

# Sheep & Beef Talk

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## Mary Had a Sneezing Lamb...



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Coughing and snotty noses are a common occurrence in lambs over the summer and autumn seasons, particularly after long mustering and yarding. Some of these lambs may lie down when mustered, and if severely affected will die. Post mortem of affected lambs usually gives a diagnosis of pneumonia.

Pneumonia in lambs is a complex disease involving the interaction of environmental conditions, bacteria, viruses and the lamb's immune system.

There are two types of pneumonia, an acute form that causes sudden death, and a chronic form that can cause pleurisy resulting in reduced weight gain and reduced carcass quality at slaughter. Studies have shown that although deaths from acute pneumonia are a cost, it is the chronic form that causes the most significant economic loss. At slaughter, carcasses with pleural lesions as a result of pneumonia are identified and detained for trimming, in bad cases this can involve trimming of part or all of the rib cage (resulting in loss of value of lamb racks).

While we can't completely avoid mustering and yarding for shearing, drenching and dipping, there are a few things that can help reduce the risk of lambs developing pneumonia. One of the most important ways of reducing pneumonia in your flock is to minimise heat stress, thereby minimising the chance of open-mouthed breathing and panting.

Other factors that will reduce the chance of disease include mustering early in the day when the temperature is cooler: wetting down the

yards, minimising the number of times stock need to be yarded and trying to arrange the rotation so that lambs are closer to the yards when they are needed.

The number of lambs with pneumonia found at slaughter increases throughout the season so sending lambs, including cull ewe lambs, earlier reduces the number of lambs with pneumonia.

Pneumonia and pleurisy have substantial economic impact on sheep farming in New Zealand. The average cost of pneumonia and pleurisy to the sheep industry in New Zealand due to reduced lamb growth and decreased carcass value is estimated to be between NZ\$32.4 and \$78.9 million. This is a conservative estimate that does not include deaths due to acute pneumonia.

A good way to check the level of pneumonia in your flock is to assess kill sheets for the level of pleurisy in the line, or bring in lambs for postmortems to be done at your nearest VetEnt clinic.



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As we have been out and about doing last minute service testing and finding a fair few duds this is a timely reminder to check your bulls pre-mating. It is estimated that up to 13% of young bulls and 20% of mixed age bulls are not fit for mating. Here are some leading issues as to what can go wrong...

## Lameness:

Any mild lameness now will be quickly exacerbated once the bull starts working. Check for any puffiness in the hocks as this is a sign of arthritis developing – especially in older bulls. A lame bull will struggle to get the job done and is often the cause of poor scanning results.

## Serving ability:

Even if you have blocky tested, it is still a good idea to spend a few minutes out observing and ensuring that intromission is being achieved. Things to look for include: corkscrews, deviations to the sides, penis injuries and swollen sheaths. Low libido will also result in lower numbers of cows in calf.

## Mating groups:

Managing bull pairs or groups is especially important to prevent

fighting and injuries. An unsound dominant bull will bully other bulls and prevent them from servicing cows effectively. If you are single sire mating it is especially important to know that the bull can effectively service. Swapping bulls after a cycle is a good idea to minimise the risk when using single sire mating.

## BVD:

Bulls should be getting an annual BVD booster ideally 3-4 weeks before mating. BVD infection during mating can greatly reduce the bull's fertility resulting in a high dry rate. If a bull picks up BVD during mating he will also spread it to every cow he mates – thus increasing the risk of producing carrier animals and early abortions. This is also a reminder that cows and heifers should have had their annual BVD vaccination boost pre mating.

Bull breakdowns are one of the leading causes of high dry rates in beef cows. To get your best results at scanning time make sure your bulls are fit before they go out and keep a close watch on them to ensure they are getting the job done right. If you need information or have bulls needing testing give your VetEnt clinic a call.



# Parasite Resistance in Livestock



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Worms pose a constant challenge to farm efficiency and productivity. Unfortunately the rate of parasite resistance to drenches in New Zealand is on the rise.

The rise in resistance means your drenches may not be working as well as you think, costing you in feed, labour and lost production. South Island sheep and beef farmers are fairing better than their North Island counterparts, but the story unfolding is still far from pretty. More than 60% of kiwi sheep farms have drench resistance and

over 90% of North Island beef farms have drench resistance. There are cases of triple resistance trickling in alongside evidence that long acting products such as capsules and injectables are starting to fail. The only novel options on the market for sheep are Startect and Zolvix, and for cattle a triple drench is the best option we currently have.

There are two key tools for assessing drench effectiveness on your farm:

## Drench Check:

- Involves a faecal egg count (FEC) on stock that were drenched 7-10 days previous.
- Cheap and easy option to monitor your farm annually.
- Can be performed on any stock following any drench in the season but better done earlier than later so that any problems can be addressed immediately.

If an adequate drench dose was administered properly, the FEC should be zero. If there are eggs present in the faeces then it means that your drench isn't working and a FECRT should be done to assess the extent of drench resistance on your farm.

## Faecal Egg Count Reduction Test (FECRT):

- Provides comprehensive insight into drench effectiveness on your farm.

- More involved process with a higher cost but only indicated every 5-7 years.

Approx. 100 lambs are left undrenched and run as a separate mob. Their FECs are monitored until they are high enough to provide reliable results. The lambs are then marked for each drench type to be tested, individually weighed, drenched and 10-15 faecal samples are collected for FEC and larval culture (this identifies the types of worms present). Ten days later faecal samples are collected from each lamb drenched for FEC and larval culture to look at how effective each drench tested was on each worm species. This tells you if you have drench resistance, what species of worm are resistant and to what families of drench.

**Long Acting Products:** an FEC should always be performed on ten treated animals towards the end of the product's lifespan; it's often offered for FREE! For 100 day capsules this means anytime from 60 days post application (which can tie in with tailing) and anywhere from 20 days onwards for 35 day injectables. If eggs are found in these samples it means there are worms resistant to the long acting drench present; these worms are spreading resistant eggs all over your pasture each day. In this instance all stock treated with a long acting product should be given a novel drench to wipe out the population of resistant worms living in their gut.

If you have any questions regarding parasite management, please don't hesitate to contact your local VetEnt vet. Measuring and monitoring drench resistance allows you to make informed decisions specifically for your farm. It means you can rest assured knowing that the time, labour and money spent on drenching is actually contributing towards optimising stock performance and growth as well as helping protect your farm's sustainability and profitability for the future.