

**SHEEP / CATTLE / HORSES**

**FEBRUARY 2016**

# **VET NEWS**

**SUPPLEMENTARY FEED**

**SKIN ALLERGIES**

**REFUGIA**



PHOTOS BY RICHARD HILSON

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# SUPPLEMENTARY FEEDING OF EWES

MARK MATTHEWS

El Nino is producing severe drought conditions in the South Island and luckily we have been fortunate enough to avoid this up on the East Coast of the North Island. As a result it is unlikely that ewes will need supplementary feeding this summer and autumn but regardless there should be a plan in place in case it is needed later.

The key to supplementary feeding sheep is to introduce the feed way before it is really needed.

Some Tips on Supplementary Feeding Sheep:

- Consider introducing supplements to replacement ewe hoggets as a matter of course on an annual basis during the summer or autumn. Once they know what supplements are you will have no trouble with uptake when they are really needed.
- Introduce supplements early so all are feeding well before 'crunch time'.
- Consider starting with baleage. It has high nutritional value and sheep find it very palatable.
- Once on baleage grain can also be introduced by adding it to the top of the baleage or along side of it. Start with around 50g/day/head for about a week then build it up over the next 7 – 10 days to the full rate. Maize is the most widely used grain locally.
- Salt can be added to the maize (3 kg per 100kg) as an extra attractant for the grain.

- If feeding grain at high levels (1kg) it is important to ensure roughage is also available to reduce the possibility of grain overload.
- There will be some sheep that will not eat grain. These animals need to be identified, drafted off and fed differently.
- Sheep don't like palm kernel and because it is high in copper and can be toxic in some breeds like Texels.
- Maintenance for a 60 kg ewe is around 10MJ of energy per day and if gaining 50g per day it is 13 MJ / day.

## Quick guide:

Maize	88% dry matter	13MJ/ kg dry matter
Baleage	40% dry matter	10MJ/kg dry matter
Meadow hay	85% dry matter	9MJ/kg dry matter

Know how much everything weighs so you know how much to feed.

If using crops assess dry matter (DM). This can be done by cutting and weighing and then making an adjustment for dry matter.

Cut 1 square metre of crop and weigh

Multiply by 10,000 gives total wet matter per hectare

Multiply by DM gives DM per hectare

**For information on feed values, dry matter content etc of various feeds visit [www.dairynz.co.nz/feedsupplements/feed-values/](http://www.dairynz.co.nz/feedsupplements/feed-values/) and if you aren't sure give one of the vets a call.**

# FAECAL EGG COUNT REDUCTION TESTING

SIMON MARSHALL

You should conduct a faecal egg count reduction test every 3 years to assess the levels of drench resistance in the parasites on your property. The test can be done in sheep and cattle. As they have their own set of parasite species that infect them you need to do two separate tests if you have both sheep and cattle on the property.

It is fair to say that the level of FECRT's that are conducted annually in New Zealand are low compared to the number of farms in the country but it is even lower in cattle compared to sheep.

Cattle FECRT's are harder to conduct as it is harder to get the faecal egg counts up to the minimum level but as time goes on it will become even more important to know the resistance status in cattle parasites to manage them effectively. So, I would encourage you to also think about testing the cattle parasites on your farm.

Hopefully if you want to conduct a faecal egg count reduction test this season you may have already started to get a test group of lambs or calves organised. If you haven't don't panic there is still time to do this. Basically you need a group of lambs or calves that have not had a drench for at least 4-5 weeks and have a faecal egg count of >500 eggs per gram for lambs or >150 eggs per gram for calves. Once you have got the test group established the test can begin.

We will visit the farm to conduct the test. All you will need to do is have some weigh scales set up and have the animals on grass in a nearby yard so they are full when we start the process of testing.

The results take some time to be gathered and collated so you can expect a result within approximately 3-4 weeks of starting the test.

The test results are great to have when deciding on drench choice but to make full value of the test and to ensure ongoing sustainability in your parasite control, having a parasite management plan done for the farm is the icing on the cake. This takes 1-2 hours and is really worth doing. It will cover not only drench choice and timing but grazing management, refugia (see Richard Hilsons article), use of crops etc.

So don't hesitate to get into action this year and get a test done. You will not regret it.



TAPEWORM SEGMENTS IN FAECES

# REFUGIA? WHAT THE HELL DOES THAT MEAN?

RICHARD HILSON

You must surely have heard the word by now as it is one of the most important messages to help ensure your drenches stay working for longer. Here we explain the way refugia works and give you a few practical ideas to help use this "simple" technique. The basis of this is aimed at lambs and sheep in general but obviously applies to cattle and deer too.

Refugia is about not drenching every worm and therefore trying to maintain a population of worms that are not exposed to drench. It aims to be productive (control worms and ensure animals grow and perform well) yet also sustainable (so drenches keep being effective for as long as possible).

There are some basic messages about things to avoid and they aren't what we thought 15-20 years ago, when the aim was "no worms".

### **Don't drench entire mobs of stock onto new grass or crops.**

The crops and new grass have virtually no worms present so any worms that survive your drench will contribute the only eggs onto the area they graze. When these hatch and the larvae enter a host, you begin breeding resistant worms with resistant worms. Bad.

### **Options:**

- (a) Drench the animals a few days before they go on the crop. A slight improvement but the animals do need time to pick up worms from the general worm population elsewhere on your farm, the population that is "normal" and hopefully relatively easy to kill.
- (b) Put animals on the crop for a few days and drench them once they have contaminated the area with some eggs from undrenched worms. Better than above as this way the animals have had more time to pick up more worms before going on the clean area.
- (c) Leave some undrenched animals of the same class in the mob. This was a good idea once but has fallen by the wayside to a degree. It is a bit complicated and can compromise growth rates when young stock are involved. It also makes faecal egg counts hard to interpret when assessing future egg counts within a group. This technique does work and ideally (and counter-intuitively) you leave big and well grown animals undrenched.
- (d) Add some undrenched animals of another class. Perfect. These animals carry undrenched worms so they do the refugia for you. Add light ewes to every lamb mob for refugia- they will also act as leaders and will gain condition (and tup better) too.

Depending on how well your drenches work, this may need to be anything from 3-30% of the mob so talk to us about that number.

- (e) Follow the young stock with undrenched adult stock. Close to perfect but you may be reluctant to do this on crops or new grass which are best suited to finishing stock. You can still do this towards the end of the crop (a final graze) or sometime later in the season on new grasses. Even whip the older animals in for a few hours and avoid levelling the feed- just leave plenty of pooh in there!

**Don't drench all adult stock at one time.** One size does not fit all and you should know that by now. El Nino and droughts are classic examples where we can contribute to drench resistance far too easily. Animals are underfed and in poor condition but we want to do something so we drench them.

- (a) Always leave some undrenched. At least 10% is a good start when drenching ewes and you will always find at least that many in any mob of adult stock that can be left undrenched. Save some money and effort by leaving them- maybe mark them so you can monitor their condition.
- (b) Draft off the lights and drench them. This is more accurate but in the interests of refugia you should still leave some well conditioned and undrenched animals with them.
- (c) Think carefully before reaching for longer acting products. While this is not strictly about refugia per se, the choices demand that you do consider refugia.

There are other things to consider in a drench programme beyond refugia and knowing which drenches work (combinations are better than single actives) and how well ( a faecal egg count reduction test), knowing how wormy animals are (a faecal egg count) and how well they are fed (covers and conditions scores) all help make good judgements.

We know some aspects of this can sound awfully complicated but we now have years of experience getting some of these techniques in place on commercial farms and many are not too hard to adopt once you understand the background principles. We are only too happy to work with you to get refugia working best for your farm. In the meantime, using any of the above techniques will go some way towards extending the useful lifespan of anthelmintics on your farm.



## WELCOME

**The Waipukurau clinic welcomes Sam Burrows who started with us as a new graduate vet in December.**

**Sam is originally from North Canterbury and finished his final year at Massey University in 2015. Sam has a keen interest in all areas of Veterinary work especially equine medicine. He is a keen polo player and has a team of his own horses.**

# SKIN ALLERGIES IN HORSES

DAVE KRUGER

We have seen a large number of horses and ponies this summer with very itchy skin!

There are a number of possible underlying causes of skin allergies in horses including insect bite hypersensitivity, contact allergy and inhalant allergy (atopy). The majority of the cases we have treated this season are primary insect bite allergies. Various midge species and mosquitoes which are active in summer may cause the problem. In Australia the classic "Queensland Itch" is caused by a *Culicoides* midge.

Clinical signs include generalised pruritis (itchiness), rubbing (especially of the tail dock and back), and, if severe enough, biting at the flanks and legs.

In the early stages the skin shows raised areas of hair, indicating dilation of underlying blood vessels and localised swelling of the skin. These lesions then usually progress to firm raised lumps or nodules which may persist for a long period. The lumps often occur in the saddle area, resulting in further irritation from the saddle when ridden. On occasion these may require surgical excision.

Avoidance of insect bites is the primary objective of control. Use of pyrethrin sprays such as "Buzz-Off" and use of a light summer rug will help. If horses are stabled at night, ensure that stable lights are not left on as this will attract insects.



For clinically affected animals, judicious use of prednisolone (cortisone) injections, oral powders or topical hydrocortisone spray may be required to counteract the itching and self trauma which may result. In cases where secondary bacterial infection is suspected antibiotics may be prescribed. Washing with mild antibacterial shampoos such as chlorhexidine may also be useful.

# LAME SIRE RAMS? DON'T BE TOO HASTY!

RICHARD HILSON



Don't be too quick to cull sire rams with foot issues such as lameness or odd shaped claws, please....

We often hear of significant numbers of very expensive sire rams being culled due to foot issues yet we know that in most cases no one has actually diagnosed the cause of the "problem". We know this because we get to discuss feet quite a bit during the ram runs and we do get a long hard look at some individual feet.

Firstly consider the investment. Top rams now sell to commercial farmers at up to \$1500 each. Why make a hurried decision to ditch the ram when there is that much money at stake? If it is a

welfare case such as a broken leg then act promptly. Otherwise we'd suggest that you talk to at least one of the following two people- your ram breeder and/or your vet. Allow the breeder to have a say or even a look and therefore an option to replace a ram or to ask a vet for an opinion. We work closely with all the local ram breeders and we know that they are all fussy about their product and that they are always looking for even minor faults in their sale stock. They certainly do not breed from stock with bad feet. We attend many expensive stags, horses and bulls with sore feet but rarely get called to lame rams. We are quite successful at fixing their feet too!

Secondly consider why they are lame. If they are structurally unsound with cow hocks or scissor claws then maybe they do need culling. But single limb lameness, sore feet, scald, or the odd long toe? I would venture to say that most rams are not given enough attention and spend too long in one paddock for most of the year. It is not unreasonable to expect the odd ram to get sore feet if he hangs about in the same area all winter and is left to his own devices.

Having to run rams through a foot bath occasionally is not a sign of weakness. It is good husbandry. It certainly isn't a hard job. Leaving animals with scald untreated may lead to long toes, foot abscesses or footrot. And then you will be culling some good animals simply because they had a straight forward issue that became a complicated one.

The proof of the pudding? If you have had lame sire rams on occasion, do you have great numbers of limping ewes? So, is it heritable or is it just because the weather was a bit wet, the grass a bit long or the crop a bit muddy?

Don't be hasty, ask a question.

# SEASONAL UPDATE

## HASTINGS/NAPIER

"Well let's first talk about the weather. Summer has been unusually autumnal, with humidity and rain bringing us more feed than expected. The biggest concern with this is now we have had autumn what will happen in the coming months. Be prepared for less rain and perhaps lower covers than normal during the autumn/winter period. Be on the watch for facial eczema and parasite levels, they may be like an unwanted gift you can not return!

## WAIPUKURAU

The rain continues to come; crops and clover are boosting, and plenty of grass is on the ground. Staying on top of feed is still an issue with plenty of mature grass and grass seed around. Plenty of wind over the New Year period has left the hills looking high and dry, but nothing extreme or unusual for this time of year. Because of good preparation for the El Nino dry (obviously the El Nino seminar among other things); Murphy's Law means El Nino hasn't reared its head – YET. Autumn is just around the corner, and if a drastically dry autumn comes as forecast this could mean some very tough times for winter.

Rams were looking in great condition during the rounds of ram palpations so this needs to be maintained through to the end of

## DANNEVIRKE

So far pasture growth has been sustained by some timely rain, with some fantastic clover growth in early summer. Some localised areas have had more grass than they have seen for some time and summer crops look good. Generally, stock condition is good and things are currently set up well. Where to from here? If (or when?) the dry arrives it looks like it will be late. This calls for contingencies heading into autumn particularly in ewe flocks where this is such a critical period.

At the moment we are preparing for the cow scanning season, so don't forget to get your bookings in. There have been a few cows tested already and early results have been pretty good. We also

## WAIRARAPA

We experienced some much needed rain over the New Year holiday. The amount varied over the district from 20 – 50mm from the reports fed back to me. Many farmers have already off loaded surplus trading stock and at this point body condition of animals looks good. I attended a meeting at the Gladstone Complex in mid-December to listen to a ruminant nutritionist speak to a group of 50 farmers about supplementary feeding of sheep during drought. If you follow the attached link you will be able to read my notes from the meeting – particularly some practical tips about feed volumes, the importance of fibre and water, mob sizes, what to do with shy feeders etc.

**CAMILLE FLACK**

Cattle pregnancy testing is coming in thick and fast – don't forget to book if you haven't already. Ewes and hinds should be going to the ram and stag in good order, setting us up for a good year to come!

Don't forget to make some time to watch the T20 cricket world cup. Brendan McCullum may be absent but remember one man can not make a team!

**MIKE CATLEY**

mating for optimal fertility. Vasectomies are in full flight – next rounds on farm are for the cockey's, so wives need to get them booked in.

Pregnancy scanning cattle has commenced; dairy cattle pregnancies are being aged, then beef cattle will not be far behind. A cautious approach to feeding your crops would be wise; special attention to transition management, up-to-date vaccination, and proportion/variety of weeds (as they could be poisonous plants). Don't forget about parasite management – warm and wet means good grass growth, which also means good larval growth. All we need now is a good autumn to tie us over for winter!

**JOHNNY ATKINS**

have a number of sheep farms conducting drench tests which will help make some informed drench decisions going forward.

The long grass and pollens have also been causing allergy problems in dogs, horses and their owners! These can be tricky to manage so let us know if you have been having problems, at least for the canine and equine varieties!

We have also seen a number of calves with thiamine deficiency recently. Early treatment usually results in a good recovery so let us know if you have calves showing unusual nervous signs, blindness or seizure's in more serious cases.

**STUART BRUÈRE**

<http://www.vetserviceswairarapa.co.nz/news/article/24/drought-feeding-sheep-and-cattle/>

Remember, as the pressure "goes on" over the next few months, keep an eye out for your neighbours, friends and family. Take time to get away from the farm at least once a week and have a meal out just to clear your mind of the "fog" that goes with stress. There will be plenty of holiday "specials" offered by travel agents – explore where you may like to go when the pressure eases. Get your passports up to date. I have already seen several and they are catering for all budgets.

## Winners of our Christmas Pet Hampers

### NAPIER:

Dog – Susie Adam

Cat – Joy Walker

### HASTINGS:

Dog – Robyn Ward

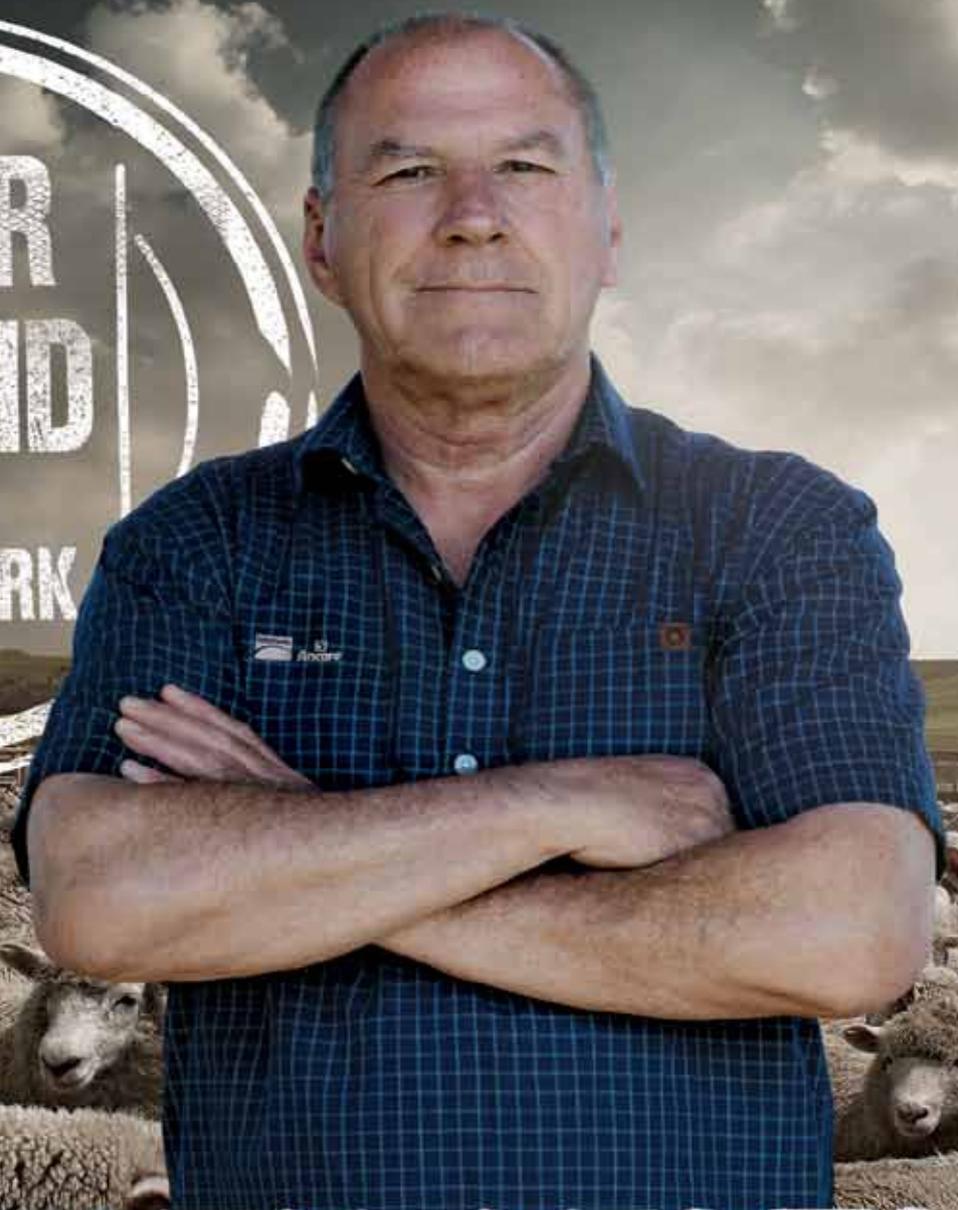
Cat – Jenny McKinnon

### WAIPUKURAU:

Dog – Blair Kent

Cat – Wayne & Janet Smith

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