

FEBRUARY 2017

VET NEWS

EWE BODY SCORES

WHAT DOES 2017 HOLD

AUTUMN LOOMS



SOME PHOTOS BY RICHARD HILSON

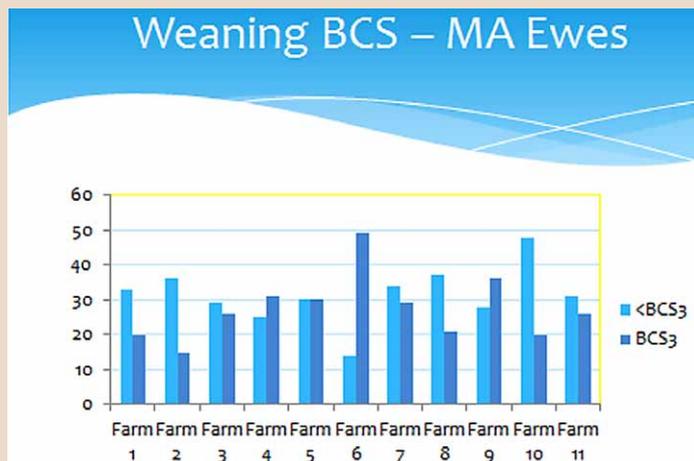
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EWE BODY CONDITION SCORES FROM THE WAIRARAPA – DECEMBER 2016

STUART BRUERE

In December 2016 I surveyed the BCS of between 50 and 70 MA ewes on 11 properties in the Wairarapa. The selection criteria was on the basis of farmers being willing for me to do this. The geographical locations were dispersed widely over the district. The method used was as per Beef and Lamb scoring by feeling over the “short ribs” and spine in the mid back region. The scoring was based on BCS3 or above and below BCS3.

I also sampled 10/11 flocks for FEC counts and asked other questions about weaning weights of lambs and ewes. So what did I find?



If you look at this graph you can see the actual numbers counted on the vertical axis and on the horizontal axis you can see the individual farms. Only 3 of the 11 farms had more than 50% of the ewes in BCS3 or greater. I also observed that the FEC counts were low on all but one farm, 6/11 had a lamb weaning weight and 5/11 had a ewe weaning weight. Some had a weight range for lamb weaning weight and this ranged from 13 – 52kg across all the farms where it was taken.

Many farmers have expressed disappointment at their lamb weaning weights from 2016 and this data helps explain why. If many of these ewes were BCS2 at lamb drop, ewe milk production would have been compromised and not recovered even with good pasture covers after this.

Take home messages from this are **1.** BCS scoring of ewes at scanning and weaning time is a useful tool to ascertain ewe condition – this has the obvious benefit of providing information to draft lighter ewes into separate mobs for preferential feeding. Studies confirm the best “bang for your buck” comes from bringing light ewes up to BCS3. **2.** There is ample opportunity to gather other data such as lamb and ewe weights at weaning and particularly make sure the range is also recorded. **3.** Without data it’s all just a guess. I found it impossible to BCS ewes by eye. **4.** Early intervention allows realistic daily weight gain to be achieved. To lift a ewe 10kg (about 1 BCS unit) over a 90 days period can be done with a daily weight gain of 111gm/day or an extra 30kg of DM. This is a 50% increase over maintenance.

HEALTHCARE GUIDELINES FOR YOUR EQUINE COMPANION

SAM BURROWS

In the current veterinary world, equine patients are now considered part of the family much like cats, dogs and other fur babies. In keeping with this theme we recommend developing an equine preventative healthcare plan with one of our team of veterinarians.

All horses should have a veterinary consult at least annually, with some requiring more based on the needs of the horse and owner. This begins with an initial health evaluation, involving a thorough history, and a general discussion surrounding housing, management and feeding.

Following on from this comes a comprehensive physical exam. This includes:

A dental assessment, body condition scoring, general locomotion assessment, pain assessment and foot health.

On the basis of these findings, a therapeutic plan will be put into place, which will include:

- Targeted anthelmintic treatments, based on faecal examination for internal parasites, and most likely to involve 1-2 broad-spectrum treatments per year.
- Routine farriery recommendations
- Dental recommendation, based on an dental exam
- Diet/nutritional recommendations based on the athletic requirements of your horse.
- Vaccination schedule, with core tetanus included.
- Reproductive management for horses intended for breeding purposes.

Once we have established this plan of action, we can set up a time for an annual follow-up visit to continue with future care recommendations, thus ensuring that your horse/s are getting the appropriate health care they require.

BACK IN THE FOLD: MIKE FITZGERALD



We are really pleased to welcome Mike Fitzgerald back into the VSHB team after an eighteen month overseas experience. Mike started with us in 2011 and after more than three years in Waipukurau, took some time off to see a bit of the world. We hoped that he would keep us in mind when he decided to head home and he has now started work again with us in CHB.

Mike has hit the ground running, revitalised and keen to get into his work. A near-death accident at Murchison (detoured as a result of the Kaikoura earthquake) on his way up from Canterbury in December created some dramas just before he started but we were pleased to learn he was unscathed. Mike has a particular interest in things equine and as part of a broader succession plan will be

working closely with Richard McKenzie and Dave Kruger as he establishes himself further within the local horse scene. He has been very busy from the get-go, especially with equine dental work and lameness examinations.

We do not really have any “specialists” in our team. We cannot call ourselves that without a considerable amount of further study and some extremely nasty exams. However, we do have vets with areas of special interest though, with some vets quite focussed on specific branches of veterinary medicine. Like most of us in the large animal field, Mike will also be working with the entire range of production animals too, not solely focussing on equine endeavours. Expect to see Mike out and about- and to hear his name more often now too!

2017 — WHAT MIGHT IT HOLD FOR THE RURAL SECTOR?

BRENDAN JAMES BBS CA

Wow, 2016 was a tumultuous year politically which was always a possibility but most thought not a reality. First was the Brexit vote which will cause on-going challenges particularly for our sheep sector with the GBP tanking and not really recovering at all and there being continuing uncertainty regarding European quotas. Second was Donald Trump being elected (seemingly everyone's worst night mare) which promised lots in terms of upheaval in the financial markets but hasn't delivered any of that to date. As a result of his appointment TPPA looks dead which isn't particularly helpful in providing opportunities to grow trade with various overseas markets.

So, what do the experts think about 2017? As is always the case there is little in the way of consistency from those far more qualified than myself when documenting where they expect the economy to head in 2017. Economic growth particularly on the back of tourism looks set to continue but will this mean a rise in interest rates and what could that mean in the housing sector? (A recent report suggested that a 0.5% increase in rates across the Tasman could bankrupt a reasonable proportion of home owners);

- The NZ \$ should hold steady at around the USD \$0.70 mark although any drop into the 60's would be beneficial from an exporters perspective. Donald Trump officially takes office tomorrow as I write this and most think it's only a matter of time until one of his decisions affects the world economy (hopefully temporarily!)
- Europe and the new UK continue to be "who the hell knows what will happen". It is difficult to see the GBP rebounding much in 2017 at all. The Euro should hold steady assuming there are no more bankrupt country discussions within the new form EU
- Interest rates will remain largely unchanged but it appears they have bottomed out and there is a reasonable risk of small increases to wholesale interest rates- not led by the OCR but led by the increase of borrowing costs from overseas
- Economic growth should continue to hold steady at around the 3.5% mark based on tourism and improvements in the dairy sector
- Locally, Hawke's Bay has really turned around economically. Eighteen months ago, we sat near the bottom of the pile with regards to economic growth, we are back to being near the top which has resulted in increased activity in manufacturing, jobs and consumer spending. Imagine what further investment in regional infrastructure would contribute to sustained growth in our area. Let's hope that the dam actually happens for the right reasons without political interference and unfounded innuendo.

SHEEP AND BEEF SECTOR

Recently published information from Beef+Lamb NZ produced the following insights on the coming year;

- Sheep numbers are back 3% on the previous year, mainly the result of weather conditions and changes in farming systems and livestock classes
- EBIT performance on farm is expected to decrease by 13% on 2015-16
- Lamb returns per head are expected to decrease slightly- on average 3% (based on same kg live weight)
- Wool prices continue to slide with returns expected to be back 13%. Will the wool cheque cover the shearing costs??

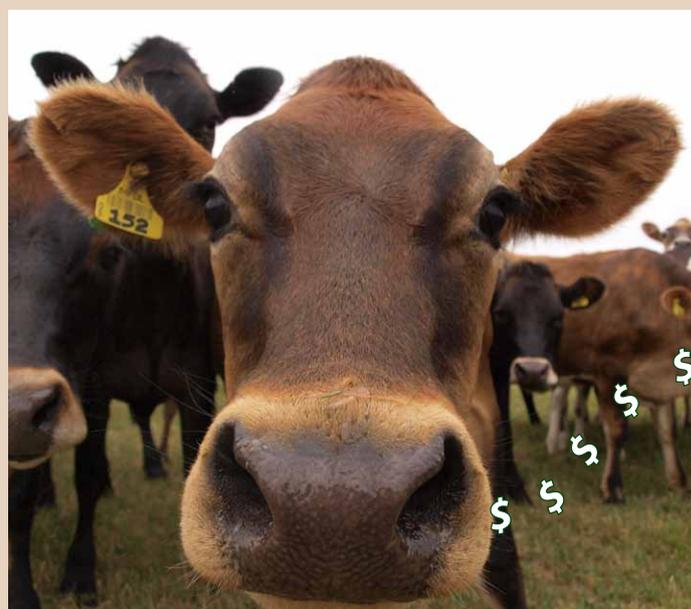


- Beef returns look to hold steady in the coming year. Kill numbers will be back 1.6% and as is usual with this sector the US market will dictate demand and price in the coming year! The uncertainty in demand from overseas markets combined with exchange rates continues to make the red meat sector difficult in generating solid income. Favourable weather conditions would at least help growth rates but as we all know that is a big IF.

DAIRY SECTOR

After two years of low prices, uncertainty around demand and countries sitting on large quantities of stock the market appears to be returning to some normality with some positivity returning to the current pay-out and forecast.

ASB's latest forecast of \$6.50 for the current season and \$6.75 for the 2017-18 season should see most dairy farmers heaving a huge sigh of relief and banking some profits for either paying off debt or investing on the farm which has been put off for the last couple of years.



So what does all of that mean for us in Hawke's Bay, Dannevirke & Wairarapa?

- Sheep and Beef farmers look like they are in for another tough year. Lots of grass would definitely help!
- The dairy industry is rebounding which as previously noted will be a huge sigh of relief for that sector and all that are connected to it
- Your interest expense is likely to increase unless you have managed to lock in some lower longer term rates.

The 2017 year will be an interesting one for all of us connected to the farming sector. More than ever, making the right decisions at the right times is critical to maximising production – no matter what species or combination thereof that you farm.

Animal health is an important part of any farming system- we have the personnel to help you and the right advice can be the difference between a good year and a great year. Please talk to any of our staff, including our vets on how you can make 2017 the best it can possibly be.

With no World Cups, Olympics or Commonwealth Games this year the sporting year will be a little quieter with the exception of the Lions Tour in June. With all the recruitment the Hurricanes have done in the off-season they are bound to defend their 2016 title!

Here at Vet Services we understand the power of information. Our ewe scanning database is the largest database's of ewe scanning information in New Zealand. This has given us a lot of data which has ultimately helped you the farmer to improve performance. The idea of comparing different management strategies and scanning results have enabled us to see why some flocks perform the way they do. This year we are starting to collect data in much the same way for our beef breeders. This season will be the first where we will ask you to supply us with information regarding your beef cow herd. As always this information is kept confidential and privacy will be maintained

between farms. On the day, it will leave you with a hard copy of your results similar to sheep scanning.

This enables us to form a database rich with information from all our clients over a wide range of regions. We will be able to compare and benchmark data across farms within a season. This will help to average out the 'weather/feed factor' as everyone will be experiencing the same season. Long term we will also be able to record your farms performance and monitor improvements or any reasons for set backs. Our commitment is to aid in improving farm performance and we see the generation of this database as a good platform to help achieve this.

A SIGNIFICANT LIST: REMINDERS FOR SHEEP FARMERS AS AUTUMN LOOMS

RICHARD HILSON

With the new year now well underway and yet another dry summer putting undue pressure on lifestylers and farmers alike, it is timely to put together a few memory- joggers in advance of autumn and the impending sheep mating season. We may not always fully realise the potential of our ewes but autumn is a critical season for sheep, the outcome of which will dictate much of what happens for the rest of the year and will underpin the financial success of the farming fiscal year.

The key considerations now should be those products that offer real productivity benefits and the decisions around what to use and when to use it need to be made right now. It is worth prefacing this reminder, though, with our desire to see these products used effectively and for the right reasons: we would prefer to take the opportunity to discuss any of these products and procedures with you to ensure best "bang for bucks" and a good understanding of the whys and wherefores for your team.

First and foremost consider the fecundity vaccines, Ovastim and Androvax, which are awesome drought busters. In difficult autumns these vaccines keep scanning results up, typically 15-20 percentage points ahead of what untreated ewes could be expected to achieve. While they can be nearly too effective in a great autumn, we rarely get "great" autumns. By ensuring that ewes maintain a good level of fecundity, these products assist in overcoming an inability to effectively flush ewes at tugging. We know from previous monitoring work that it is nigh impossible to truly put weight on ewes at tugging (the dynamic effect) which means we consistently miss out on additional lambs on offer.

Many farms use either of these two vaccines regularly and we understand their fit really well. If you have ewes that were previously vaccinated then you have a wee bit of time yet. If you are considering a first use of these vaccines, get cracking and come for a yarn real soon. You'll need to be treating ewes at least six weeks before ram joining and that is very soon. The numbers stack up well but you need to scan and plan for best results. Best results and common use is in MA ewes (rarely two tooth, never hoggets), with use in both maternal and terminal flocks.

The other two production vaccines that become topics of discussion in a dry spell are those protecting ewes against toxoplasmosis and campylobacter. When we get extended dry spells we see too many ewe lambs slip behind their weight targets (hmmm, do they actually have targets? have they been weighed?) and a decision is made to leave them unmated for the year. Oddly enough, there is often a significant amount of regret in spring about not mating at least a proportion of the ewe lambs, when the dry has corrected itself and the hoggets are all child-less. So a challenge to you would be to aim to mate hoggets (assuming you do normally) and to monitor their

progress through summer to allow you to tweak the numbers and dates as tugging time looms.

We tend to find hogget mating is an "all or nothing" event - mate the lot or mate none. We have suggested in the past that if the ewe hogget mob is struggling to hold weight, give consideration to weighing off and joining the heavier end, to at least ensure better lamb numbers in spring. Either way, slotting these two production vaccines into the hogget mating programme are critical in terms of best practice (a broad term indeed) and to maximise the performance of young ewes (surely your aim). We have managed to help many farmers alter vaccine programmes to hoggets and we can help with those critical autumn decisions.

Two more things: ones that we bang on about a bit. Firstly, get feed sorted if you want to get a decent tugging. We will not explore the best local options here but any supplementary feed is invariably better than none in a tight autumn and unless there is a big change in the weather, we think you should be making some plans right now. Too late for most to put crops in but plan the use of silage, hay or grains in particular. Price them up if you need to buy them in then come and see us about how the feeding and mating will all fit together economically. We don't need to think "drought" to think about supplements at tugging time... judicious use of grain can protect your scanning result at a cost of just 1% of the entire lamb crop. Cheap as.

Finally, please ensure the ewes of all ages are well covered for fly over this crucial period. In the last decade or so we have seen little evidence of strike at tugging but in days gone by (last century!), we recognised that maybe less than 20% of ewes struck at or before tugging actually got pregnant. There are some nifty products available and if you want good cover with a clever spend then come and see us to work through your requirements and the appropriate timings.

Tugging time is fraught and timing is everything. We'd love it to rain heaps so that March and April are a breeze but even history is against us there. Be a good Boy Scout and be well prepared!



SEASONAL UPDATE

HASTINGS/NAPIER

It has been a strange season in the Hastings area. It is quite dry in many areas including Kereru, Otamauri and of course the traditional coastal areas and Raukawa. We also have been hit with a lot of wind which has come about 2 – 3 months later than usual. Summer crops are struggling in most areas.

The early lambing farmers had difficulty finishing lambs this season due to a lack of clover which is normally abundant in their spring and early summer pastures. Whilst most would have killed all of this season's lambs by now the average weights are a couple of kgs less than last season. By the time this newsletter is out the rams in these early flocks would also have finished doing their work for the year.

I have visited some of the dairy farms in Patoka recently and it was nice to see that most of cows were grazing in paddocks with

WAIPUKURAU

A lack of moisture has only been exceeded by wind, wind and more wind in CHB. Certainly many people are concerned and decisions are having to be made, if not already.

Early dairy pregnancy scanning, for those wanting foetal ageing, has begun – the wind is providing a good breeze on the platform – a great silver lining.

DANNEVIRKE

Wind, wind, and more wind has been the theme so far this year! After relatively little through October/November it has really kicked into gear now. Hopefully as you read this it has eased up a little.....

Although there seems to be adequate feed around for most, some areas (North of Norsewood, and Coastal) have become dry, and any rain they have had has been accompanied by (yes you guessed it) wind! February could be a tough month for some if it really heats up, hopefully we get a shower of rain.

We are well into scanning dairy cows now, although as I write this it's a little too early to say how it's going. Mating was slow for most so fingers crossed that hasn't impacted on empty rates too much.

Vaccinating calves is also underway, and once again we are trying to construct some decent runs to get these done as efficiently as possible. We have had increasingly poor uptake in the last

WAIRARAPA

The "silly season" was very busy with cats and dogs visiting the clinic with the usual array of barley grass seed abscesses, broken legs, skin conditions, routine vaccinations and neutering surgeries. The Equine team carried out their seasonal mare reproduction work over November/December, horse dentals and lameness workups in the Wairarapa and Wellington. It is pleasing to see we are now seeing quite a number of horses "over the hill" in Wellington. The production animal work lit up again

MARK MATTHEWS

good covers and cow condition looked good. One dairy farm has dropped cow numbers by about 20% to 450 which has resulted in "fat dairy cows" and production ahead of last year.

Deer velvet production is on a par with previous years although regrowth is looking disappointing.

We have started Facial Eczema monitoring and as at the beginning of January spore counts were low. Check our web site for updates.

The local vineyards are filling up with ewes for the annual summer prune. It could be another good year for wine so long as it doesn't get cold too early.

Stonefruit growers are struggling with the wind which has downgraded their crops a bit but this has been partly compensated with good yields of quality fruit.

MIKE FITZGERALD

Facial eczema spore counting has begun this week, with no results at the time of writing – however the national counts, published at the start of January, show the counts are generally lower than this time last year – watch this space.

There have been a few reports of staggers in horses – please ring to discuss products we have which may be of assistance.

JOHNNY ATKINS

couple of years with some calves possibly not receiving an ideal vaccination protocol. It's really important to make sure they are done, and recent local leptospirosis cases have reminded us all that it's a must do to keep you and your staff healthy! Give us a ring if you haven't yet heard from us!

We still have the last of the rams to palpate and farm dogs to vaccinate, but in general all has been going well here with most in good condition and looking ready to go! Please contact the clinic if you still haven't been contacted with a date and time we are out your way.

Fly product is flying (!) out the door, there were some early cases of strike but it seems to have settled down. Be vigilant!

And after last year we can't forget facial eczema! Spore counts are out and they are currently low. This is something we will be monitoring closely, and as always prevention is better than cure! We have counts available in clinic, and an email list if you would like updates. Just let us know!

STUART BRUERE

in early January with ram testing, farm dog vaccinations, ram vasectomies, cow pregnancy scanning, animal health planning and Stu speaking at the Beef and Lamb workshops on body condition scoring ewes. Most farmers have now ordered their Toxovax, Campyvox4, Androvax/Ovastim and Salvexin B. If you have not done this yet please call Kate at the clinic and let her know your requirements.

OUR VET TEAM

Napier & Hastings:

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

Waipukurau:

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

Dannevirke: Masterton:

Simon Marshall, Tim Hogan, Kate Matthews, Johnny Atkins, Ingrid Meijer and Corinna Minko. Stuart Bruere, Sandy Redden, Louisa Broughton, Jacques VanZyl, Nicola Haglund, Sarah Wolland, Elke Blommers and Sara Sutherland.

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