Animal Health Update

Vaccinate against profit loss in sheep and cattle
by District Veterinarian Gabrielle Morrice

Our season has taken a turn for the better across most of our district and stock are in excellent condition with pastures coming away.

Last week at Wagga sheep sale, the best sucker lambs sold for $171/head and the top older lambs for $188.20/head. At Griffith, the top suckers were $174/ head.

At Wagga cattle sale, vealer steers topped $1384, and yearling steers were sold up to $1668/head.

In a good season like this, there is a high risk of Clostridial diseases such as pulpy kidney. Usually this presents as sudden death in your best grower animals. It can also affect older animals, especially if they have not had much lifetime exposure and can kill lambs as young as 2-3 weeks old on ewes with a flush of pasture causing good milk production.

Vaccination using a 5 in 1 costs 25¢ a dose in sheep (50¢ for full cover) and 50¢ in cattle ($1 for full cover). The worst case of pulpy kidney I have seen in my career involved the loss of 125 prime older lambs in one night. At today’s prices that would be worth around $23,500

Can you afford not to vaccinate?

Where are we up to with lice?
by District Veterinarian Rahul Shankar

Recently producers in the Young area have banded together to form a lice control and eradication program for their region.

This was due to increasing reports of lice in the district coupled with the fact that new infestations were occurring to their adjoining neighbours. A two year plan has been set out for the group, and with the assistance of district veterinarians and biosecurity officers, will aim to rid the district of lice in a few years' time.

Lice has been reported in several properties throughout the region, and one of the more commonly asked questions we have is whether enforcement action can be taken by the LLS in regards to lice offences.

Lice is no longer a notifiable disease in NSW.
As such regulatory action is limited. The roles of LLS biosecurity officers and District Veterinarians are limited to:

- responding to producer enquiries for lice control information
- assisting producers to develop an approved lice biosecurity plan
- facilitate initial communication and mediation of lice issues between landholders

In accordance with the Stock Diseases Act, 1923, it is still an offence for lice infested sheep to be present at a public saleyard, and for lice infested...
sheep to move on or across a travelling stock route (TSR).

What are ways you can reduce the likelihood of having lice on your property?

• Maintain good fences. Check them regularly and make sure they are in good order.
• When purchasing sheep, insist on a Sheep Health Statement (SHS) and quarantine the new introductions prior to introducing them to other mobs. Check for lice when they are next shorn.
• Shearers moccasins are microwaved for a period of 5 minutes or moccasins that have not been used for 10 days by shearers are used on property.

For further information about lice, and the treatment options available to you, please contact your local district veterinarian for details.

Photosensitization on grazing oats by District Veterinarian Emily Stearman

Recently sheep graziers in the Wagga Wagga area have reported photosensatization when grazing oats.

Oats do not contain any liver toxic chemicals unlike Witch Grass or Hairy Panic (Panicum spp), for example, typically associated with photosensatization in the Riverina.

However with recent weather conditions two scenarios exist: fungal contamination of oats or more commonly, the plant is so rapidly growing that chlorophyll content is at an all-time high, resulting in photosensatization.

Chlorophyll is the pigment plants utilise with sunlight to generate growth. Grazing animals can tolerate large and variable amounts of chlorophyll which is broken down by the liver.

1-2% sheep in flocks grazing lush oats at this time of year may become overwhelmed, resulting in Primary Photosensatization.

Clinical signs include irritation and oedema around the face and head, erratic behavior and in severe cases sloughing of facial skin. Affected sheep should be kept out of direct sunlight with ready access to high quality hay, +/- grain and fresh water.

Symptoms can persist for up to two weeks but usually regress after a few days.

Severe cases may require medical treatment with anti-inflammatory products and/or antibiotics. Consult your local veterinarian for assistance.

When cases are seen on a paddock removing the whole mob for 2-3 days will often break the cycle of disease occurrence.

If you are suspicious that the crop may be fungi affected seek assistance from your Agronomist and remove stock immediately.

Bit of scouring about? Don’t discount worms!
by District Veterinarian Rahul Shankar

Throughout the region producers have been experiencing scouring amongst their various mobs. Most of this would be attributed to the current feed on offer, however in many cases worms have been causing production issues.

The main culprit to date has been the black scour worm (Trichostrongylus species), but incidental findings of Barbers Pole Worm (BPW) have also been found by district veterinarians whilst undertaking field visits.

What can you do to rule out worms on your property?

Undertake a wormtest. These are available from many rural suppliers and our LLS offices.

A wormtest allows you to get a good idea of the worm burdens present in the paddocks being tested and whether or not the mobs will need a subsequent drench as a result.
Typical signs of worm burdens causing production issues in addition to scouring are: weight loss, sudden death, anemia (in the case of barbers pole worm), bottle jaw (barbers pole worm), and a distinctive tail to the mob.

To discuss drenches, worms or issues you may have with increasing worm burdens, please contact your local district veterinarian.

Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) quiz
by District Veterinarian Rahul Shankar

Image 3: Sheep with severe dermatitis and wool loss from chewing at its wool and skin

What’s wrong with this sheep?

History: Producer is extremely concerned as part of his flock of dry ewes have been away from the rest of the mob and have been displaying signs of rubbing and chewing at their skin.

Loss of condition is also noted in affected sheep and a small percentage of the sheep are also displaying an unusual gait, described as ‘high stepping’ with some of the animals going into convulsions or tremors when handled for closer examination.

Which of the following are you thinking might be the cause of the problem experienced by this producer?

a) Lice  
b) Johnes disease  
c) Itch-mite  
d) Maedi Visna  
e) Rabies  
f) Scrapie

The correct answer is f, Scrapie.
Australia’s sheep flock is free from Scrapie. Scrapie is a TSE, similar to mad cow disease. It is an incurable nervous systemic illness. Australia has strict quarantine measures and surveillance programs in place to meet international standards for the detection of TSE. Australia has an internationally recognised TSE-free status.

Producers should be aware that as part of an incentive program called the NTSESP (National Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy Surveillance Program), eligible sheep over the age of 18 months that show relevant clinical signs will be eligible for $100 in compensation.

One of the difficulties facing Australia in a Scrapie outbreak is how fast will we recognise the disease. This means that everyone from the paddock (producers, agents, abattoir workers) to the top of government (private vets, district vets, veterinary laboratories, State and Federal veterinary officers) have to be aware of their role in that diagnosis.

For those of us at the ground level, we need to be able to recognise the signs as unusual (for Scrapie, that is rubbing, itching, blindness, weight loss, wool pulling, tremors, convulsions, bunny hopping, behavioural changes and being found dead) and then seek the appropriate help.

As a producer, what would you do if these were your sheep?

Your answer should be to call a vet. This could be your local private vet or your local district vet. These are the people equipped to get a speedy diagnosis and also assist in containing the disease.

You could also call the Exotic Disease Hotline 1800 675 888.

Other Announcements

Markets accept only current LPA NVDs

Red meat producers will need to ensure they have the current Livestock Production Assurance National Vendor declaration (LPA NVD) form from 16 November, 2015 as all older forms will not be accepted under the LPA program.

The current LPA NVD will be required for movements of all LPA accredited livestock (sheep, lambs, goats and cattle), including property to property, through saleyards, direct to processors, feedlots, and to the live export trade.

The phase-out of all versions older than those labeled 0413, which has been available since December 2013, is being driven by expectations from international markets. The current LPA NVD for bobby calves is version 0412 and was released in 2012.

What do producers need to do?

If you are using the current LPA NVD, you need to do nothing
If you are unsure, check your LPA NVD Book:

The LPA NVD version number can be found in the top left corner of each LPA NVD.

Have a different version?

The order a hard-copy LPA NVC booklet online or purchase electronic NVD’s at http://lpa.ausmeat.com.au/

What happens if I sell livestock without the current LPA NVD?

LPA accredited producers must use the current LPA NVD (Cattle, EU Cattle, Sheep and Goats) for all movements from Monday, 16 November 2015.

Please note, that the phase out of old NVDs also means they are no longer valid as a Transported Stock Statement or an NLIS approved movement document. This means, they literally can no longer be used for any legal livestock movements.
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