Animal Health Update

Anaemia in sheep due to Eperythrozoonosis by District Veterinarian Kristy Stone

Recent high rainfalls and waterlogged areas are providing an optimum environment for mosquitoes. As a result we are seeing a few cases of Eperythrozoonosis, caused by the bacteria *Mycoplasma ovis* (*M.ovis*).

This particular bacterium is spread between animals by the transfer of infected red blood cells either via biting insects such as mosquitoes or flies or through contaminated equipment used for marking, mulesing or shearing.

*M.ovis* causes anemia (low red blood cell levels).

The disease can often be confused with other causes of anaemia, such as barber’s pole worm infestation and liver fluke or causes of jaundice such as copper toxicity.

The disease can be diagnosed based on clinical signs, post mortem examination and laboratory tests. Treatment options are limited. Antibiotic treatment has been used in the past but with little success.

It is recommended to simply avoid any handling of the affected stock and leaving them in a paddock with good quality feed and water for 4-6 weeks to recover.

Eperythrozoonosis can generally be controlled by ensuring good hygiene during marking and mulesing by keeping instruments clean and by avoiding the need to yard stock within six weeks of marking or shearing.

Ensuring optimum nutrition, worm control and trace element supplementation (if required) will also help limit the severity of the disease if it occurs.

If you identify or suspect anaemic sheep it is important not to assume they have a Barber’s pole infection as mustering/yarding/drenching sheep infected with *M.ovis* can exacerbate the problem and result in sheep dying. Occasionally, concurrent diseases such as a worm burden may be exacerbating the impact of *M.ovis* and as such need to be identified and managed appropriately.

Please contact your local district veterinarian for further information.

www.riverina.lls.nsw.gov.au
Lumpy wool
by District Veterinarian Courtney Simkin

Several enquiries have been made by producers with regards to lumpy wool.

Lumpy wool is a skin infection caused by the bacterium *Dermatophilus congolensis*. It can only be spread by direct contact. The bacterium causes an infection of the skin which initially appears red for a week or more. After which exudation and encrustation (oozing and scab formation) occurs; this is known as the acute stage of infection.

The infection/scabs spread outwards and the scab separates from the skin. With favourable conditions the same area is re-infected and the infected area size continues to increase.

The infected sheep develops immunity and the lesions typically dry out within 4-6 weeks. The dry scab lifts completely away from the skin and remains contained in the wool fibres. These scabs can vary from a few millimetres wide to several centimetres.

In young lambs it can affect most of their body. The scabs increase drying time of wool and are susceptible to flystrike.

There are four conditions required for the spread of the infection.

1. source of the zoospores
2. moisture to release zoospores from scabs
3. a means to transfer the spores, in particular close and hard rubbing contact
4. a break in three protective layers - wool, sebaceous wax (lanolin) and stratum corneum (outer skin layer).

Wetting of the scabs can occur in several ways including – rain, dew, dipping and jetting. Once wet, zoospores can form within 30 minutes.

Wet sheep should not be held in close contact including yarding, droving or trucking. Studies have shown that up to 70% of ‘clean’/non-infected sheep can become infected after dipping. When there is an outbreak of lumpy wool all infected sheep should be dipped with 0.5-1% Zinc Sulphate separately.

Lambs do not develop a complete wax layer until they are at least five weeks old. It is common for ewes infected with lumpy wool to have scabs on their ears or on their faces. These scabs can become active under wet continues and easily spread the zoospores to the lambs. Lambs with severe infections can become ill thrifty and in some cases die.

Sheep which fail to develop immunity to the bacterium and become chronically infected should be culled. Severe cases can be treated with antibiotics. This is usually only recommended for valuable sheep or sheep that could die without treatment. Antibiotics act by stopping the infection allowing the scab to lift of the skin.

Certain conformational characteristics make sheep more susceptible to the infection including ‘devil grips’ (high shoulder blades) which open the wool, staple structure and tip formation (increasing penetration of water) and wool grease composition.

The only way to remove a scab from wool is close shearing under the dry scabs. The scabs will decrease the value of the wool clip due to increased processing time and the decreased quality of the wool within the scab.

You must always be careful when handling a sheep with lumpy wool when they are wet as the bacterium can also cause skin infection in humans.

If you have any further questions or have a suspect case of lumpy wool please call your local district veterinarian.
Flystrike prevention by District Veterinarian Emily

Flystrike is another health risk to add to the long list of ‘wet weather disease issues’ yet to be encountered this year.

With harvest fast approaching now is the time to consider fly prevention in sheep flocks across the area.

It has been the perfect storm for insect populations so far. Moist conditions are set to stay until at least December, with increasing temperatures and increasing winds, flies are likely to spread across our region.

Crutching has traditionally reduced the risk of breach and belly strike. However, body strike is predicted to be prevalent this year as well. Fleece conditions such as fleece rot, mycotic dermatitis (dermo), and grass seed contamination, established by the season so far create the ideal environment for female flies.

Careful consideration should be given to the selection of a fly treatment. The wool, meat and milk withhold as well as the method of application may determine the best product for your sheep enterprise. Some products have as high as 180 days for wool withholding and 120 days for meat export slaughter interval, this may not be desirable in fat lamb production systems.

The period of protection also varies with each product, something to consider coming into harvest where labour for repeated application may be scarce. This information is clearly displayed on the chemical label.

For assistance making preventative decisions you can contact your local District Veterinarian and/or assess the many useful resources on the ‘Flyboss’ website (http://flyboss.com.au).

Information about the registered chemicals is available on the back of National Vendor Declaration and in the DPI Prime fact; http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/content/agriculture/live stock/sheep/health/chemicals-lice-flystrike

I have a few chickens – should I consider their biosecurity? by District Veterinarian Tim Biffin

Avian Influenza (AI) and Newcastle Disease (ND) are regarded as the two most serious avian diseases from which we must protect Australian poultry (be that one backyard hen to a commercial enterprise). Australian outbreaks of these diseases have occurred in the past (and been eliminated) and are likely to occur again in the future.

In addition to these two diseases, there is a myriad of other exotic and endemic poultry diseases of which biosecurity practices can help to prevent the occurrence in your hen house.

Sourcing Stock

Even hens that appear healthy can carry diseases such as chronic respiratory disease, Infectious synovitis, Avian leukosis and some salmonella species. All hens should be purchased from a reputable supplier.

Wild Bird Control

In addition to the risk of disease transmission, waterfowl in Australia are known reservoirs for low pathogenic AI, and pigeons in the United Kingdom have been identified as reservoirs for ND.

Your domestic hens need to be isolated from other bird species on farm (whether they are wild or domestic). Wild birds should not be able to enter bird sheds, or be able to contaminate their feeding and watering points or sources. Further to this, feed spillages and swampy/wet areas around the sheds need to be cleaned up to discourage wild visitors.
People Control
People are probably the second most common carrier of poultry disease. Minimising exposure is most effective however those that do handle your hens should at least be washing their hands before and after. If they have been around other hens in the same day they should also wear clean clothes and a change of shoes/gumboots.

Commercial poultry farms are very strict on this point, only allowing essential personnel with disposable overalls, gumboots and gloves into any of their sheds.

Rodent and Pet control
Rodents and pets also have a role in disease transmission. Rodents will often spoil feed and water sources, cause damage to housing and present as a risk to human health (via food safety). A rodent control program should minimise the points of access into facilities; minimise access to feed/water/shelter; eliminate nesting places; provide good sanitation conditions; conduct baiting and/or trapping stations; and monitor rodent populations and control measures.

Domestic pets should also be limited in their exposure.

Medications and Vaccination
Internal (for example gut worms) and external parasites (for example lice and mites) are relatively common in domestic poultry. These should be controlled via management practices and medications.

Additionally, there are a variety of diseases for which chickens can be vaccinated against. Your veterinarian should be consulted about these.

For further information on keeping diseases out of your poultry:

Or for more information in regard to recognising exotic poultry diseases:

Figure 2 - Symptoms in chickens affected by Avian Influenza (AI) -Images credit: USDA

Figure 3 - Paralysis and fatality, typical symptoms of Newcastle Disease (ND) Images credit: Rod Reece, NSW Department of Primary Industries.

Cold feet, wet feet by District Veterinarian Emily Stearman

It is no surprise that this year has been a challenge for sheep production. The longevity of the wet conditions has significantly impacted the integrity of the sheep hoof. Standing in water, mud and lush grass softens the hard horn of the hoof and reduces the ability to resist bacterial infection.

Winter saw many sheep with very tender feet. Yarding for management reasons saw spikes in foot abscess, although the prevalence of this was also high in paddocked sheep flocks.

Needless to say sheep moving through saleyards or over concrete are foot sore for days after the
movement. This should by no means deter farmers from examining all lame sheep to determine the specific causes of lameness. Accurate diagnosis ensures an efficient treatment plan.

Scald (benign footrot) and virulent footrot are caused by the same bacteria. The differences in presentation of the disease are due to the difference in ability of the bacteria to underrun the hard horn of the foot. With such soft feet this year it is likely that less virulent strains may cause more severe presentation of disease than what we would see in a dryer spring.

Figure 4 - Moisture and hair loss between the claws typical of benign footrot

Favorable conditions for bacterial spread include moisture, mean daily temperatures between 10°C -20°C with actively growing pasture, especially where clover is large composition of the pasture.

Farmers should be conscious of any sweating between the toes especially when the hard horn is being underrun. For assistance in determining a diagnosis and management plan for lameness on farm please contact your local district or private veterinarian.

Announcements

Reproductive workshop/seminar – Gundagai

More Beef from Pastures is a Meat & Livestock Australia initiative, aimed at improving producer production and profitability.

Developed by Australia’s leading vets, cattle specialists and rural business experts, ReproActive is an outstanding specialised training workshop series designed to help maximise the reproductive potential of herds.

Each module will provide a wealth of knowledge to producers, resellers and veterinarians.

Date: Wednesday 26th October 2016
Time: 8:30am–3:00pm
Where: Kookoomooroo (woolshed), 2804 Gocup Rd Gundagai, NSW
Cost: $40.00 (ReproActive materials, refreshment and lunch provided)

RSVP: Register online at http://www.reproactivegundagai.eventbrite.com.au by the 24th October 2016 for more information and directions.

Agenda items

- **Tim Ryan, Meat & Livestock Australia** - Cattle market update: what’s driving prices and where are we heading?
- **Dr Peter Armstrong, Southwest Livestock Veterinary Services** (Event Coordinator) - The impact of knowing and achieving Critical Mating Weights + managing and planning through Condition Scoring (including yard demonstration and assessment).
- **Dr Tom Graham, Coolac Veterinary Services** (Event Coordinator) - Optimising Joining Periods + Bull Management and Health to extend bull working life (including
practical demonstration of a veterinary pre-jointing check).

- Dr Natalie Robertson, Group Veterinary Operations Manager, Zoetis Australia - Reproductive disease awareness and management.

For more information contact: Peter Reardo from Zoetis on 0438 610 688.

**Riverina Local Land Services**

**District Veterinarians**

**Wagga Wagga**
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Gabrielle Morrice (on leave until 16/04/2017)
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