

# Sheep & Beef Talk

February 2019



## Ram Testing



Rob Dunbar  
Veterinarian

**It is not too late to get your rams checked out for mating soundness...**

If one ewe fails then the loss would not be not overly significant to your farm bottom line (unless of course you only have a handful of ewes) but ram failure can have a drastic effect....

into account the breed and age of the ram, we want rams to have two large symmetrical testes free of defects.

Testicular atrophy or degeneration is not uncommon and may be temporary or permanent but in either case adversely affects semen quality. These defects can be determined by palpation of the testicles but remember that events can occur after palpation, or may have just happened prior to palpation, so rams should be checked by the farmer or vet just prior to being used even if vet checked a month or two earlier.

Epididymitis caused by *Brucella ovis* is a contagious disease which spreads ram to ram by sexual contact between rams or by transmission from infected to non-infected rams serving the same ewe. It used to be more common than it is now but it has not disappeared and is still a risk farmers need to be aware of. Another organism, *Actinobacillus seminis* which can also cause epididymitis in young rams, is important to test for.

There is a brucellosis accreditation program in place to identify ram flocks which are free of evidence of brucellosis, and these are the flocks where ram replacements should be sourced.

A combination of blood testing and ram palpation is used to achieve accreditation but it is important to remember that a ram recently affected may not have had time to develop lesions which can be palpated, and there are also limitations as to when the bloods are accurate.

If you would like to know more about accreditation or ram testing, give your VetEnt clinic a call today.

Ideally rams should be checked at least two months prior to when you are planning on using them, but testing at any stage may help prevent a disaster and allow time for replacements to be sourced.

The spermatogenic cycle (spermatogonia to mature sperm) in rams takes up to two months so an insult now may affect the semen quality in two months.

### What do we look for when checking your rams?

- Ability to move - obviously foot lesions or lameness of any description adversely affects mating behaviour.
- Scrotum - contains the testes. Check for abscesses, scrotal mange and wool length.

These factors can all affect the fertility of rams. Excessive wool length (longer than 0.5-1cm of wool) can adversely affect semen quality by affecting the ram's ability to control the temperature in his testicles as the internal temperature of the testis is below normal body temperature.

Testes size - size does matter. Large testicles produce more semen than small ones. Taking



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# Barber's Pole and Exit Drenching

Now that Barbers Pole season is in full swing, it is important to know about the risks of over-using Barber's Pole drenches, and to think about using an exit drench as one of your last lamb drenches in Autumn.

Barber's Pole drenches such as Cydectin and Exodus are single active moxidectin drenches. They are extremely useful in providing extended coverage against the deadly worm.

Most regular lamb drenches will kill the Barber's Pole worm, but their coverage will only last around 10 days. It is moxidectin that provides extended coverage and prevents the build up of the worms resulting in dead lambs. It is this reason that we need to look after this drench and do everything we can to prevent resistance developing to moxidectin.

Currently, according to yearly reduction test results, moxidectin appears to 100% effective at killing Barber's Pole worm (other worm species have already developed some resistance) and we would love it to stay that way. Unfortunately, the very reason moxidectin is useful against Barber's Pole, makes it high risk for developing resistance worms. The long activity of moxidectin allows partially resistant worms to develop and breed with other partially resistant worms.

This is where exit drenching comes into the picture. An exit drench is a drench that is 100% effective at killing all worm species that have managed to survive during the 'tail' of moxidectin.

Currently there is only one drench on the market that ticks this box. Zolvix Plus. This product contains both monepantel (a brand new active) and abamectin. This product is currently demonstrating 100% kill of multiple drench resistant worms in New Zealand. This is the gold standard for exit drenching.

A triple active such as Matrix does not meet the requirements of an exit drench unless it has been tested on your farm to be 100% effective against all worms. The idea is to expose resistant worms to a drench they haven't "seen" before and completely wipe them out to stay one step ahead of the resistance.

The use of an exit drench at the end of your lamb drenching programme will slow down the onset of drench resistance to all drench actives.

If you want further information on Barbers Pole or exit drenching, contact your VetEnt clinic.



## Veterinary Enterprises and Mycoplasma bovis

A note from Ian Hodge, Technical Manager at Veterinary Enterprises Group

*The Mycoplasma bovis disease incursion into New Zealand has, and still is having, a significant effect on animals, people and our farming communities. As a national veterinary practice we have been doing all that we can to assist with MPI directives, diagnosis, testing, and containing the spread of infection, which all help reduce the impact of the disease as together we march towards eradication.*

*Our vets have all had significant training in the management of M. bovis and are well placed to offer veterinary support.*

*It often helps a great deal when you are able to discuss the disease in complete confidence and with certainty that you will get the facts from a veterinarian who understands your particular farming situation.*

*We encourage you to engage with the vets if you are unsure about any aspect of the disease or its management. I am personally always available to discuss in complete confidence any concerns you may have.*

*VetEnt cares a great deal about our clients and animals, and we will provide support and assistance in our capacity as vets as far as we are able to.*

### **Ian Hodge**

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# A note from VetEnt: TB Testing Changes

You should have all received notification from OSPRI that there is to be a change in providers for TB testing services on March 1st 2019. VetEnt will no longer be TB testing cattle in South Waikato, North Manawatu-Wanganui, Gisborne/Wairoa, & Canterbury or TB testing deer in Tasman, Marlborough, & Canterbury. AsureQuality will now provide all cattle and deer TB testing services under OSPRI's TB Free scheme.

We are disappointed that we will no longer be able to provide this service to our farming communities and wish OSPRI all the best with their plan to eradicate TB from New Zealand.

We understand the need to minimize the number of times cattle and deer need to come in for treatment/testing. Don't hesitate to contact your local clinic to organise for one of our team to come out at the same time as your TB test.

Services that may work well to combine with your TB test are: vaccinations (lepto, BVD, etc.), pregnancy testing, trace mineral bloods, BVD bloods, velveting stags, & condition scoring.

If you have any questions about the changes or require further information please give your clinic a call.

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## Local News...

### Otago:

We have Amy Hoogenboom a new grad veterinarian who has started with us at VetEnt Ranfurly. Amy has a particular interest in beef cattle and has several of her own breeding cows.

We also have Andy Smith who has joined the team at VetEnt Alexandra, Andy initially worked in mixed practice in North East London and then in Suffolk before moving to New Zealand where he now concentrates on small animals with a particular interest in surgery.

Jenifer Ross is another new graduate veterinarian who has also started at the Alexandra clinic. Graduating from studying in Edinburgh in 2018, Jen came to New Zealand to work the calving season on a dairy farm in Canterbury and has been traveling and working since then.

If you see any of our new team out and about be sure to introduce yourself and say hi!

