Tuesday night. As usual it was a very enjoyable evening and Hadleigh was a very entertaining speaker. It is always great to catch up with our members over a drink or two. Thank you to the ladies from the Playcentre who continue to make us a delicious supper to enjoy.

Faecal Egg Counts: Fresh Samples, Reliable Results!

Please remember these steps for collecting faecal egg counts (FECs):

- Collect around a desert spoon of fresh faeces, from 10 - 12 different animals, keeping each sample separate. A good way to do this is putting the samples in an egg carton.
- These samples can be collected by boxing the animals up for a short period and then collecting the fresh samples from the ground.
- Label the egg carton with your name, mob details and the date of their last drench. (Bring in a completed form if you have one.)
- **Get samples into the clinic promptly. If you are unable to get them into the clinic, then put the egg carton in a bread bag, seal the bread bag and keep it in the fridge**. In warm conditions, eggs in moist faeces exposed to air can start hatching within just two hours, giving a falsely low count. If you are unable to get the samples into the clinic straight away, if they are wrapped in plastic and kept in the fridge, they can last for 2 days before testing.

When should you check?

For a **drench check**, aim for 10 days after drenching, with 9-13 days generally acceptable for routine checks. If the drench has worked, we expect no eggs at this stage.

For **ongoing worm monitoring**, checking around **28 days after drenching** can help assess whether burdens are building again. Timing depends on the season, pasture conditions and the drench used. Please phone us if you're unsure when to sample, or need help interpreting your results.



Are High Producing Dairy Cows Harder To Get In Calf??

This theory is often fired about based on the idea that high producing cows produce so much milk they close down reproductive functions and are slow to get in calf.

In my years in Hunterville I have seen individual cow production and herd production increase hugely. A lot of this has been the result of concentrate feeding aided by genetics. However, reproductive rates have not crashed although they haven't necessarily got a lot better either!

Recent work from LIC demonstrated that the average reproductive performance of the top 25% of dairy herds averaging 473 kg MS when measured by 6 week in calf rate, 3 week submission rates, conception rates and empty rates, was higher than that of the bottom 50% of dairy herds that averaged 364 kg MS.

The take home message is if you feed your cows and manage them correctly using the many tools available to you, high performing cows don't struggle to get in calf.

Sharpen Your Earmarkers Now!

We often get farmers in a mad panic just before docking when they get their gear out and realise their earmarkers are blunt! To avoid potential 4 weeks delays at the busy time of the year for the sharpeners, get your earmarkers into us now and they will be nice and sharp when you come to use them next docking.

Buying Rams

We have just about completed our pre-sale inspections of stud rams for our ram breeding clients.

While the rams you buy have been checked, it may be 2-3 months before you actually make your purchase and things can change in this time. When buying rams, as well as looking at the figures and the rams topside, make sure you look underneath at the most important part!

Check testicles have good size and tone and are not carried high. We often check rams when they are still quite immature. At this time the testicles can be quite small. We assume they will develop as the ram matures. In a small number of cases this may not occur, so always check underneath before you load them on your ute!



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