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Animal WOFs Newsletter – May/June 2011 -



Welcome to another *Animal WOFs for Lifestyle Blocks* newsletter.

Each issue we are covering important animal health issues relevant for that time of year. Please feel free to give us feedback or ideas for the next issue, with any topics you would like to see covered.

In this issue:

Animal Health Diary – things to watch out for at this time of year

Tetanus, Lepto and Co... vaccinations for farm animals

Fat cow vs thin cow – body condition scoring made easy



Animal Health Diary May/June



'Six ticks' for autumn animal husbandry

Body condition score

It can be difficult to tell if farm animals are an appropriate weight for their size. Not everyone has scales available, yet we want cattle, sheep, goats and alpacas to be in a good condition before going into winter, when feed supply may be reduced.

Check out our guide to body condition scoring cattle, sheep and goats and alpacas on the next page. Feed up any underweight animals and reduce feed intake for obese ones so everyone is the right size.

Also, young stock can get ill-thrifty and thin over autumn so make sure you do Faecal Egg Counts on thin and scouring animals before reaching for the drench. If you have any concerns, get the vet out.



Footrot and Eczema

Especially in wet autumn weather, our farm pets are more likely to pick up footrot. Check hooves for signs of scald or footrot and treat appropriately. Provide dry areas so animals can get out of the mud.

Also, Facial Eczema may still be a problem so continue to monitor spore counts with our free email service and take precautions until spore counts have dropped.

Shelter

Especially goats and pigs need dry waterproof shelters with good bedding for winter. Goats can get sick if wet and pigs like a dry straw bed to burrow in on cold nights.

Signs of an ill pig include hunched back, hind legs tucked under body, diarrhoea, vomiting, depression, shivering, panting, dribbling or pain to the touch. Pigs can go downhill quickly so get Vet help early if you are concerned.

If shearing ewes this month ensure shelter is available in case of bad weather and use long shearing combs to leave more wool on the sheep.



Vaccinations

There are several vaccinations available for farm animals. This is a good time of year to get them done, so pregnant animals can be vaccinated before birthing and pass on protection to their young through colostrum. The immune system also gets a little boost before winter.

Trace element testing

Trace elements like Copper, Selenium, Magnesium, Cobalt and Zinc play an important role in maintaining healthy and productive livestock. Deficiencies in these and other trace elements can have significant effects on growth, resistance to disease and fertility.

Pre-winter blood or liver samples can be tested and any deficiencies found can be treated with injectable or other supplements.

Please talk to us at the clinic to arrange trace element testing.



Fertility

Ewes can be scanned for pregnancy status between 50 and 90 days of gestation to predict lambing numbers.

The previous newsletter stated that sows can be mated in March to have piglets due in September. This is a typo and with a gestation period of 3 months, 3 weeks and 3 days sows mated in March should give piglets in July.



Tetanus, Lepto and Co... vaccinations for farm animals

Our dogs and cats get regular check-ups and vaccinations, but what about Bessy the cow and Alfred the Alpaca?

There are several vaccinations for different diseases available for Bessy and Alfred, most of which can help prevent deadly diseases like Tetanus, Blackleg, Leptospirosis and Pulpy Kidney.

Clostridial diseases:

Clostridial diseases are caused by bacteria that can be found in the environment or as normal gut bacteria in animals and are therefore hard to eradicate.

These bacteria can enter the animal through a wound or the gut, causing sudden rapidly deteriorating conditions with high mortality rates. They are usually not curable once the disease has taken hold of your animal, therefore prevention is essential.

The most common Clostridial diseases in farm animals in New Zealand include Tetanus, Black Leg, Pulpy Kidney or enterotoxemia and Black Disease.



Tetanus is the most commonly known Clostridial disease world wide. It is caused by the bacterium *Clostridium Tetani* and can affect cattle, sheep, goats, alpacas and horses as well as dogs, cats and people. These bacteria live in the ground and usually enter the animal through a wound, often following castration, dehorning or shearing. All body muscles stiffen and the disease almost always ends in death.

Black Leg is the most commonly seen in young stock. It is caused by *Clostridium Chauvoei*. Usually fast growing, healthy young cattle (aged 6-24 months) are most at risk, especially after transport or mixing mobs. In sheep, this disease does not have any preference for age, but it is always associated with wounds. Black Leg can affect multiple animals in a group. The animal goes stiff in the hind legs and the muscles become sore and swollen. The animals are often found dead without any external signs. It is often the best animals in a mob that are affected.



Pulpy kidney or enterotoxemia is an acute blood poisoning of your biggest, healthiest young sheep and cattle, caused by a combination of highly nutritious feed and an epsilon-toxin produced by *Clostridium Perfringens Type D*, present in the intestine of the animal. Lambs aged 3 to 10 weeks old and lambs and calves just after weaning are most prone to this disease. It has a very rapid onset and the animal usually dies within 12 hours. The grass fed to these animals plays an important role in the disease so restriction of feed when weaning or shifting is therefore important.

All these and other clostridial diseases have a high fatality rate and are usually not curable once the disease has taken hold of your animal. Therefore prevention is the most important way to battle these bacteria.

Hygiene during procedures like tail docking and castrating is important to prevent contamination of the wound with Clostridial organisms.

A vaccine to protect for Clostridial diseases is registered for cattle and sheep but has been used off label for Alpacas and goats with good results too.



Animals can be vaccinated as young as 4 weeks old and need a booster 4 weeks after the first shot. Pregnant animals can be vaccinated 4 weeks before the expected date of birth to produce enough antibodies in the colostrum to protect offspring until they are old enough to receive their first vaccination.

Combined vaccines including Clostridials and Leptospirosis can be used for cattle.






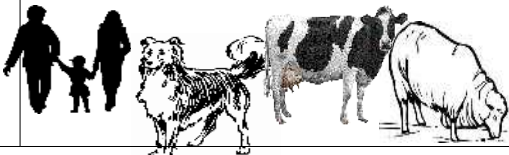
Please talk to your vet about an appropriate vaccination protocol and vaccine for your stock. If you are not confident about vaccinating your animals, give us a call, we are happy to do this for you.

Leptospirosis:

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that can affect many different species of mammals including people.

Leptospire bacteria have maintenance hosts, who shed the bacteria in large numbers but only show mild symptoms of disease, and incidental hosts, who are not a normal source of infection but can get severely ill when affected.

In New Zealand there are 4 main types of Leptospires:

Leptospire serovar	Maintenance host	Incidental host
Hardjo-Bovis		
Ballum and Copenhageni		
Pomona		

On small holding blocks the biggest risk of contracting Leptospirosis comes from cattle, pigs and rats as they can be carriers without showing many signs of being ill.

Lepto passes to people from urine of infected animals that comes into contact with even the smallest cuts and abrasions, for example during milking, calving, foot trimming and similar activities. It can cause flu-like symptoms like fever, headaches, muscle aches and in severe cases death.

To minimise the risk of getting Lepto from your stock, all cattle and pigs should be vaccinated against Lepto.

Calves and piglets should be vaccinated from 4-6 weeks of age and receive a booster 4-6 weeks later, followed by annual revaccination. A combined vaccine with Clostridial protection is available for cattle, while pigs receive a combined vaccine with Erysipelas (a skin disease). Adult animals can be vaccinated at any time, they need a booster 4-6 weeks later and annual revaccination.

Talk to your vets at the clinic to organise vaccinations for your stock.

Fat cow vs Thin cow... Body condition scoring made easy

Why should we condition score our animals?

This doesn't just apply to farm animals, but applies to companion animals, pocket pets and people as well.

Animals maintained at the ideal body condition score (BCS) are healthier than under- or overweight animals and have less risk of becoming ill.

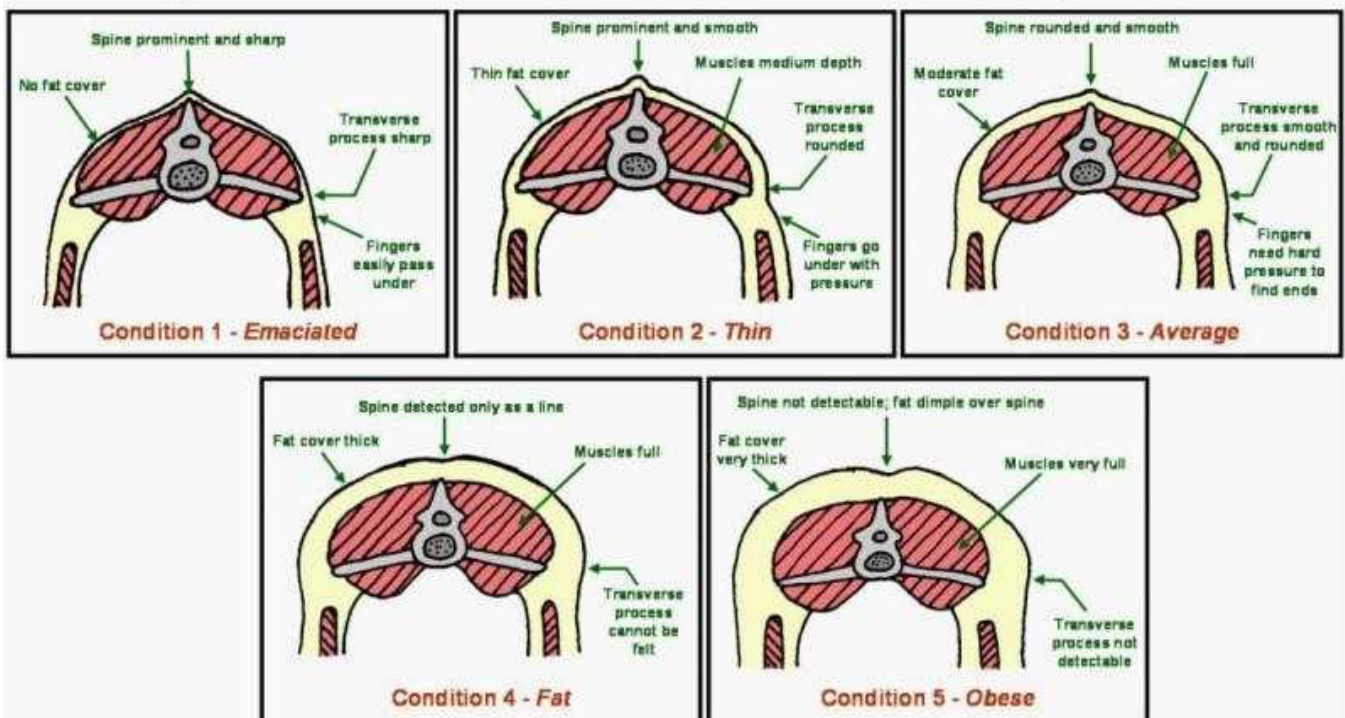
Thin animals are more prone to catching diseases. They can't cope with colder weather very well and are often weak and less mobile.

Obese animals are also less mobile, more likely to have problems birthing due to large amounts of fat narrowing the birth canal and they can develop metabolic problems after birthing.

As many people don't have scales available and body weights can vary depending on the height and breed of the animal, the body condition scoring system was developed. It is based on visual assessment and palpation of the ribs, backbone and pin bones and assesses the amount of body fat in relation to the animals size.

For **sheep and goats**, the following scale can be used to assess BCS. Feel your sheep and goats' backbone just in front of the back legs to assess fat cover.

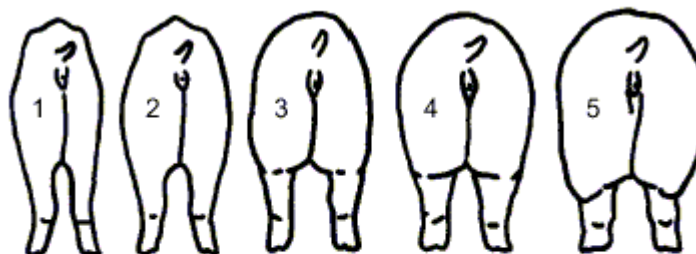
Body Condition Scores – Sheep/Goats



Adapted from "Body Condition Scoring of Sheep" by J.M. Thompson and H. Meyer (Oregon State University)

A similar system applies to **pigs**. Visual assessment is easier because they are not covered in wool and you may not need to handle them. The system is based on detection of ribs, backbone and pin bones mainly.

Figure 2. Body condition scores of sows.



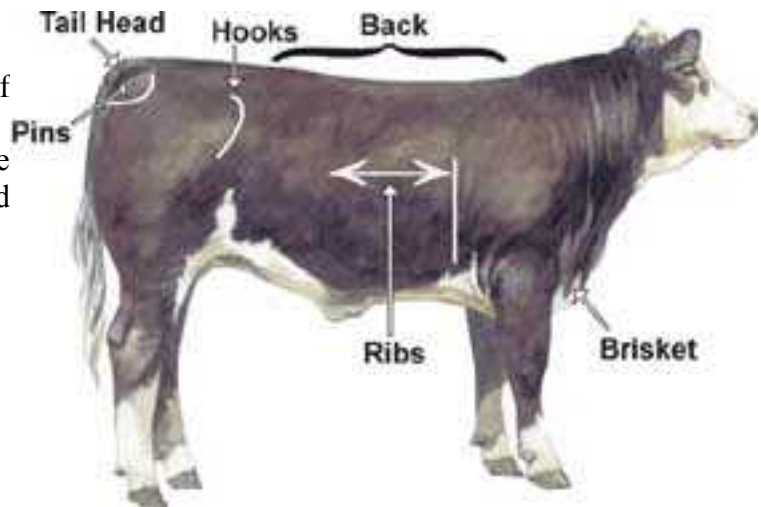
Score	Condition	Detection of ribs, backbone, "H" bones, and "pin" bones
1	Emaciated	Obvious
2	Thin	Easily detected with pressure
3	Ideal	Barely felt with firm pressure
4	Fat	None
5	Overly fat	None

	<p>BCS1 - EMACIATED -very steep angle along spine & curves inward - ribs are very easily felt <u>Immediate intervention required</u></p>
	<p>BCS2 - THIN - spinal slope concave, more than 45 degrees.</p>
	<p>BCS3 - OPTIMAL - about 45 degree angle along spine</p> <p>This is the ideal for adult huacaya-type alpaca.</p>
	<p>BCS4 - OVERWEIGHT - convex shape between the backbone & upper ribs</p> <p>Ideal for adolescent huacaya alpaca under one year old.</p>
	<p>BCS5 - OBESE - backbone feels flat</p> <p>Normal for Suri-type alpaca, and all cria < 6 months old</p>

Alpacas are also scored based on a system of 1 (emaciated) to 5 (obese). Unlike in sheep and goats, alpacas feel thin over their pelvis due to light muscling there so this is unreliable.

So feel the chest vertebrae and ribs instead as well as the point of the sternum (breast bone) between the front legs.

Cattle vary a little depending on beef vs dairy breeds. The basic principles are the same however and cows can be visually and manually assessed.



Now throw on some warm clothes and go to condition score your animals, so you can be sure they are in good shape for winter.

Body Condition Score	Vertebrae at the middle of the back	Rear view (cross-section) of the hook bones	Side view of the line between the hook and pinbones	Cavity between tailhead and pinbone	
				Rear view	Angled view
1 Severe underconditioning					
2 Frame obvious					
3 Frame and covering well balanced					
4 Frame not as visible as covering					
5 Severe overconditioning					

Figure 3: Body condition scores (Adapted from A.J. Edmondson, I.J. Lean, C.O. Weaver, T. Farver and G. Webster. 1989. A body condition scoring chart for Holstein dairy cows. J. Dairy Sci. 72:68-78.)

If you have any questions or need help condition scoring your animals, please don't hesitate to contact us at the clinic.

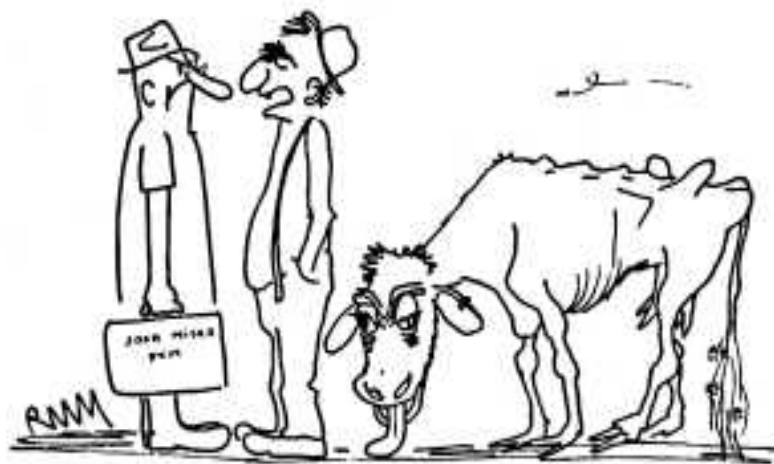
Special offer for our WOFers:

For the months of May and June we are offering farm calls at reduced rates for members of our Animal WOFs programme.

Use this as a great opportunity to get your stock vaccinated, foot trimmed, wormed etc. Sick animal visits are also included.

We can set up animal health programmes for your family of barnyard pets and discuss any products you are likely to need during the year.

Coordinating farm calls with your neighbours can also make vet visits more affordable for you as mileage costs will be shared.



"And then, this morning, I suddenly noticed she didn't look so good."

Looking forward to see you at the clinic or at your place,

Step of the team
@ LHUC.