

**SHEEP**

MARCH 2016

# VET NEWS

SHEEP MEASLES

VACCINES

TOOTH WEAR



PHOTOS BY RICHARD HILSON

**VET**services  
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# SHEEP MEASLES

CAROLINE ROBERTSON

Sheep measles (*Taenia Ovis*), unlike true hydatids (*Echinococcus granulosus*), has no human health risks, but its importance lies in the fact that it causes unsightly cysts throughout the carcass of the infected animal. No consumer wants to buy meat with visible parasitic cysts and in today's competitive environment we cannot afford to produce meat like this. It does somewhat shatter our clean green image!

Sheep measles is not someone else's problem, it is everyone's, whether we breed replacements or buy in lambs. As producers of some of the best meat in the world we have responsibility.

Sheep measles is caused by a tapeworm (*Taenia Ovis*). The sheep eat the tapeworm egg that is on the pasture and cysts then develop in the muscle of the sheep. If this infected meat is then fed uncooked or unfrozen to a dog the adult tapeworm develops in the dog's gut. This takes about 35 days and the adult tapeworm then starts to produce eggs that are passed in the dog's faeces onto the pasture for the next sheep to pick up, thus completing the cycle.

The real disaster is the number of eggs that a tapeworm can produce – up to 250,000 per tapeworm per day. As a dog can host two or three adult tapes at any one time in their gut, one infected dog may shed 750,000 eggs per day onto the pasture! These eggs are really tough, last months on pasture and can be wind-blown or carried on tyres or feet for vast distances. Do not underestimate the ability of tapeworms and their "offspring" to get about your farm.

The only way to maintain control of sheep measles is to have a control programme.

## **Key Steps to ensure sheep measles control on your farm:**

**Only feed dogs cooked or frozen meat and offal** Meat and offal needs to be heated to a core temp of 72 degrees to ensure all cysts are killed (as a rule of thumb meat should be brown throughout with no tinges of pink) or frozen at minus 10 degrees Celsius for 7 days.

**Clean up dead sheep quickly** and put into dog proof offal holes.

**Beware of your pet dog** as these guys usually have the freedom to roam and scavenge and can be a major source of contamination.

**Treat all dogs on the property monthly.** Treatments have to be 4 weekly to break the 35 day tapeworm lifecycle, longer intervals will not be effective (eg 3 monthly!!)

**Pet dogs and the pet dogs in farm cottages** should be included in the farm program to make it effective. These dogs often have more opportunity to scavenge and get infected.

**Visiting dogs** of contractors, casual staff and friends need to have been treated in the last month or they can wipe out all your control with just one pooch -**remember that one dog pooch could mean 750,000 eggs left behind on your farm.**

**Join the Vet Services tape worm control programme** where we automatically mail to you monthly sheep measles dog worm tablets and once every 6 months a general wormer to maintain the health of your dogs.

# GRAIN FEEDING AND TOOTH WEAR IN STOCK

RICHARD HILSON

Hawke's Bay is usually blessed with large quantities of feed grain through the significant areas of maize and barley grown locally. These are easily sourced at reasonable prices and they are simple to transport and store for use as stock feed.

Their use as stock feed supplements continues to increase too, with increasing use as drought feeds for ewes at mating time, as winter feed for deer and as routine in-shed feeds for dairy cows. We devote a lot of veterinary time to repeated warnings and messages about the risk of grain overload when feeding stock and about the best ways to adjust stock to these feeds. Grain feeding is a routine procedure on many farms and it is done well.

A topic that often pops up is the issue of teeth wear in animals that are eating lots of grain and for some owners of livestock it appears to be a reason to avoid using grain or a reason to feed out small quantities for a short period of time only. Hearing sheep eating maize, with the whole mob making horrendous crunching noises, makes for some tough listening!

I have spent a lot of time looking in the mouths of production animals, especially sheep and deer, relating the amount of wear to what I know about how the animals are fed. Without applying a scientific study to the subject, it would appear that grain per se is not a significant factor in teeth wear, despite the folklore...

On a most basic level, the teeth we most often look at for wear (and for culling purposes) will be the incisor teeth. These teeth are not getting much work when ruminants eat grain as these teeth are normally used to nibble and cut grass or browse. The cheek teeth are doing all the work and making all the noise when grain is consumed, so it is very unlikely that grain wears down incisors. Consider also that in most cases the animals will Hoover

up their daily grain ration in a few short minutes, not a long time in the context of a day's eating for a ruminant.

Which brings us to the other big issue with teeth wear- simply, lots of use. The tougher the tucker, the harder it is to harvest, the more that needs to be harvested and the more that the incisor teeth must wear. If animals have to eat poor quality feed and spend the large part of a day doing so, then teeth must wear. Inevitable. Do not be under any illusions about what constitutes "tough tucker" either as the period that you will be grain feeding will either be late summer/early autumn with a Big Dry spell going on, or in winter when feed is short- that feed will not be as easy to eat as lush and nutritious spring feed.

The final consideration is dust and dirt. I have observed vastly different rates of teeth wear in deer grazing either summer dry properties or summer safe properties, to the extent that stags and hinds in wetter climes may have decent teeth until maybe twice the age of their lowland mates. Allowing for different feeding regimes, I believe that dust has a large role here, especially when feed is low. The abrasive quality of dirt is well known and it is on or in every mouthful of grass, every day of a dry summer.

Having spent much time mouthing aged ewes and making decisions on their behalf if they should stay another year to breed more lambs, accelerated teeth wear answers at least some of the reason that ewes with good teeth in December can become ewes with bad teeth by the time scanning time comes around in mid winter, notably after a hard dry summer.

So don't blame grain for all that teeth wear. Instead, see if you can find space for it within your feeding systems as a quality supplement for improved stock performance.



# KEEPING UP WITH THE VACCINES

RICHARD HILSON

Things aren't super-rosy down on every farm and when budgets get trimmed a bit, animal health, as a relatively big component of annual farm expenses, often gets some quick cuts made to it. After all, that is much easier to do than negotiate a sweeter interest rate with the bank!

Please ask for advice about what you trim though. We appreciate the need to make things fit a budget and to justify a spend but it is worthwhile being informed about the downside of certain decisions. From our perspective we see volumes of certain products or services dip when fiscal or farming pressure comes to bear, but we also see the fallout from some of those decisions further down the track. It is those consequences that we would rather you were aware of.

When we vaccinate we can lull ourselves into a false sense of security as for all intents and purposes the problem we vaccinate against will appear to "disappear". Unfortunately it may not actually go away though- the requirements for disease expression are often all still there with the animals, the bugs and the right environment. It is just that the animals are better able to avoid the disease as you have helped their immunity by teaching their system what the bugs look like and what to do about them.

When we stop vaccination, the immunity system can lose its memory over time, making animals once again fully susceptible. One very good example was a case I saw in North Canterbury many years ago when the farmer had been regularly vaccinating against campylobacteriosis but decided to stop as he no longer saw any abortion. He continued to run the same animals in the same manner with high winter stocking rates, behind electric fences. Over the next few years the immunity of the entire ewe flock waned and when he had an abortion storm late one winter, 700 of his 2300 ewes lost their lambs. There are many such examples locally too but this one is certainly extreme.

Similarly with salmonella, a bug that is not dissimilar to Campylobacter in many ways. Local experience and thinking has always had this vaccination programme trimmed back to a really practical point whereby only incoming two tooth ewes are vaccinated every year. This allows all ewes on the farm to receive a booster at any time, specifically when an outbreak occurs and we want to confer some strong immunity on the ewe

flock, immediately. In this case a conscious decision is made to wear some small losses at the beginning of an outbreak as the outbreaks are less frequent and less devastating (normally). A quick diagnosis and some rapid action can stop a salmonella outbreak as long as all ewes have been previously sensitised, as described. Yet every year we deal with outbreaks that test everyone involved as they linger on, with a mounting loss of animals, if that two tooth shot is dropped out.

The message here is not about trying to stop you dropping aspects of your animal health programme but rather to seek some advice as you consider what you may drop. It may be that you already vaccinate more than you need to, so we can streamline that. It may be that you over use other products instead or maybe that a better fit exists- that can be quickly sorted too. Or it may be that you can use things in a smarter manner, for example taking advantage of crops to minimise or remove the need for drenching. If you have a need to tinker with your animal health spend, please come and see us to help avoid the catastrophes that seem incumbent with short term decisions and let us see if we can find clever ways to reduce the spend where it will create less risk in the medium and long term.



**REMINDER:** Did your dog get a Lepto vaccination on the dog run? If so it is important that they get a booster vaccination 1 month later to be covered for Lepto.

## FAREWELL

It's time to say goodbye to another couple of long-serving Vet Services stalwarts...

You will probably already be aware that Ivan Bettelheim finished up with us in February, having been with the company since the beginning of 1984- over 32 years. His vast knowledge of products (and product history) as well as his ability to factor in personal aspects of farmers businesses made him invaluable to us all.

Ian Walker is also finishing with us and retires on 31 March after 33 years with the company and the last 15 heading up the operation from the Waipukurau base. Most of you will know Ian or at least know of him- his commercial acumen, coupled with a scientific vet brain, has provided the company with excellent leadership. His skill set, enthusiasm and commitment to VSHB will be sorely missed.



We have a date and venue set for a farewell function on the evening of Thursday 31 March- please contact the Waipukurau clinic if you would like to attend, to assist with catering. Invites to CHB Farmers Veterinary club members and close industry characters and acquaintances will be sent shortly.

# ONCE UPON A TIME...

RICHARD HILSON

Once upon a time there was a ovine lady called Eunice who was no longer a princess. She had been one once, when she had been a pretty hogget and then a beautiful two tooth but now she was feeling somewhat less loved. As she was Earlier Wonderful Eunice she is called EWE.

EWE was forlorn this autumn, the feed was short and dry and it had some awful bugs growing on it. She loved kids and she enjoyed having more than one if she could, despite the fact she was actually a pretty stupid EWE and not too good at counting beyond the number "two". One day, as luck would have it, she nosed past a dry nodding thistle and happened to see a shiny silver shepherd's whistle lying under some barley grass. She licked it, to see if it was worth eating, and bugger me if, in a flash of light, a fairy godmother didn't suddenly appear.

Now sheep don't usually have fairy godmothers. Fairy godfathers are really the order of the day. Oddly enough this fairy godmother was once a bloke called Bruce who was part of a mad family called the Baadashians and he decided he would rather be a fairy godmother. And so he made a few changes and now liked to be called Caitlin or something like that.

Anyway, he was pretty stoked about someone noticing him as it suddenly made him feel like she had a purpose in life. Having so much female perception she noticed that EWE was a bit down in the mouth (even though he initially thought it was because she had no top teeth, so little did he actually know about sheep!). Being so keen to impress, Caitlin offered EWE three wishes as a reward for releasing her from the whistle, which smelled of beer and sheep shit.

EWE was stoked. So she asked to be fed really well so she could tup in excellent condition and have two lambs every year. So Caitlin went "poof" (not because she was a poof but just because that is what all fairy godmothers do when they do spells) and bugger me again if EWE wasn't suddenly knee deep in beautiful green spring grass. Now that worked quite well as EWE really piled on the condition, as she should for a flushing effect, but the days were getting longer, not shorter, so she wasn't able to start her breeding cycle. She was very frustrated and she lost her temper at just the smallest irritating thing.

So she asked Caitlin to send her a mate to see if that would get her going. Well, that was the second wish blown just like that. Along came a mate, a Really Amorous Male, who we shall call RAM, but he was simply not up to it. He too required the day length to be shortening and he just wasn't interested. Mind you, neither was EWE, so it was all a bit of a disaster. They had the feed thing dead right but they sure needed some help with the sheep breeding thing.

By now Caitlin realised she was way out of her depth and needed to do better. She was not helping EWE at all. So she asked a passing Very Educated Type, who suggested she try a bit harder to help EWE achieve her goals in the proper sheep breeding season, which for this all EWES of her breeding and on this class of land and within this region was really mid March to early April.

So Caitlin, aware that EWE had just one wish left, did a bit of research and consulted with this VET. They came up with a plan that should have a happy enough ending. And away she went again-"poof"- and EWE and that disinterested RAM were whisked back to late February. It was pretty hot and the nodder was still there but this time they could see that Caitlin had really laid it on with chocolate and ice cream everywhere. To us humans it looked more like grain and brassica crops really but to a sheep it looked quite stunning.

Problem was that neither EWE nor RAM knew much about the chocolate and ice cream and they raced over to have a good scoff. "No!!!", shouted the fairy godmother, "do not eat too much or I shall turn you into a Pumpkin". She really was no good at this job but by accident she got EWE and RAM to eat a bit more slowly and they became accustomed to this fancy new food. EWE piled on some weight and this was good for her plan to have two lambs later in the year. For some reason RAM really took a liking to her new-found shape and even though she was polled she was also very horny, which he also liked immensely.

Well, the rest is pretty much history. EWE had lots of lambs as she got so well looked after, which was lucky as if she had kept eating that dry rubbish she had before then she was destined to become a mutton flap in some far off land. RAM was stoked but got worn right out as he was very busy with many EWES at the same time. He needed the rest of the year off to recuperate (but that is another story altogether).

What a lovely story. Wonder what the moral is?

March 2016

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# SEASONAL UPDATE

## HASTINGS/NAPIER

You can tell that it's a green summer in the Hastings and Napier regions - the lush grass is serving as an excellent lubricant for the cows' bums whilst pregnancy testing! Normally by the end of February the mixed aged girls are on the real dry stalky stuff but most farmers are struggling to even make a dent in the clean up as it just keeps on raining.

FE spore levels are hovering around the lamb hurting levels in some places but we are hoping that we can mitigate some of the risk by maintaining covers so they aren't grazing down into the danger zone. Please keep a close eye on the website as we are monitoring in many regions and things can change quickly, and perhaps think about getting some samples analysed before grazing paddocks as there can be huge variation in spore levels

## WAIPUKURAU

The coastal farms seem to have dried off considerably over the last 10-14 days. The farmers near the ranges have managed to get a few more millimetres of rain to keep the grass growing. The facial eczema spore counts seem to have stayed static at this stage but may start to increase with the last few lots of

## DANNEVIRKE

What a year to be a cow! Still plenty of feed around the place, although the dry and hot weather has dried a few places out considerably. We have had some nice top-ups though and that has kept a bit of moisture in the ground. Touch wood we continue to get rain and it should be a great autumn, no late drought please!

We are into the thick of scanning cows and have had a large range of results from great to pretty poor. A bit early to say but the dairy results seem to be about average and the early beef scanning seems to be going well. Watch this space!

## WAIRARAPA

In the Wairarapa we have experienced some remarkably hot days, with many topping 30C. At the point of writing we have seen four outbreaks of Salmonellosis in breeding ewes, which tells me the ewes are in pretty good nick! Many of our clients attended the El Nino seminar back in late October and clearly took notice of the "heads up" given by the NIWA staff. By the end of December most had destocked back to the number required for the winter plus replacements. This was an astute move as the pastures, although dry, have hung on quite well until now. We

**HELEN TAYLOR**

even between paddocks. Growth rates might just slow up or one or two in the mob might show signs of FE, but by then its too late to make up that lost production.

Its all comings and goings in the office as we welcome back Clare Ryan from her maternity leave – she is looking very relaxed and tanned, and seems to have the two child household down to a fine art. Sadly though, we will be saying goodbye to young Tom who is off on a tiki tour around New Zealand (which was his original plan...2 years ago). We've certainly enjoyed his enthusiasm and he does tell a great story, but we reckon that we have shown him plenty of the kiwi way and we hope that he'll recount tales of his time in Hawkes Bay with fondness and utilises that kiwi ingenuity he has been practicing so well out here!

**ANYIKA SCOTLAND**

showers so please watch this space. There has been one case of salmonella closer to the ranges. Most farmers are currently happy with the body condition of their ewes. The cow condition is looking great with the scanning starting to get underway.

**JOHNNY ATKINS**

Facial Eczema should be on the radar for those with farms in risky areas. Spore counts have been creeping up and with the warm, humid weather we are currently having, reaching close to 100,000 at local monitoring sites last week. This is usually only a localised issue in our region so if you have areas that are risky then preventative measures should be in place or alternative feed sources should be used. Often, thinking about paddock selection is all that is required. If you want to have pasture samples analysed please talk to us.

**STUART BRUÈRE**

have blood tested numerous ewe flocks for subclinical iodine deficiency and in most cases the levels are in the low/marginal range. This deficiency has been remedied by injecting ewes with Flexidine pre-tup. We are now planning to contact all our beef bull breeders and organise semen evaluation of sale bulls. Stuart attended a bull breeding evaluation training session with Dr Bill Tranter of Malanda, up on the Atherton Tablelands near Cairns at the end of 2014. He has fine-tuned the Australian Cattle Vets system and has examined numerous bulls in the last 15 months.



## Lighter note.....

### MY FAVORITE ANIMAL

Our teacher asked what my favorite animal was, and I said, "Fried chicken."

She said I wasn't funny, but she couldn't have been right, because everyone else laughed.

My parents told me to always tell the truth. I did. Fried chicken is my favorite animal.

I told my dad what happened, and he said my teacher was probably a member of PETA.

He said they love animals very much.

I do, too. Especially chicken, pork and beef. Anyway, my teacher sent me to the principal's office.

I told him what happened, and he laughed, too. Then he told me not to do it again.

The next day in class my teacher asked me what my favorite live animal was.

I told her it was chicken. She asked me why, so I told her it was because you could make them into fried chicken.

She sent me back to the principal's office. He laughed, and told me not to do it again.

I don't understand. My parents taught me to be honest, but my teacher doesn't like it when I am.

Today, my teacher asked me to tell her what famous person I admired most. I told her, "Colonel Sanders."

Guess where I am now...

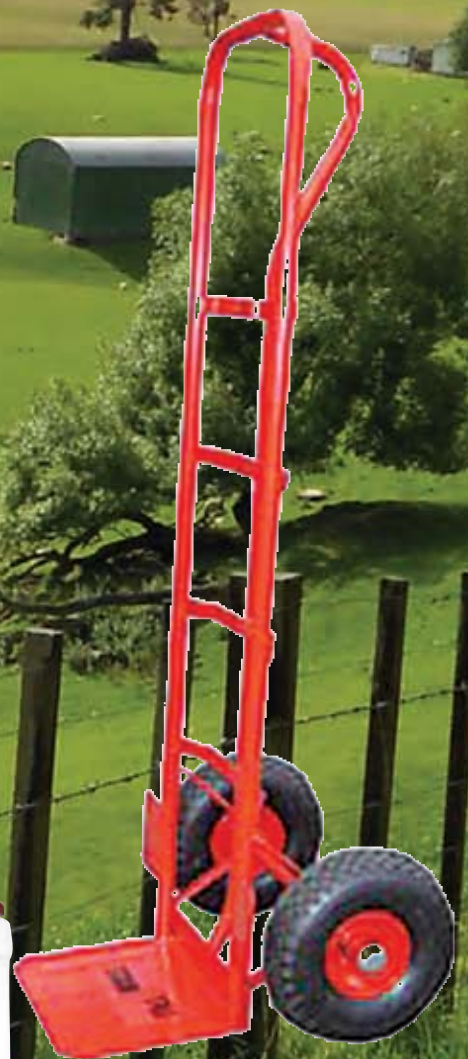


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