Animal Health Update

A footrot update
District Veterinarian Tim Biffin

Currently there are 14 known virulent footrot infected properties out of approximately 3257 flocks across the Riverina Local Land Services region. This remains well within the overall prevalence of <1%; as required for the state-wide protected status from the disease.

Virulent footrot is a notifiable disease and all personnel that are suspicious of footrot have a legal obligation to report the disease to Local Land Services immediately.

All known cases of the disease are currently undergoing management plans to eradicate the disease, as developed and agreed upon between the district veterinarian and the stock manager. Some farmers will elect to just depopulate their flock direct to slaughter (for example XB lambs), while others will attempt inspect and cull programs.

Such inspect and cull programs are in full swing at the moment, and have been since January (given the associated climatic conditions). Dry, hot weather, with dry stalky pastures does not favour expression and spread of the disease. This means its progression is paused, giving farmers a chance to get on top of it.

Every 3-6 weeks these farmers are tipping every single sheep on farm. Those infected animals are isolated and culled. During repeat inspections new infected animals may be identified in apparently clean mobs, these are also culled. Essentially, to eradicate the disease the producers needs to have inspected every animal on farm as clean two times (≥3-6 weeks apart), prior to a spread period. Local Land Services staff are on farm and over the phone providing advice to farmers throughout this process, to help ensure the disease is eradicated and that mobs don’t break down given the next spring.

Following all this work, Local Land Services staff (or an accredited footrot contractor) is required to inspect all animals on farm, after a spread period, to ensure the disease has been eradicated. If the disease was still present, it should express lameness and foot lesions in at least a few animals. Following a successful clearance exam the property is then released from quarantine.

Image 1: Senior Biosecurity officer, Mark Luff and Biosecurity officer Kate Radford tipping sheep as part of an eradication program.
Supplementary feeding in pregnant/lactating ewes

District Veterinarian Emily Stearman

Supplementary feeding is employed when the available feed does not meet appropriate energy, protein and fibre requirements.

There are some standard rules of thumb which can be adapted to focus on ewes in late pregnancy and early lactation to prevent conditions such as pregnancy toxemia from occurring.

The nutritional requirement of the ewe is the most important thing to know when considering supplementary feeding, in particular the energy requirement with some consideration to minerals:

- A 50 kg ewe with singles will require metabolisable energy of 11-14.2 MJ/kg from 16-20 weeks gestation; the twin bearing equivalent will require 12.8-18MJ/Kg.
- Protein requirements are around 8% of the ration for both maintenance and gestation however increase during lactation.
- During lactation, body condition defines the protein requirement – the higher the body condition, the higher the protein requirement; concurrently raising twins requires a higher level of protein than singles.
- As an example, oats have approx 12.5 MJ/Kg energy and 10.5% protein compared to lucerne hay with energy of approx. 8.5 MJ/Kg and protein of 15-20%.

The second consideration is to the volume of feed the animal can actually consume. A late gestation ewe may need to consume 4kgs/day of pasture feed to meet requirements but physically cannot consume this volume due to the size of the fetus and uterus.

During lactation while the energy requirements remain high the capacity to consume feed is greatly increased with the uterus and associated fluids now gone.

Rules of thumb:

- Choice of feed – hay vs grain: grain is high energy and small volume so this is usually critical in late pregnant ewes where volume of feed is a major factor. In lactation, where protein and energy are required, hay can be useful as well as providing fibre for good milk production.
- How much do I feed? – knowing the nutrient value of the feed commodity allows you to calculate the volume required based on the animals requirement; with a special focus on meeting energy requirements in late gestation and protein and energy requirements during lactation.
- When do I start feeding? Generally, we recommend starting supplementary feeding (particularly grain) approx. 4 -6 weeks out from lambing. This allows time for introduction to grain while slowly increasing the energy portion of the diet as lambing is approaching.
- Start feeding at 50g per head per day increasing by 50-100g per head per day, allowing approximately 2 weeks to reach the total volume required. This will allow rumen microbes to adapt to the change in diet and reduce the risk of acidosis.
- Some grains are more of a risk to producing acidosis than others. Lupins are safest, followed by oats, then barley, with wheat and triticale being the most risky.
- Cereal grains have altered calcium: phosphorus ratios and ewes in late gestation and early lactation have a high calcium requirement; so 1-1.5% ground limestone should be added to cereal grain to avoid issues with low calcium (eg. Milk Fever).

Grain supplementation example:

Basically, a ewe getting full hand feeding would require: 50% more than her normal requirements in late pregnancy and up to 100% more once the lambs are on the ground (in lactation). For example, a fully hand fed ewe requires 3.5kg of grain per week if there is no feed available in the paddock. That would mean in late pregnancy she
would need approximately 5kg of grain and then increased to 7kg/week in early lactation. Obviously that is a lot of grain and luckily this year, there is available feed in the paddock.

So the trick is estimating how much feed value is in the paddock and then supplementing the ewe for the rest. If you estimate that your paddock (or supplemented hay) is providing 50%, then you would only need to supplement ½ the grain (eg. 2.5kg/week in late pregnancy rising to 3.5 kg /week when into lactation).

Other factors to consider in this example are the things mentioned above. Ask yourself:

- How much room does the ewe have to fit the required feed in?
- Am I feeding other supplements (eg. hay as well)?
- Do I need Calcium / Magnesium supplementation too?

Another quick handy conversion guide to work from:

1kg grain =
- 1kg nuts
- 1.5 kg legume hay
- 2 kgs pasture hay /straw
- 0.83 Litres of molasses
- 3-4 kg silage

For further advice please contact your local district veterinarian.

BJD requirements to move cattle into Western Australia and Northern Territory

To sell cattle into Western Australia and now the Northern Territory, producers should send cattle:

1) That are not from a herd infected or suspected to be infected with Johne's disease; and * are from a property of origin that has had a tested status of MN2 or MN3 in the previous CattleMAP, and the testing regime to maintain that status has been continued and the animals have had no subsequent contact with cattle of a lower Johne's disease status

OR

2) Are from a property of origin that has a J-BAS score of 8, with a history of at least two negative biennial sample tests over a two (2) year period plus certification of a negative property Maintenance Test every two years after the last Sample Test, and the animals have had no subsequent contact with cattle of a lower Johne's disease status.

Important points for NSW Cattle Producers:

- Herds in the CattleMAP program were given a J-BAS score of 8 under the transitional arrangements to **30 June 2017**.
- To maintain a J-BAS score of 8 NSW breeders must establish and maintain a Biosecurity Plan relevant to BJD which is overseen by a veterinary advisor (annual review).
- If a Biosecurity Plan is not implemented by **30 June 2017** the herd will have a J-BAS score of 0 and will be ineligible to send cattle to WA or the NT after **30 June 2017**
- Note that the biosecurity plan used to maintain a previous MAP status would be adequate provided it was reviewed annually by a veterinary advisor.
Riverina Local Land Services
District Veterinarians

**Wagga Wagga**
Tim Biffin and Emily Stearman
6923 6300

**Young**
Elizabeth Braddon and Rahul Shankar
6381 4700

**Gundagai**
Kristy Stone
6940 6900

**Hay**
Courtney Simkin
0427 418 006

**Narrandera**
Gabrielle Morrice (on leave until 16/04/2017)
other offices to cover during interim
6958 1800