RIVERINA ANIMAL HEALTH UPDATE

June
SALMONELLA - NOT JUST SOMETHING TO WATCH OUT FOR WITH CHICKEN!
Banjo Davidson (CSU student) & District Veterinarian Dione Howard
If livestock are fed in containment areas, many organisms that are often present in low numbers without causing problems will become more concentrated and increase the risk of disease.

Faecal contamination leads to contamination of feed and water with Salmonella organisms. This is often associated with stressors such as transport and with livestock in areas that are wet and muddy following rain or overflowing water troughs.

Salmonellosis causes fever, scouring (sometimes bloody) and depression in livestock. It may also cause ‘joint ill’ and associated lameness in young stock as well as sudden death.

If you suspect salmonellosis in your livestock, advice should be sought from your veterinarian promptly. Treatment for salmonellosis requires fluid therapy and antibiotics prescribed by a veterinarian. To prevent salmonellosis, prevent faecal contamination of feed and water and avoid keeping livestock that are under stress in wet, muddy areas. Remember that salmonellosis is a zoonosis and therefore a risk to us too. So maintain strict hygiene after handling sick animals and withhold affected sheep from slaughter until the outbreak is controlled.

PHOTOSENSITISATION IN SHEEP ON GRAZING CROPS
District Veterinarian Katelyn Braine
Over the last month, we have had several reports of photosensitisation in sheep that are grazing canola and recently wheat crops. It has been reported mostly in both weaned and unweaned lambs. They typically present with swelling to the ears, muzzles and around the eyes, shaking of the head due to pain and discomfort, as well as damage to the skin that appears similar to sunburn. In some cases death has also been reported.

Photosensitisation can arise from either directly eating a range of plants that contain photodynamic agents (primary photosensitisation), or as a result of liver damage (secondary photosensitisation). Sunlight then activates the photodynamic agents present in unpigmented and unprotected skin, resulting in local tissue damage.

Although the photodynamic agent in Brassica spp is unknown, the photosensitisation caused by grazing canola and cereal crops is thought to be a primary photosensitisation.

Prompt treatment by removing stock from the source of the toxin, keeping them out of direct sunlight and providing nursing care when needed, will normally result in recovery.

If you have any concerns about photosensitisation in your livestock, please contact your local district vet.
CASE STUDY: THE CASE OF THE WOBBLY PORKERS
District Veterinarian Sophie Hemley

Case history
A pig producer had five adult barrows sporadically become progressively wobbly (ataxic) over a six month period. The pigs became so ataxic they became recumbent (unable to walk) but remained bright, alert and responsive and maintained their dietary intake. Clinical signs became most evident in the hot summer months. The pigs were fed a predominant grain and legume diet. Only adult barrows were affected, and no clinical signs were seen in the smaller piglets.

Clinical examination findings
The barrows examined had:

• A wide-based stance - indicating that they did not have normal balance
• Those barrows who could walk circled to one side and intermittently knuckled at the fetlock, some also had severe curvature of the spine
• Those barrows who were recumbent could dog sit
• All pigs had normal head carriage.

Post mortem findings
• Significant volumes of flocculent cerebrospinal fluid
• Yellow boney plaque on the back of the skull
• Multiple irregular shaped areas of consolidation on both lung lobes

Laboratory findings
• Mild selenium and copper deficiency
• Severe vitamin A deficiency
• Syringomelia (fluid filled cyst in spinal cord) with spinal cord degeneration
• Increased muscle enzymes due to recumbency

So why were the porkers wobbly?
The major problem with the pigs is the significant vitamin A deficiency. Vitamin A deficiency is uncommon in pigs as most producers include a commercial pellet or supplementation in the ration and the liver is able to store surplus vitamin A, however prolonged dietary deficiency can result in clinical disease.

Vitamin A deficiency can present as night blindness, respiratory disorders, incoordination, urinary disease, gastrointestinal upset or as impaired fertility in sows. Vitamin A deficient sows can farrow blind, eyeless, weak or malformed pigs.
WHY DO LAMBS DIE?
District Veterinarian Evie Duggan

Peri-natal lamb mortality (deaths of lambs in their first week of life) is a huge point of inefficiency in our industry, with 10-30% of lambs on the ground not surviving. Of those lambs that don’t survive to marking, 90% die in that first week of life. The most common reason for lambs to die in the first week of life is because they fail to ingest sufficient nutrients to survive the first few hours and days – it is figuring out what is causing the lambs to not ingest these nutrients that is the key to being able to identify and make changes.

There are many reasons causing lambs to not ingest sufficient nutrients (milk from the ewe) – but there are 3 major ones:

- lamb birth weight
- difficulties during the birthing process and,
- inappropriate behaviour by either the ewe or lamb while developing the ewe-lamb bond – which can be caused by multiple factors.

NATIONAL SHEEP HEALTH MONITORING PROJECT
District Veterinarian Dione Howard

The National Sheep Health Monitoring Project (NSHMP) monitors lines of adult sheep in abattoirs for animal health conditions that reduce farm profit through productivity losses or impact market access. The NSHMP collects information on 20 conditions:

- Arthritis
- Bladder worm
- Caseous lymphadenitis (CLA, cheesy gland)
- Dog bites
- Grass seeds
- Hydatids
- Knotty gut
- Liver fluke
- Ovine Johne's Disease (on request by the producer)
- Pleurisy
- Pneumonia
- Sarcocystosis
- Sheep measles
- Vaccination lesions
- Lung worm
- Rib fractures
- Bruising
- Cirrhosis
- Nephritis
- Fever/septicaemia

12 abattoirs across Australia participated in data collection in 2017-18, four of these were in NSW and included Cowra, Dubbo, Gundagai and Tamworth abattoirs. 2.24 million sheep were inspected in NSW across 8,601 lines and 1,922 PICs. The NSHMP 2017-18 Annual Report is now available online. Notable observations from the report relating to NSW are:

- Over 2017-18 financial year the incidence of grass seeds in NSW has decreased, likely due to dry conditions.
- The percentage of lines infected with liver fluke with at least one infected sheep was highest in NSW for 2017-18 financial year.
- The percentage of sheep infected with hydatids has continued to decrease in NSW since 2014-15.

How do you get feedback carcass data from your flock? Log onto Meat & Livestock Australia’s Livestock Data Link to access your results.

AUSTRALIA'S NEW DEFINITION OF LAMB
District Veterinarian Evie Duggan

As of 1st July 2019 the definition of a lamb has changed in Australia. The new definition is:

‘An ovine animal that a) is under 12 months of age, or b) does not have any permanent incisor teeth in wear’.

This change in definition allows producers to have some time between eruption and being able to sell lambs before they are classed as hoggets. It should be noted that with this new definition, the length of time a lamb is considered a lamb will be extended by an average of 4 weeks (Holmes Sacket 2008).

Sheep CRC (2019) summarised the findings of animal age and eating quality experiments as overall meat eating quality of lambs is superior to hoggets, however meat from young sheep with partially erupted teeth is unlikely to be inferior to eating quality of meat under the previous classification of lamb.
LPA AUDITS - NOT THAT SCARY!

District Veterinarian Emily Stearman

A few weeks ago Livestock Production Assurance program sent Auditors to our farm. There is not a large amount of information available publicly about what these audits entail - hopefully my experience can answer some of the questions you may have.

What things do they look at?
The aim of these audits is to ensure food safety and traceability. The focus therefore is on records kept around plant and animal treatments, including batch numbers, dose/application rates and date of use. Be aware of product recommendations regarding Export Slaughter Intervals (ESI), withholding periods (WHPs) and stock grazing intervals. They will ask where and how these products are stored and request to inspect these areas. Copies of NVD’s for movements onto and off the property should be accessible, electronically or by hard copy. The ability to correctly complete these documents will be assessed.

How did they choose me?
Essentially the audits are conducted on a set number of PIC’s in each region of Australia. The number of properties audited has increased as a follow up from the changes brought about in 2017. The PICs are randomly selected from all PICs in the local area, things that may flag attention to a PIC for targeting auditing include the use of HGPs in livestock or if large numbers of stock move off your property and lose lifetime traceability.

What if I don’t have everything completed on my Biosecurity Plan?
The biosecurity plans were designed to ask producers questions about on farm operations or sites that may impact on food safety. While some things are regulated under other legislation, such as NLIS requirements, the biosecurity plan should be considered as a guideline for farm management not as a list of things that must be done before an audit. Common sense things like preventing stock from accessing old dip sites or rubbish dumps is a requirement but how you do this is up to you. Reassessing these annually is recommended, you may generate a list of things that need to be done on farm but they don’t have to all be done at once. The auditors may make recommendations that will improve on farm operations. Some of these may be a directive if impacting on food safety or traceability and a follow up inspection may be required in these cases. At the completion of the audit you will receive an audit summary. The process takes a couple of hours but time will vary depending on the size and intensity of the operation. Be prepared but not alarmed. If you have any major concerns leading up to these audits your LLS vet may be able to guide you to some assistance.

RIVERINA BEEF PRODUCERS!
CSU are looking for 10 beef cattle producers to participate in a drench resistance trial. Herds are required to be within 80km of Wagga Wagga or Holbrook, have minimum 70 cattle under 12 months which have not been drenched within 2 months. Participating producers will be notified of their on-farm drench resistance results once project has been completed. If interested, please contact Jane Nelson on jnelson@csu.edu.au

RIVERINA SHEEP PRODUCERS!
Riverina sheep producers are invited to participate in a web-based questionnaire aimed at improving extension services available to sheep producers relating to animal health and nutrition practices associated with lambing.

Questions will be based around vaccination, nutritional supplementation of sheep and producer perceptions of management practices. The study is part of research being completed by PhD student Kayla Kopp at Charles Sturt University and will take participants approximately 15 minutes to complete. The study is completely confidential and participants will go into the draw to win a $50 pre-paid Visa/Mastercard gift card.

For more information please follow the link https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/lambsurvey. In doing so, you are under no obligation to continue through to the questions.

LAMB PLANNER
Have you ever thought about changing your lambing date? The WA Department of Agriculture and Food in conjunction with ASHEEP, AWI and MLA have made the ever popular paper based “Lambing Planner” into an app. The Lambing Planner App sets out the key management dates within the reproductive cycle and offers information on nutrition, condition score targets, reproductive management and lambing guidelines. The app is free to download and available in both Android and iOS formats.
OUR SHADOWS!
For a few weeks of the year, you may notice that your district veterinarians gain one or two extra shadows. These shadows are better known as vet students! Hot on the tail of the DV’s, we are eager to learn as much as possible about the role of the LLS in NSW. As part of our final year of study at CSU, we are required to complete ten placements in all fields of veterinary science; one of these is State Veterinary Medicine. During our time with the LLS district vets we are here to learn about animal production, biosecurity, disease surveillance and public health in the Riverina. We enjoy getting our hands dirty and developing our practical skills on farm by tipping sheep and doing disease investigations. We also love experiencing life outside of private practice! We would like to say thank you for your hospitality and for taking the time to chat to us about all things livestock.

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Stock Chat

Do you follow us on Facebook? Stock Chat is a series of instructional videos featuring our veterinarians. They’ll step you through the symptoms and treatment options of common animal health issues, and give you some advice along the way.

Find Riverina Local Land Services on Facebook to keep in the loop!

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CONTACT YOUR CLOSEST DISTRICT VETERINARIAN

Wagga Wagga | Emily Stearman | 6923 6300 | Dione Howard | 0428 115 134
Young | Eliz Braddon & Evie Duggan | 6381 4700
Narrandra/Griffith | Sophie Hemley | 0427 696 895
Hay | Courtney Simkin | 0427 418 006
Gundagai | Katelyn Braine | 0428 262 112

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NSW Government Local Land Services