



# EWES NEWS

## Lamb Tailing and Castration

**Dave Robertson BVSc BSc – VETERINARY CENTRE Oamaru**



As most of you are aware it has become a law that farmers need to leave a stumpy bit behind when tailing now. This has been a “best practice guideline” for 4 years, the consultation was done in 2016. Many of the meat works report on it, and most Western European countries have decided it has to be this way...so (as usual) we end up following to keep the peace. The evidence of any meaningful or useful reason for this change is sketchy at best, but we will get used to it. Most tailing contractors have been compliant for a number of seasons now.

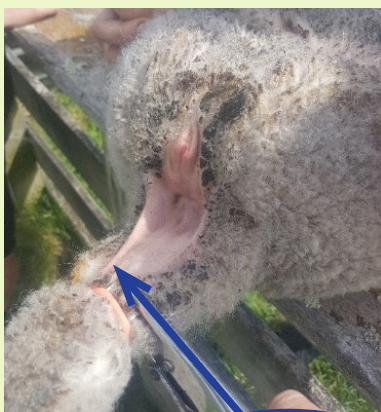
**Minimum standard for tail length came into effect May 2021.** \$500 fines will be issued if 2021 born animals are non-compliant.

**The tail MUST be no shorter than the distal end of the caudal fold.** <sup>1</sup>

Another way of stating it is:

**No shorter than the third palpable joint**

**Or... The tail shall be docked with sufficient length to cover the vulva of a ewe, and the equivalent length in rams.** <sup>2</sup>



Caudal Fold

<sup>1</sup> Beef and lamb Fact Sheet July 2020. minimum standards and best practice guidelines please refer to Animal Welfare (Painful Husbandry Procedures) Code of Welfare available from MPI Tel: 0800 008 333 or [www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/animal-welfare/codes-of-welfare/](http://www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/animal-welfare/codes-of-welfare/)

<sup>2</sup> RWS Tail Docking Standard Operating Procedure. Publication Date: August 13, 2020

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## Capsule Monitoring

**Daley Watson-Krawitz BVSc – VETERINARY CENTRE Waimate**



Have you put capsules in ewes pre-lamb this winter? If so you should want to know if they are being effective or if there is the beginnings of resistance developing!

The Veterinary Centre are again offering free faecal egg count monitoring for any capsules purchased with us.

10 individual samples (please don't mix all together in a pot) at day 60-80 post administration is all that is required. We have sampling packs available in store.

At this point if working effectively then we would hope for zero or very minimal numbers of eggs (the claimed payout of a Bionic is 100 days).

A sample with eggs means 1 of 3 things:

- You have resistance

- There was an animal/s which did not receive a drench (refugia) in the group
- The sample was taken too late (closer to the 100 day mark)

Last season a number of samples were coming through with eggs which sparked plenty of discussion interest between the farmers and vets. It may prompt an investigation into drench efficacy in lambs if that hasn't been done in a while?

Lastly a reminder that if you (hopefully) have used refugia and (hopefully!!) have identified these ewes, do not include them in your 10 samples. If you haven't tagged your refugia ewes it is another reason to consider doing it next year! (i.e is an elevated egg count from 3/10 samples resistance or just 3 unmarked refugia ewes?)



A family affair tailing with Dave Robertson



# Using Pain Management at tailing



**Dave Robertson BVSc BSc – VETERINARY CENTRE Oamaru**

The management of pain during tailing and castration is a new concept. It is not law. This article outlines some of the options. It is currently for farmers to weigh-up the costs and welfare benefits. No one is making you do it. It is an interesting field to discuss with your farming colleagues and Veterinary Centre vet.

Benefits:

- Male lambs will not lie down and get mis-mothered the same.
- Your lambs will experience less pain afterwards.

It is probably better if you have an informed view on the pain management options for tail and castration pain in your lambs before some outfit mandates that you have to.

Most of the pain associated with castration and tailing occurs within the first 5 to 40 minutes following the procedure. Lambs can lie-down for a period and display signs of discomfort.

There are options available for managing this pain associated with tailing and castration. It is not mandated at this point, but has been identified as a “best practice guideline” in some instances. There are wool contracts that may require it in future. The Australian’s are a lot further down this path than we currently are.

To adopt best practice recommendations to manage the painful aspects of tailing and castrating lambs the following options are available.

**Fast acting, shorter duration anaesthetics.** Local anaesthetics block pain and sensation of the area they contact. The approved local anaesthetic products available for use at lamb marking that do not require a Veterinary Operating Instruction (VOI) are Tri-Solfen® topical and NumOcaine® injection.

Tri-Solfen® contains two types of local anaesthetics, (lignocaine and bupivacaine), Adrenaline, and Antiseptic.

Tri-Solfen® is applied as a gel spray directly onto the open wound and provides immediate (within one minute) pain relief that lasts up to 24 hours. The meat withhold is currently default at 90 days. This may shorten with current work under way. Only appropriate after hot-iron or surgical removal.

NumOcaine® (delivered via the Numnuts® device) is an injected local anaesthetic developed specifically for ring castration and tail docking with rings. It provides immediate pain relief, reaching maximum intensity 15-35 minutes after application. Local injection into the neck of the scrotum rather than the testicle is more effective. It reduces pain displayed by up to 68%.

**Lignocaine injection** is a restricted veterinary medicine. It is used for minor surgical procedures in conscious animals. For use in tail dock and castration a Veterinary Operating Instruction (V.O.I) would have to

be approved, which would involve an audit of competency to handle and administer it correctly. A register of use and log book would have to be complied.

Products with meloxicam (Metacam and buccalgesic) alleviate pain and inflammation and reduce fever and fluid production caused by tissue damage. These are slower-acting than local anaesthetics, can be injected or applied orally, and provides longer-lasting pain relief for over 24 hrs.

Injectable local anaesthetic is the fastest acting and most comprehensive to cover the bulk of the pain associated with castration & tailing (first 45min).

## Summary

The numnuts applicator is well designed and standardises the procedure and has additional safety features. The numnuts tool costs ~\$350.

If using a hot iron I would use Tri-Solfen on the tail stump. Anti-inflammatories take too long to kick-in to be of benefit on their own.

## Summary of tail docking and castration pain management options

| Procedure         | Option                   | Comments   | \$/lamb (approx) | Meat WH |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--|------------------|---------|
| Castration        | Numnuts                  | Approved tool that combines elastrator ring and consistent local delivery                                      | 0.85             | Nil     |
|                   | Local injection          | Separate local injection on vaccination needle. Require veterinary assessment for initial dispensation.        |                  | Nil     |
| Tailing with Iron | Local injection          | As above   |                  | Nil     |
|                   | Tri-Solfen topical spray | Contains 2 types of local anaesthetic, adrenaline and disinfectant. Spray 1.5 -3mL on stump post tail removal. | 20-60c           | 90 days |
| Tailing rings     | Numnuts                  | As above   | 0.85             | Nil     |
|                   | Local injection          | As above   |                  | Nil     |
|                   | Buccalgesic              | Oral anti-inflammatory. Starts working after 20 min. Lasts 24hrs+.   | TBA ~0.50        | 10 days |

# Transport Regulations

**Finja Schmidt BVSc – VETERINARY CENTRE WAIMATE**

There are always a handful of animals on farm that one would like to send to the works but we need to consider how these will travel on the ride to the works. Here is a quick review around what can/ can't get a transport certificate to get to the works.

- **Lameness: sheep and cattle have to be weight bearing at rest and when walking.** We need to be confident that our lame animals won't deteriorate through travel.
- **Cancer eye: lesions have to be smaller than \$1 coin, non-ulcerated, not weeping, not bleeding and can't have spread to the nearby bone.** To inspect these animals, please be prepared to put them in a headcrush as we can't make these judgments out in the paddock. Generally, it

is best to get any eye lesions removed ASAP before they spread. Then send to works after they've healed.

- **Broken penis: to send these, bulls have to be able to urinate** – it may even help if you can take a video of this on farm before we arrive as they don't often urinate on command! These are very painful and a welfare decision needs to be made very promptly.
- **Any abnormality or deformity:** needs a vet cert. For example, an amputated claw, missing eye or blown joint.
- **Lines of sheep with footrot** require a vet certificate. However, any that are non-weight bearing and emaciated can't go. Snow-shoe type toes need tidying up.

- **Other conditions:** animals need to be of appropriate body condition, i.e. not emaciated. Johnes cows can go, provided they are not dehydrated or emaciated. Both sheep and cattle can't be trucked if heavily pregnant i.e. about to give birth.

- **Anything systemically ill, bleeding or discharging:** cannot be transported. That includes vaginal prolapse (can be replaced and retained but need a cert), retained afterbirth and ulcerated skin cancers. Udder blow-outs are not acceptable.

Certificates are only valid for 7 days. Get space sorted for the nearest works before ordering a vet to come for a transport certificate.



# Lamb Rearing

**Dave Robertson BVSc BSc**  
VETERINARY CENTRE Oamaru



## The ad lib way – like what mother does.

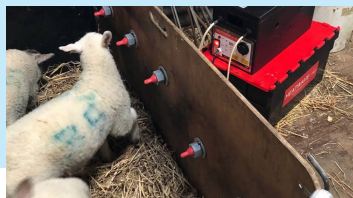
We have in-stock the Heatwave automatic lamb feeders again. There are more farmers with these units and they have changed the way they view rearing extra lambs.

“Lambs do a lot better, and it is much less hassle”. It mimics what happens naturally. Lambs are never completely emptied out, so always have energy in the system to grow optimally. Because the stomach is full, they don't gorge and blow-up like they can do on twice-daily feed milk replacer.

The Heatwave is a simple design and much lower cost than the bigger commercial scale feeders that are fully automated.

The work required is to mix cold milk once per day and clean the piping through with water and alkali (5 minutes and very easy). Training the lamb on the teat will depend on the lamb and the teat type. They still require colostrum for 2 days. This will not go as well through automatic feeders.

Have lamb starter mix and fresh water available. Scratching pet lambs with Scabiguard early is advised with automatic feeders to prevent them spreading scabby mouth.



## What milk powder?

We have Sprayfo milk powder is stock. It prevents bloat deaths at that 3-6 week stage, especially with bottle fed lambs. It also works well in automatic lamb feeders due to its ease of mixing.

Other standard lamb milk replacers can work in automatic feeders also.

## Meal and quality grass

To make lamb rearing “stack-up” getting lambs onto meal/muesli seems to be critical. This develops the rumen environment faster. On a per kg of energy basis meal is 1/3rd the price of milk replacer.

If bottle feeding lambs when lambs are eating 100g of meal per day you can drop out a milk feed (~400mL). The early milk wean system is when lambs are eating 200g of meal per day then they can be weaned (10-12kg liveweight) and remain on 200-600g of meal per day for another month whilst on grass until 25kg liveweight. The trick is to keep the hens, birds and adult sheep out of it!

Quality spring grass for orphan lambs will ensure best results.

# Water Mouth in Lambs

**Ellen Hodder BVSc**  
VETERINARY CENTRE Oamaru



Watery mouth is caused by coliform bacteria – E.coli. Affected lambs look depressed, drool excessively (gives the name “watery mouth”), have blue/dark looking gums and have a bloated abdomen. They typically do not have diarrhoea.

Commonly diagnosed in Great Britain, watery mouth is also an important cause of lamb loss on New Zealand farms.

The disease occurs most often in 1-3 day old lambs. The low acidity in the abomasum is unable to kill off E. coli bacteria, which can then infect the small intestine. E. coli then release toxins and gas; causing abdominal pain, bloating and eventually septic shock. Lambs consume the E.coli bacteria when suckling from ewes with dirty udders and daggly bellies – so we may see more Watery Mouth when weather conditions are wet and muddy.

Recommended treatment is with daily injections into the muscle of either Intracillin, Bivatop or Engemycin, and supportive care with stomach tubed electrolytes twice to three times daily, in between feeds of milk.

The main ways in which to prevent watery mouth:

- Lamb in as clean paddocks as possible
- Pre-lamb crutching of ewes
- Ensuring lambs are receiving adequate colostrum intakes. Colostrum intakes can be improved by separating triplets into twins and fostering one lamb off onto a surrogate. Ensure any lambs brought in for revival, mothering on etc are fed colostrum, by stomach tube if necessary. There are commercial colostrum products available where no stored colostrum is available.

# Veltrak – A new way of tagging velvet for the 2021/22 season

**Luke Smyth BVSc – VETERINARY CENTRE Oamaru**



VelTrak is a fully electronic, web-based system for tagging and tracing velvet. It was introduced on the 1st August 2021.

Velvet tags will now be black, bar coded and contain UHF RFID chips. The blue tags with the barcodes we had been previously using will now be obsolete.

Velvet tags must be associated with the farm from which the velvet is harvested. By now you should have all received an invitation from DINZ and now be able to access the veltrak website.

All users of VelTrak, must first register their farming business. When you register, you must select which vet practice you will be getting your tags from.

VelTrak's primary purpose is to provide

traceability of velvet from farm to market. Scanning and recording at each step of the chain from the farm to the export pack house ensures that every stick of velvet can be tracked or traced.

Velvet tags must be associated with the farm from which the velvet is harvested.

Before we can allocate VelTrak tags to a deer farmer, the farm's velveting and cold storage facilities must have passed an RCS audit. This applies regardless of whether you or one of the veterinary centre vets removes the velvet.

Before giving the tags to you, the Veterinary Centre clinic will scan the tags and record them on the VelTrak website. The tags will next be scanned and recorded by the velvet

buyer or the receiving pack house. The buyer or receiver will generate an electronic Velvet Status Declaration (eVSD) for you to approve in VelTrak. You no longer need to fill out a paper VSD or record tag numbers, unless you wish to for farm management reasons. The agent or firm that generates the eVSD will email you to let you know that an eVSD is ready.



# Beef Production and Mating



**Dave Robertson BVSc BSc**  
VETERINARY CENTRE Oamaru

## Mating preparations start now for heifers:

### Yearling Heifer timetable

|              |           |                                  |
|--------------|-----------|----------------------------------|
| September 15 | 250kg min | Eclipse<br>1st BVD or blood test |
| October 15   | 270kg min | 2nd BVD<br>Multimin boost        |
| November 20  | 300kg min | Mating 42 days 1 bull:25<br>AI*  |
| January 2    |           | Bull removed                     |
| February 14  |           | Preg test                        |

\*See programme below

### Worm control

September and November are typical months to drench yearling cattle, depending on the type of pastures they are on. Combination drench (Eclipse pour-on or injectable) or oral (Matrix mini dose) are good options.

### Minerals

Selenium and Copper are the main ones to top-up prior to breeding. If you don't know whether they need to supplement do some bloods to check. Multimin is popular as an all-round, shorter acting option. It has some New Zealand trial data showing benefits with conception rate and immune function. Selovin LA and coppermax are popular options also.

### Disease control

BVD vaccination is the big one. 55% of beef herds are infected and heifers are at the biggest risk.

1st heifer vaccination should be done in September and 2nd booster in October. Alternatively blood test all heifers to see if any carriers are present.

### The right genetics for yearling heifer mating

The physical size of yearling and 2 year-old bulls is important, but will not tell you the calving ease or birth weights of progeny. For heifers a live calf and a healthy 1st calvers are the top priority, but it can be interesting to check the make-up of other traits on heifer-mating bulls. Check the breeding values for calving ease: Birth weight, Calving ease direct, gestation length of the heifer bulls you intend to use. Look also at the accuracies and what the sire of the bull is made up of also.



Nicky Gibson – Seadown Herefords

# Prescribing Antibiotics for Sheep & Beef Farms



**Euan Tait BVMS – VETERINARY CENTRE** Waimate

As vets, we are required to prescribe antibiotics for use in animals. If you don't have a current annual prescription for restricted veterinary medicines, then a point of sale prescription is required where you discuss the condition with a vet at the time of purchase.

While most conditions you treat with antibiotics are fairly routine, thinking about dose rates and treatment duration is a part of the process that is vital for good outcomes. What is the condition? How bad is the condition? What will work best?

To justify antibiotic use, there needs to be signs of bacterial infection and a commitment to monitoring response to treatment, repeating the dose where required and recording the animal treated. Even when penicillin was first commercialised in the 1940's they identified that a lack of follow-up treatment not only compromised resolving the infection but allowed resistant bacteria to emerge. If conditions aren't responding to treatment, please get in touch with a vet for further assessment.

Penicillin and oxytetracycline are the go-to antibiotics for sheep and beef farmers, common uses include:

- After a dead lamb/calf is removed – penicillin at 1ml/10kg is required and they usually need a follow-up dose.
- Navel infections in calves and lambs. 5 day penicillin course recommended at 1mL/10kg (ie 0.5ml for a 5kg lamb) anti-inflammatories will help too
- Bearings are controversial. Really fresh ones don't need antibiotic treatment but older bearings or any sign of trauma will benefit from penicillin. A single dose at 1ml/10kg should suffice unless badly infected. Again anti-inflammatories are of benefit
- Treating individual cases of infectious lameness in sheep. Tetravet aerosol and oxytetracycline (bivatop/tenaline) 1mL/10kg should sort most one-off cases out.
- Advanced eye infections and lung conditions - oxytetracycline is recommended.

Having antibiotics on hand around lambing and calving time is a sensible idea to be able to quickly treat infections in the paddock as required. Record keeping and making sure follow up doses are given when required is essential to successful treatments. Speak to one of our sheep and beef team to arrange an annual prescription or a vet can prescribe drugs in the shop if required. If lockdown persists, please ring ahead to allow sufficient time to arrange a prescription.

## When is it time to call the Vet?

Call 0800 VET 111 (0800 838 111) for assistance

Calving cows call a vet/  
investigate when:

- If something sticking out and there is no progress after 30min.
- Need all 3 bits (head & 2 legs OR if backwards 2 back legs & a tail)
- Cow straining for more than 3 hours and nothing showing

Don't leave a cow in labour to check the next day. Once in labour you've got 6 hours to get it out before bacteria proliferate.

When assisting

- Know what you're doing
- Get some decent gear and lube
- Clean yourself and the cow
- Check the cervix is open
- Line up the head and legs before pulling
- Work with the cow's contractions. Let her stretch
- If the calf is well-dead the cow will not stretch the same