



## updates from the field



Dr Will Lucas joined CVH veterinary staff in January. A Bachelor of Veterinary Science graduate from James Cook University, QLD, Will also has a Bachelor of Rural Science from the University of New England.

In between his agriculture and veterinary degrees, Will gained extensive experience working on large sheep and cattle properties. He says he developed a love for rural life and production animals when working on the T A Field Estates Hunthawang property at Hillston in 1998.

Before commencing his vet studies, Will was overseer of Egelabra Merino Stud at Warren in 2004, and in 2005 overseer of Egelabra property, Yanganbil. In 2006, he volunteered at the Nimbkia Agricultural Research Institute at Maharashtra, India, working on genetics in Deccan sheep and goats.

Will was awarded the Beef Cattle Production and Medicine medal at graduation.

### Season plays havoc with worms

Problems caused by sheep worms continue to challenge producers and vets since the issue was explored by almost 100 producers at a seminar organised by CVH last October.

Speakers Dr Bill Johnson, District Veterinarian, Tablelands Livestock Health and Pest Authority, Dr Brad O'Hagan, Veterinary Services Manager, Jurox Pty Ltd, and Dr Rob Churchill, discussed the unusual and rapidly changing sheep parasite behaviour being seen on the Southern Tablelands.

Attendees and speakers reported significant losses of ewes and lambs across a wide area of the Southern Tablelands in late winter-early spring 2011, despite frequent drenching.

Re-infection from contaminated pastures was occurring at alarming speed, and cases of drench resistance were also common. Producers monitoring worm levels by faecal worm egg counts reported marked paddock-to-paddock differences in the size of the burden and the worm species present. Some properties had mainly black scour worms, some only barbers pole worms, while most had a mixture of both – plus brown stomach worm.

Take home messages included:

- Don't delay worm egg counts (CVH does these in house)
- Follow with laboratory culture of the eggs to identify the worm species
- Repeat the worm egg count 10-14 days after drenching to check drench was effective
- Monitor weaned lambs with monthly faecal egg tests

- Consider a drench resistance test (CVH can guide you through drench resistance and help with the small quantities of chemicals required).

In this month's issue of WormBoss, Dr Bill Johnson reports deaths of prime lambs from barber's pole worms, rapid re-infection with brown stomach worm, and massively high worm egg counts in ewes and lambs a month after effective drenching ([http://www.wool.com/Grow\\_WormBoss\\_Current-news\\_New-South-Wales.htm](http://www.wool.com/Grow_WormBoss_Current-news_New-South-Wales.htm)).

As autumn arrives, CVH also continues to see similar unpredictable worm problems and significant sheep losses – with most deaths due to barber's pole worm. This is largely due to the absence of a hot, dry summer for a second year in a row. High worm populations remain on pastures and producers are finding it difficult to create safe, worm-free grazing conditions.

Make an appointment and speak with our vets. We can help develop a worm management strategy to assist with your particular conditions. We undertake worm egg testing in our CVH pathology facilities, regularly plan drench resistance tests, and organise worm culture. We are able to provide treatment appropriate to your results, and to undertake follow up testing to ensure drenches are effective.

(Dr Bill Johnson contributed to this article).

# updates from the field

## The perfect season for grass tetany

Cases of grass tetany, or hypomagnesaemia, are also increasing this autumn. A potentially fatal metabolic disease of cattle, grass tetany can decimate herds in cold rainy seasons. Bountiful autumn and winter grasses might look lush, but are often high in water content and low in magnesium and calcium.

Seen in older, high milk producing cows pre-calving or with calves at foot, the disease is also initiated when high potassium levels hinder magnesium absorption from the rumen – classically on heavily fertilised pastures. Contributing factors include:

- Stress of calving and lactating, especially in older cows with lower reserves and poorer absorption of magnesium (low calcium occurs at the same time, particularly in lactating cows)
- Grazing on tetany-prone pastures – grass dominant, cereal crops, acid soils, potassium fertilisers
- Cold weather, particularly sudden drops in temperature
- Other factors include the stress of feed changes, transportation, periods of starvation
- Angus and Angus-cross are thought to be more susceptible than other beef breeds.

Symptoms vary but affected cows are excitable, and sometimes dangerous. Early cases show slight muscle twitching, a stiff gait and appear wary. This progresses to staggering, charging, falling to the ground and paddling with head stretched back. The animal may appear blind.

Treatment involves intravenous administration of magnesium and calcium and needs to be delivered quickly. The prognosis following treatment is unpredictable, and severe cases may still die.

Prevention through magnesium supplementation is the best option. This can be achieved by the feeding of magnesium oxide products such as Causmag at 60mg to 100mg per head per day. Long-acting magnesium pellets delivered into the rumen provide 80 to 90 days of protection.

Other products include loose licks - granulated or powdered preparations administered from feeders. Magnesium blocks are not effective (too costly and difficult to manage delivery per cow).

Providing hay for cows and calves is good practice – legume hay supplies nutrients that help reduce the incidence of grass tetany.

Keep your pet cosy with a WeatherBeeta dog rug!

CVH has a huge range of high quality dog rugs in store: bring your pooch in for a fitting. WeatherBeeta is a top brand - the rugs are strong, lined and warm, weatherproof, available in all sizes, colours and patterns.



## Rat bait kills

The rains and good season have supported a jump in the population of mice and rats – and a corresponding dramatic increase in the incidence of rat bait poisoning in dogs (and occasionally cats).

Common rat poisons contain anti-coagulants that can be as fatal to pets as they are to rodents. These toxins work slowly, usually causing internal (so not obvious) bleeding with the poisoned animal gradually becoming increasingly anaemic and weak until it's pretty obvious something unusual is happening.

The symptoms can be varied, depending on which part of the body is losing blood. Bleeding can occur into the lungs, abdominal cavity, joints – occasionally bleeding will be seen from the mouth, nose or anus.

Fortunately, there is an antidote but pets presented in an extremely anaemic state may need a blood transfusion. If you see your pet eating the bait, bring them in immediately – an injection to cause vomiting will empty the stomach and if early enough, stop further symptoms developing.

The key message – rat baits are fatal. They are produced to be tasty to rodents – and they also happen to be highly attractive to dogs – and cats that aren't fussy eaters. Dogs are often presented after ripping apart a new pack and eating the contents. Take great care where you store unopened packs and where you place the pellets – both need to be completely secure from scavenging pets.

## Contact us

Opening hours 8.30am – 5.30pm M to F | 9am – 12pm Saturday

**24 hour emergency service**

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