

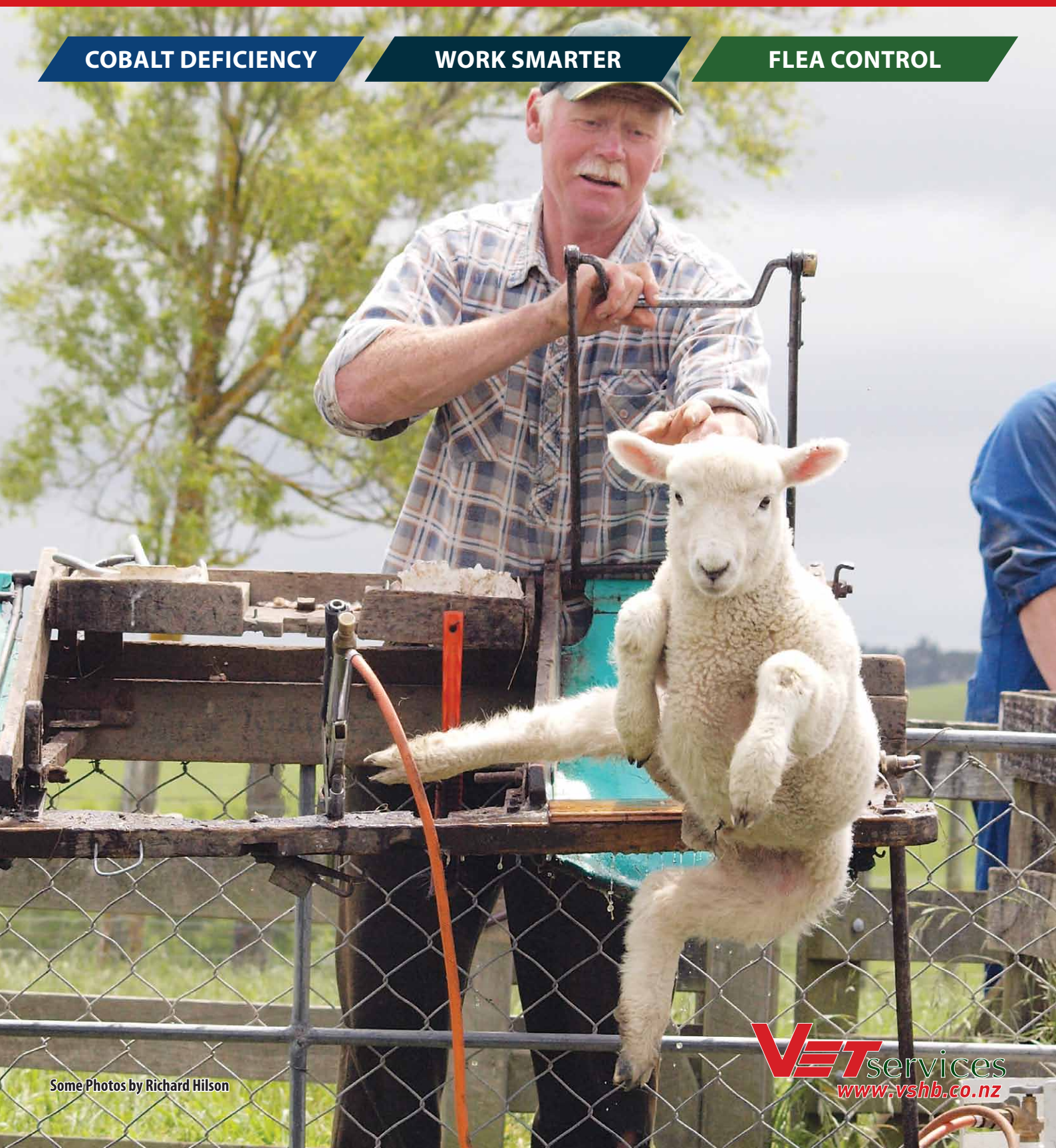
OCTOBER 2017

VET NEWS

COBALT DEFICIENCY

WORK SMARTER

FLEA CONTROL



Some Photos by Richard Hilson

VETservices
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MYCOPLASMA BOVIS: WHAT WILL YOU SEE ON FARM?

GEERT GELLING

With the emergence of *Mycoplasma bovis* in New Zealand it might be useful to have a look at what you might see on farm if this disease emerges in our area as well. *Mycoplasma bovis* is known to cause respiratory disease (pneumonia) and middle ear infections in calves, joint infections in calves and mature animals and, most visible, mastitis in lactating cows.

I have had the opportunity to see *Mycoplasma bovis* infections on a dairy farm overseas and mastitis is the most specific and visible form of *M.Bovis* infections. Cows and heifers with a *M.Bovis* mastitis are moderately sick and have a moderate fever. Often mastitis spreads from one quarter to two, three or all quarters in a few days. Milk from affected quarters could be thick like colostrum or just watery milk with a few clots. Milk production drops significantly.

M.Bovis infections are resistant to antibiotic treatment; no results with whatever mastitis drug will be used. In the days following infection the udder will dry up completely, with lumps of hard

tissue emerging in the udder. In the end the result will be a dry cow with a lumpy udder. Some of the cows with *M.Bovis* mastitis will develop a joint infection as well, most of them in the hock and/or knee joint. These joint infections again are resistant to treatment.

The other forms of the infection (joint infections, pneumonia, middle ear infections) can all be caused by different bugs as well. A post mortem or lab diagnosis will be needed to confirm *M.Bovis*.

M.Bovis in dairy farms will transfer easily from cow to cow through milking (hands/cups/etc.). In the face of this threat we might need a rethink regarding pre-milking hygiene protocols. Affected animals need to be segregated from the herd and need to be milked last, with a full disinfection of the plant following that milking. As cows with *M.Bovis* mastitis will never recover, they will end up being culled.

COBALT DEFICIENCY IN SHEEP

STUART BRUERE

Cobalt deficiency is a reasonably common trace element deficiency in some parts of New Zealand. It was first described in the area of Morton Mains in Southland and later as "Bush sickness" on the volcanic plateau of the North Island. The first cases in New Zealand were reported in 1893. Invariably the animals affected were not thriving and took long periods of time to grow out or remained as small sheep.

Many of New Zealand's soils are geologically young, which means they don't contain the levels of trace elements required for normal functioning of the enzyme systems in the bodies of animals. Cobalt is one of the precursor elements of vitamin B12. Vitamin B12 is "manufactured" by the rumen micro-organisms and is required to convert one of the rumen volatile fatty acids from propionic acid to glucose as an energy source. Essentially the clear message is "no glucose – no growth".

This explains why the most obvious symptom of cobalt deficiency in young sheep is poor growth rates. Other clinical symptoms are lack of appetite, runny eyes and anaemia. As with many trace element deficiency conditions, the occurrence is not consistent between years and by the time a diagnosis is made, there has been significant production loss.

The factors that play a role in the development of cobalt deficiency are the soil types and pasture species being grazed. In Wairarapa, our soil types belong to the "yellow grey earths", which are characterised by low trace element levels. The cobalt uptake varies between plants, so for instance in a study carried out in 1971, under the same conditions, short rotation ryegrass concentrated cobalt at 0.13mg/kg, whereas the white

clover concentrated it at 0.24mg/kg. Anecdotal evidence also supports the view that cobalt deficiency is worse in sheep in wet autumns. This also explains why there is inconsistency with supplementation responses from year to year on commercial farms.

In particularly extreme cases, I have observed daily weight gains of up to 400gm/day once lambs have been supplemented with short acting B12. In more "average type" deficiency circumstances, it would be likely that the daily weight gain would be 60 – 150gm/day.

How do you know your animals have deficient or marginal cobalt levels? You can get 3 fresh liver samples or 15 serum samples from the target group of animals and measure the Vitamin B12 levels.

When are the likely periods of cobalt deficiency? In Wairarapa, we see this condition anywhere between October – May in young sheep (under 12 months of age).

What would you treat deficient/marginal sheep with? There are a range of short and long acting products that can be injected directly into animals. One of the more exciting new introductions to the market is Multine B12, which is a combination 5in1/B12 product that can be used at docking. Smartshot is a long acting B12 injection which may also fit well. Cobalt topdressing is a common way to treat volcanic soils, but this method doesn't appear to function very well on yellow grey earth soils.

If you have any questions and/or comments please give one of our production animal vets a call at your clinic for further details.

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DON'T KILL THEM TOO EARLY: LAMB DRENCHING AT DOCKING

RICHARD HILSON

If there is one time of the Sheep Year that we can be sure about not drenching lambs, it is at docking. While there is often good reason to drench some ewes at docking time, there is really no good reason to drench lambs at the same time. Well, unless you are so disorganised that you have left docking until nearer weaning, maybe, but we hope you wouldn't be that shambolic.

Most lambs at docking have just begun to nibble grass, which presents the first opportunity to pick up any worms. They are not born with a worm burden (unlike puppies might be) and they will not get parasites from their mother's milk either. Nibbling grass means that they don't even ingest many larvae to start with and faecal egg counts in lambs at docking are normally either non-existent or negligible. We are firm on this advice and do not recommend docking drenches for lambs. The only individual exception would be to very, very carefully dose any poorly lambs, those ones with a potty belly and a dirty bum (which are probably mother-less and could do with the best feed available too).

Recently we had a case where twelve of four hundred lambs died soon after docking. The lambs had been given a combination anthelmintic which included selenium. All three products in the drench are potentially toxic when given to young animals, especially if they are under stress or over dosed. The anthelmintic components in this drench, abamectin and levamisole, can be toxic at 3-4x over dose and in this case five kilogram lambs were dosed to fifteen kilograms - easily three times too much. In the same week one of our vets happened to notice that her neighbours were about to start docking and had the exact same

product lined up to dose the lambs with. Fortunately she was able to convince them to not drench the lambs and there is no sad ending to that story.

Remember the old adage - "do no harm" - which applies here. There is a moral to the story too - that product was not sold by Vet Services and a combination like that would never be sold if we were aware it may be used on lambs at docking. This one was sold for that purpose and by the same outlet in both cases. It doesn't matter that a docking drench is a waste of time in the first instance, but is the advice to drench lambs at docking worth the price of twelve dead lambs?



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IS BEEF GETTING A BIT EXPENSIVE? WORRIED ABOUT LOSING ONE?

RICHARD HILSON

When the schedule gets to a certain level, farmers seem to get reluctant to do any home kill and can be seen with perplexed looks on their faces at the meat section in the local supermarket. We seem to have been there with beef for a year or two now and with big lambs worth up to \$150 right now, even a feed of chops is a bit scary.

A parallel issue is the pain endured when good cattle decide to turn up their toes, with a \$1500 animal becoming a pretty much worthless carcase. Maybe it is a good time to think about your feelings about risk aversion and if your cattle animal health programme could do with smartening up? Spring is a great time but there are a few hidden lurgies to keep in mind with your valuable beef animals...

Have you considered the risk of bloat? Tis the season. This is an increasingly common issue and deaths are sudden, without warning and can be in significant numbers. The price of top end treatments such as the Rumensin anti-bloat capsules are more palatable when stock have such high value and the "insurance" factor of one hundred days cover plus added weight gain benefits are finding favour with many finishers. While few farms will do blanket treatments of all animals, these products have real value when treating smaller groups of cattle that may be grazing high risk feeds such as plantain, new grasses with lots of clover, even lucerne. Remember that to get maximum benefit from these capsules you want to be using them across the main bloat "season" and not leaving the call a bit late. Not used them before? We are happy to talk about the pros and cons with you and can even get one of our vets to get you started if you are unsure about the application method.

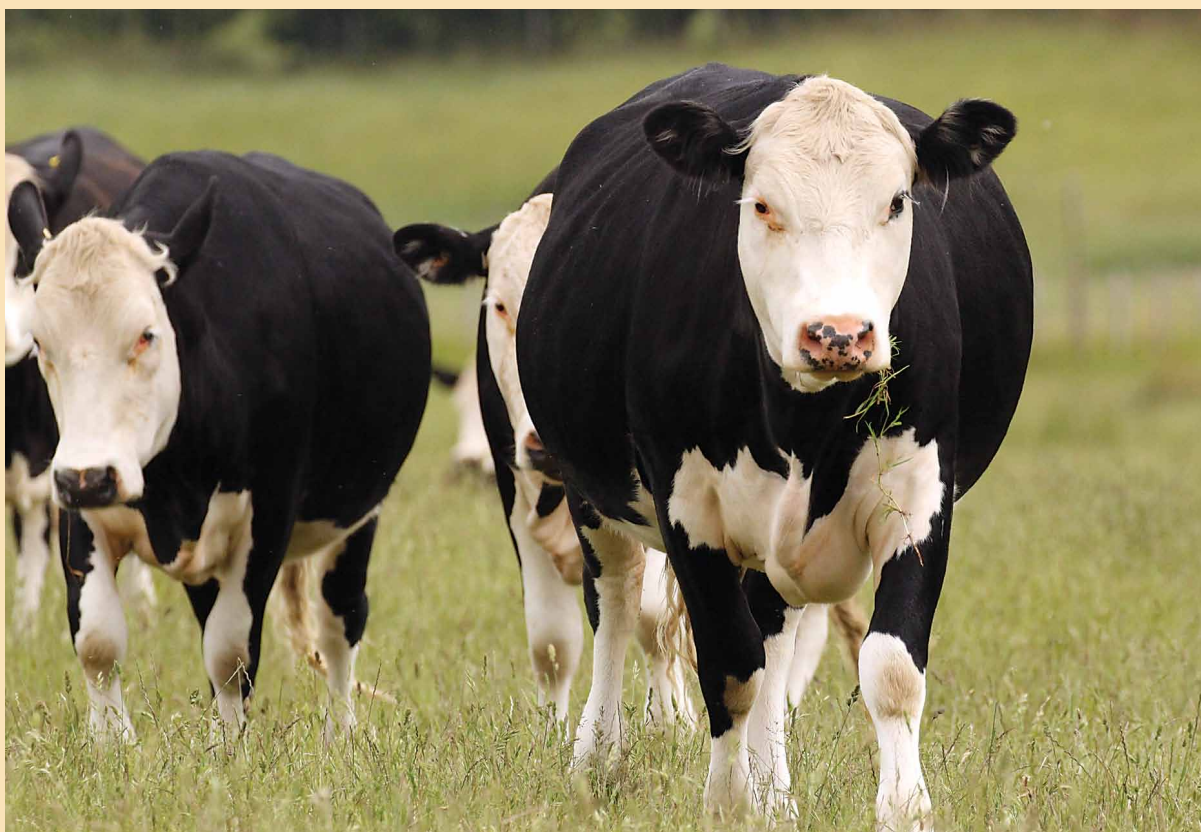
Similarly priced and similarly useful "insurance" are Rumetrace magnesium capsules for cows. Grass staggers has been responsible for some spectacular cow losses, especially in growthy springs when cows lactate really well off super-charged grass. Like bloat, daily treatment regimes are fraught (although not impossible) and when they don't work, stress levels rise fast. These products give longer term cover through the period of peak risk and suit any less-intensive calving systems where cows are hard to get magnesium supplementation to. We had one very difficult case a few years ago when a herd of cows that were very low in magnesium were dropping dead as they rushed downhill to get their daily hay ration with magnesium - the extra excitement was enough to set off staggers and several died. Many of the farmers using these capsules have been doing so for many years and the feedback is always positive.

Spring is also a period of higher risk for clostridial deaths and you are pretty much spoiled for choice now in terms of some very good vaccine options to avoid sudden death in growing stock in

particular. From 5-in-1 to 10-in-1, we are only missing a nine-way option! Young stock on rich feeds are particularly at risk but make sure that you understand the difference between blood poisoning and bloat if it comes to the unfortunate point that losses occur - these two can look very similar so get one of our vets involved to help differentiate the causes. A key factor when blood poisoning cases occur is that there are often significant holes in the vaccination programme. You are paying really good coin to buy in finishing stock so ask the vendor what they have been vaccinated with previously and when it was done - many animals never receive a booster and as such are pretty much unprotected. Remember also that the vaccine-induced immunity doesn't last forever so rising two year animals will need a booster going into their second year. Of all the "top end" treatments available to avoid many tears with cattle deaths, clostridial vaccines are extremely cheap.

And don't forget ostertagiosis. The last one of the spring check list, the sudden development of inhibited larvae that have essentially overwintered in your young cattle can really knock their host around. These cases are actually really hard to predict and I have seen losses of a dozen or more cattle when a period of stress set off an outbreak: once when a brief cold snap coincided with R2 bulls being set stocked in spring and, somewhat paradoxically, when a large number of R1 cattle were lightly set stocked on very good grass in late spring. A significant change in circumstance is all it can take to set off an outbreak and the drenching history usually shows that animals did not get an effective drench in the immediate past, which in many cases was not seen as warranted as animals were in good condition. Type II ostertagiosis is a bit hard to predict so make sure you have considered the various drench options and made a decision regarding the potential risk within your system. Avoiding this issue isn't all about expensive drench options either as some oral drenches will also do a very good job.

Big prices for store stock or finished cattle? Cows worth a bomb? Covering them from some significant causes of loss is not necessarily pricey and in many cases just common sense. We are keen to see them do well, just like you are.



SEASONAL UPDATE

HASTINGS/NAPIER

Spring so far has been pretty great – the grass is away and the lamb-to-ewe ratio remains high. I've had reports of a number of maiden beef heifers birthing twins and even a bone fide report of triplets from a 24 month old Angus - this must be a once in a lifetime occurrence!? We've done our fair share of calvings so far this season but overall no major dramas and plenty of live calves. The dairy cows have been lined up for calving with Springer covers the best I have ever seen and milker rotations are the envy of any Waikato farmer, so great work there - it'll surely pay dividends at mating time.

HELEN TAYLOR

We are getting a few reports of blow flies already which is frightening. Rearing calves has been incredibly challenging this year with very few calves arriving without a good dose of at least one of the bad bugs. Electrolytes and specific treatments have been in short supply nationwide which has made a tough job even more demoralising. Things are coming back on line now though but there will be a growth check as the gut recovers from the damage. Watch out for an early worm challenge in the calves too – as soon as they are on the grass they are eating worm larvae!

WAIPUKURAU

With spring well under way hopefully the flush of grass has made it by October. Vitamin G always tends to help get young stock growing. The lamb crop this season seems to be a bumper

CAMILLE FLACK

so hopefully the work's prices hold as promised. Plan ahead for mating and ensure all your bulls are up for the job.

The ducks all seem to be lining up for a cracker season so fingers crossed no one called Irma has paid us a visit.

DANNEVIRKE

Wet, wet, wet! This has really been taking a toll by late September, surely some sunshine can't be far away....

Despite the wet lambing has been good for most sheep farmers, early lambing mobs especially seemed to strike the better run of weather. It will be interesting to see how docking tallies translate from higher scanning percentages and better ewe condition through the winter, and what sort of toll the increased incidence of bearings has had.

TIM HOGAN

A lot of Dairy platforms are right on the edge so far as feed supply goes courtesy of the latest run of weather. Contingencies in terms of feed supply or management changes need to be implemented early to ensure the mating period starts well.

Clinically, we have been busy and seen some interesting cases, including widespread issues with calf rearing. It will continue to be busy as we look forward to mating for cattle. Please don't hesitate to contact us to discuss your requirements.

WAIRARAPA

Spring is coming or here, by the time this goes to print most of our clients will be well into docking or have finished docking. The mud in early spring led to a greater than normal amount of joint ill in lambs. We also had a lot of cases of cryptosporidiosis in calves and abortions in hoggets and 2ths. Too late to do much about abortions now, but if you did get them at least you know you were not alone. People talk a lot about challenges from toxoplasmosis overwhelming the vaccine. This can happen but in most cases of ovine abortion that we looked at, if the owner had vaccinated against toxo they were aborting from something else. Toxo and campy are the most common causes of abortion in the North Island, if you have vaccinated against these and are

SARA SUTHERLAND

still seeing abortions it is always worth getting these checked out! Thank you to everyone who brought in faecal samples 60-80 days after giving ewes capsules. This useful information will be presented back to you at some point. Before weaning think about doing some faecal egg counts in lambs before giving a pre-weaning drench to see whether drenching is required. Talk to a vet if you have any parasite control questions - now is a good time to make sure your farm parasite control plan is up to spec for the coming season. This will save you money by avoiding using drenches that are ineffective. Don't forget your BVD boosters to heifers pre-mating. Finally, enjoy the sunshine!

OUR VET TEAM

Napier & Hastings:

Clare Ryan, Dave Kruger, Dave Warburton, Helen Crawford, Helen Taylor, Ian Leadbetter, Joao Dib, Mark Matthews, Neil Stuttle, Rachel Griffiths, Richard McKenzie, Roger McKinley, Sharné Boys, Stuart Badger, Veronika Pipe and Vicki Gilchrist.

Waipukurau:

Annelise Enslin, Anyika Scotland, Camille Flack, Caroline Robertson, Geert Gelling, Harry Whiteside, Kathryn Sigvertsen, Lucy Dowsett, Mike Fitzgerald and Richard Hilson.

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