

A Dogs Blog

Oh the joys of being an only child. You know what I mean: Attention whenever you want it in whatever form you want it. That was me at the start of my life. I still remember the swims every other day. My gosh, how easy it was to impress my two legged companions, retrieving one stick after the other from the mighty Waikato. What did these humans think Labradors were bred for any way? All of a sudden my canine world changed with the addition of a Rottweiler pup to the family. The annoying little sh*t had no manners at all. After a while I got used to him biting my ears, constantly wanting to play chase. We had just sorted who was in charge at home when we were surprised by another addition to the family. Thank goodness this time it was a girl. It became evident quite soon that this girl was a worker. A dog with special talents. Our owners trained her to herd the cows and work on the farm. We were lucky though, every day we got to go on the quad bike, enjoying life!

A decisive moment in our lives came the day we had to get into our kennels to be loaded onto a trailer. I thought we would never get off the trailer again! Hours of driving, not to mention the ferry ride. Well, that was a pretty picture in itself. A Labrador, Rotweiler and Huntaway not knowing where they were going or whether they will have to stay. After the ferry trip we ended up driving again! Take my word, we kept on driving to the other end of the world: Riversdale. A change is as good as a holiday. And yep, another three additions (pig dogs) to the family became reality for us "oldies" when these "newbies" arrived at our new Southland home. This was when I knew we would never ever move back up North. Because, you can't fit 6 dogs and furniture on a trailer can you? The newbies were fast. I mean lightning fast! To cut a long story short, they became the pig hunters. As the oldest of this canine family, I took it on myself to make my owners proud by being an exceptionally good duck hunting dog.

I have always pondered whether our owners benefit socially from us. Let me tell you: I came from a dairy farm on Kawhia. Those early encounters with my whanau started my owners considering a career in dairy farming. As for the rest of us, our owners are still friends with the rest of our whanau. Cool hey, they have friends all over Southland and the North Island, because of us! Well our 2 legged "mother" even became a Vet Nurse. This implies that all of us can take more risks because "mum" can fix anything. Well that's chapter one of my life's story.

Written by Sanji the Labrador.
PS: Our owners Hendrik and Michelle might not agree with the content of this chapter. But hey who cares, what do they know after all? As for the rest of my whanau. Diesel, Zoe, Sky, Ceaser, and Chief – keep it up boys and girls, we aint going nowhere. Southland is the best isn't it?



Heat Stroke in Dogs

Summer is on its way once again, and with sunshine comes dogs with heat stroke. Heat stroke is a life threatening disease which can progress extremely rapidly.

Here are a few tips to try and prevent it:

1. Always make sure your dogs have a constant supply of drinking water.
2. If your dogs are in the back of your ute, ensure that it is parked in the shade and let them out for water frequently.
3. Never leave a dog in a car on a hot day.
4. Be aware of kennel placement as well as where you tie your dogs up, ensure they always have shade available.
5. If your dog shows any sign of heat stroke cool them rapidly (putting them in a trough for 1-2 minutes is a good way to do this) and bring them in to the vet as soon as possible. Signs of heat stroke include excessive panting, vomiting, diarrhea, tremors, collapse and seizures.

Prevention is the best way, but when heat-stroke does hit, early treatment gives the best chance of survival. We are able to cool them rapidly by providing cool intravenous fluids and can also provide drugs to prevent seizing and tremors.

Natasha Leamy BVSc



Christmas Spirit

It was just before Christmas and the magistrate was in a happy mood. He asked the prisoner who was in the dock, 'What are you charged with?'

The prisoner replied, 'Doing my Christmas shopping too early.'

'That's no crime', said the magistrate. 'Just how early were you doing this shopping?'

'Before the shop opened', answered the prisoner.

Who's The Boss

Dogs are the leaders of the planet. If you see two life forms, one of them is making a poop and the other one's carrying it for him, who would you assume is in charge?

Jerry Seinfeld



Situation Comment

It has been a great farming season thus far from a weather and growth point of view.

Most dairy farms have hit record (or close to) peaks and more importantly have had a slower decline than usual post peak. In general cow condition is very good and there has been just enough moisture. Lots of baleage and silage has been saved away.

Sheep farms also have experienced great grass growth however please keep an eye on worm burden levels in lambs. We have been expecting a higher than normal worm challenge based on the carryover from last Autumn/Winter and this will become really evident on pastures with lower covers. Your drenching programme should be discussed with one of the vets.

A new website has been developed www.sheepvax.co.nz which has a lot of useful information and a good planning tool to help with making timing decisions around sheep vaccines relative to tupping.

Velvet prices are a little better than last year but care must be taken not to let it get too long or the returns diminish.

Foaling at the horse studs is in full swing with many mares back in foal already. We are proud to have some of the best results in the country.

We have more and more dairy support units in the area. With the season being quite "growthy" weeds are doing very well as are a lot of bugs. In as much as most people don't like the NAIT system, EID tags allow for very accurate animal recording and in particular MindaWeights is a great programme for monitoring weight gains. Just remember to employ consistency in weighing methods.

Staff Comment

Not a whole lot to report really with no staff changes. We had a lovely dinner in October to celebrate Paul's over 40 year service to the area.

Pam has done a great job on the Facebook page and some staff members are currently leading the way in the photo competition for how your pets are spending their holidays.

1. Staff comment, situation comment, going away for the holidays
2. Holiday hazards
3. Managing fractures and joint injuries in dogs
4. Teasers
5. Turkey trivia and ewe management post weaning
6. Lamé bulls and ergot poisoning
7. What does staff training do for you? Stock sense – can you do without it and Yersiniosis
8. A dog's blog and heat stroke in dogs

We will have a new vet starting in the New Year, Justin Hogg, fresh from qualifying at Massey. He's a handy fast bowler and looks like he could be a handy lock forward too... we're going to struggle to find overalls long enough. I dare say the local Cricket and Rugby teams will be in touch. Finally we would like to take the opportunity to wish you all a very happy Christmas and New Year. Have a great 2014.

Going Away For The holidays?

Make sure your pets are up to date with their vaccinations and worming before going into the boarding kennels!

Dogs should be vaccinated against Kennel Cough (now re-named Canine Infectious Tracheobronchitis) at least 4 days before going into the kennels. Kennel cough is a highly contagious disease that usually presents as a honking productive cough. The vaccination lasts 12 months but is best given six months before a known exposure risk.

Cats also need to be up to date with their vaccinations before entering the cattery. The core vaccine protects against rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, panleucopaenia & chlamydia. These diseases can be made worse by the stress of change in environment.

Rebecca Morley BVSc BSc



"Gizmo" Morley

"Finn" Leamy

"Dora" Morley



Holiday Hazards

Many common summer foods and garden products can be extremely toxic to cats and dogs. Here is a list of the top five pet poisons to avoid this summer:

1. Chocolate

Chocolate can be extremely toxic to dogs due to a compound called theobromine. Clinical signs range from vomiting and diarrhoea to excitability, drooling and even death. The severity of the symptoms depend on the amount of theobromine the animal had eaten relative to its size. As a general rule, the darker the chocolate, the more theobromine it contains. White chocolate contains a very low amount whereas dark chocolate and cooking chocolate contain a high amount, hence are much more toxic. There is no specific antidote for chocolate toxicity. Treatment is based around minimising the amount of theobromine absorbed (e.g. by making the dog vomit) and treating the clinical signs. Chocolate can also be toxic to cats but they do not tend to eat it.

2. Grapes and raisins

Grapes and raisins can cause kidney failure in dogs. Raisins are more toxic, even small amounts can cause kidney failure. Signs of kidney failure include vomiting, excessive thirst, excessive urination or lethargy. If the kidney failure progresses, the kidneys will shut down and not produce any urine. Kidney failure is very serious as the kidneys have very little ability to repair any damage done to them. Without properly functioning kidneys, waste products are unable to be excreted in the urine and instead build up in the blood. There is no antidote for grape/raisin toxicity. Treatment is based around maintaining kidney function and alleviating the clinical signs. Prognosis for recovery depends on the amount of grapes/raisins eaten and the time before treatment is initiated.

3. Lilies

A common Christmas flower in many households, lilies are extremely toxic to cats. Only true lilies are toxic – this includes the Asiatic lily, Japanese showy lily, tiger lily, Easter lily, stargazer lily, oriental lily, rubrum lily and the Western or wood lily. All parts of the plant are toxic. Toxicity may result from ingestion of the plant – often when the pollen is groomed off fur. Ingestion causes damage to the kidneys. Clinical signs are usually seen within 6 hours of ingestion. Vomiting, anorexia, depression and other signs of renal failure (increased thirst and increased urination) may be seen. As with grape/raisin toxicity, treatment is based around maintaining kidney function.



Holiday Hazards cont.

4. Slug and snail bait

Metaldehyde is a toxic compound that is found in many slug and snail baits. The toxin affects the nervous system of dogs. The onset of clinical signs can be very rapid, within an hour. Signs of intoxication include muscle spasms or rigidity, tremors, twitching, convulsions, panting and respiratory distress. Again, there is no specific antidote so treatment is aimed at alleviating clinical signs.

5. Onions, garlic and leeks

Onions contain an ingredient called thiosulphate which is toxic to cats and dogs. The ingestion of onions causes a condition called hemolytic anemia, which is characterized by damage to the red blood cells. Onion toxicity can cause the red blood cells circulating through your pet's body to burst. Symptoms of this condition include breathlessness, lethargy, diarrhea and vomiting. It may take up to two to four days after your pet eats the onion for symptoms to appear. All onions whether raw or cooked are toxic to your pet. Garlic is much more toxic than onions, meaning that your pet has to ingest less to become affected. Depending on the severity of the anaemia, a blood transfusion may be required to stabilize the affected animal while it metabolises the toxins.

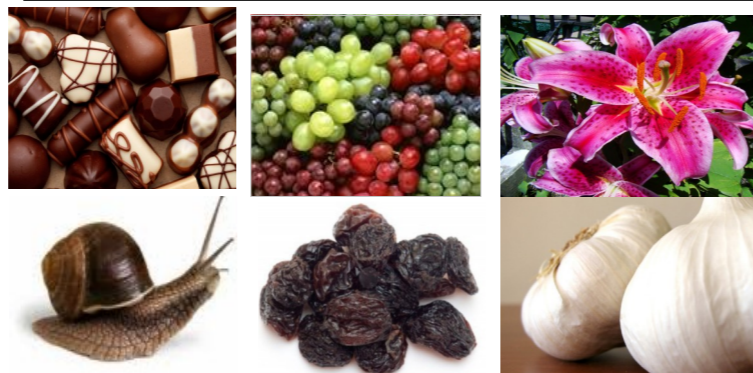
Toxic dose levels for a 30kg Labrador/Huntaway:

Chocolate (milk)	500g
Chocolate (dark)	150g
Raisins	90g
Garlic (raw)	150g

If you suspect your pet has eaten something poisonous, contact the vet clinic immediately. Many poisons can be deathly and early treatment and decontamination is the best chance we have to save your pet. If your pet has eaten medication or a chemical-based product, it is useful to bring the packaging into the clinic with you so we know exactly what they have ingested.

Don't forget that Christmas ornaments and tinsel may look tasty to your dog are not easily digested and can cause a life-threatening intestinal obstruction.

Shelly Hann BVSc



What Does Staff Training Do For You?

Training staff is a cost to every business but what are the consequences for not doing so?

It is true that staff training is an expense in money and time and better trained, better performing staff are more attractive to other employers. Untrained, poorer performing staff on the other hand cost money every single day and no one wants to take them off your hands.

Aside from mistakes made by not knowing, a lack of training makes it impossible to delegate tasks and especially responsibility. This means more time for managers spent overseeing others performing basic tasks, with less time to focus on the overall farm picture. This compounds the problems as those staff members with the better skills are underutilised at their (higher) level. They become disinterested and more likely to look over the fence for better opportunities. As the more capable staff leave those with less training are forced to take on jobs for which they are not equipped. They fail and leave both the job and the industry.

Having a clear in-house training procedure is the best way to develop junior staff that are capable of accepting responsibly and perform tasks. It is well worth the effort to develop and will ensure that staff training is not costing your business but is an investment.

Michael Baer BVSc

Yersiniosis

It is too late to vaccinate once an outbreak of Yersiniosis has started.

Yersiniosis is the leading cause of death in fawns during autumn and winter.

The bacteria that causes Yersiniosis are widespread in the environment and are carried in the gut of most wild (birds, rodents, rabbits, hares) and domestic (deer, cattle, sheep, pigs and goats) animals. These healthy carrier animals shed small numbers of the bacteria in their faeces. These bacteria can survive well in the soil, water and pasture, especially in winter. Yersiniosis is a particularly vile and highly infectious disease. First signs in deer fawns are green, watery, smelly diarrhoea which soon becomes bloody.

Two doses of Yersiniavax 3-6 weeks apart are required to stimulate immunity, the timing of the first dose is critical in determining the effectiveness of the programme.

Weaners should be vaccinated as early as possible after they reach 12 weeks of age. Vaccination just after 12 weeks ensures they have time to develop an immune response before the onset of unavoidable weather stresses and before they are mobbed together, when crowding encourages the spread of bacteria and increases the chance of an outbreak.

Stocksense-Can You Do Without It??

Upskill your staff, improve the health and welfare of your stock. Plus you've already paid for it.

We have been contracted by Dairy NZ to provide their Stocksense workshops for dairy farm workers. There is no extra charge as you have already paid for it via your Dairy NZ levies.

At the end of the workshop participants will be able to

1. Recognise the importance of monitoring the health and well-being of stock.
2. Correctly identify healthy stock signs.
3. Identify ill-thrift, unhealthy and injured animals.
4. Report animals that are unwell in a timely fashion recording all necessary information.
5. Show the following skills
 - basic health exam
 - recognise the signs of lameness
 - Report on the general body condition of an animal
 - Safely administer an intramuscular or subcutaneous injection



Workshops last 4.5 hours. They are designed for junior staff who have some experience, managers of staff who wish to share in their learning experience and experienced staff who wish to complete a refresher course in cow health.

Contact Riversdale to express your interest on 03 2025636.

Morgan Greene MVB MACVSc

10 Great Truths Children Have Learned

1. No matter how hard you try you can't baptise a cat
2. When your mum's mad at your dad, don't let her brush your hair.
3. If your sister hits you, don't hit her back, they always catch the second person.
4. Never ask your 3 year old brother to hold a tomato.
5. You can't trust dogs to watch your food.
6. Don't sneeze when someone is cutting your hair.
7. Never hold a cat and a vacuum at the same time.
8. You can't hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk.
9. Don't wear polka dot underwear under white shorts.
10. The best place to be when you're sad is in Grandpa's lap.

6 Great Truths Adults Have Learned

1. Raising teenagers is like nailing jelly to a tree.
2. Wrinkles don't hurt.
3. Families are like fudge... mostly sweet, with a few nuts.
4. Today's mighty oak is just yesterday's nut that held its ground.
5. Laughing is good exercise. It's like jogging on the inside.
6. Middle age is when you choose your cereal for its fibre, not the toy.



Lame Bulls

Lame bulls can be frustrating for farmers. Often little is done about them until things are severe enough to warrant a vet visit. Early intervention can give a more successful result and mean the difference between a valuable animal – hamburgers – or pet food.

A lame bull is inevitably less likely to mount a cow and as lameness can make a bull temporarily infertile, it may do no good if he did! Don't be fooled if he 'comes right' and is seen mounting either as some lame bulls can remain temporarily infertile for a month or more after they are healed. Lame bulls must be removed (in case he is dominant) and replaced during mating time.

The majority of lameness we see in bulls is in the foot. Other issues we see occasionally are fractures, dislocations and cruciate injury and effects of arthritis (particularly in older bulls).

Some lameness is obvious but do keep an eye out for milder signs like shorter steps, hunched back, stiffness, occasionally the 'lameness' can originate from his back.

At times it seems lame bulls are inevitable. So allow for this when selecting bull teams for mating. We recommend carrying at least double what you need with the cows at any one time for rotation anyway, with extras for things such as this.

Contact us for more tips on preventing or treating lame bulls.

Rochelle Smith BVSc MACVSc



Cattle Reminders

- Dairy calves—copper and selenium
- Dairy calves—worm control
- Dairy calves—lepto vaccinate
- Bulls—watch for unsoundness
- Cows monitor SR and NRR

Ergot Poisoning: A Case Study

At the end of July I was called to a Northern Southland dairy farm to examine 10 mixed aged cows for lameness. They had been separated from a mob of approximately 100 cows and were being fed a diet of fodder beet and baleage.

The cows varied from mildly to severely lame, predominantly in one hindlimb. All of the affected limbs had swelling above the coronary band, with cold extremities. The majority also had areas of dead ulcerated tissue above the coronary band. In some cases the outside of the hoof wall had completely fallen off. The most severely affected individual was affected in 3 limbs and unable to stand. One cow had already been shot prior to my visit for severe lameness.

These lesions were consistent with a gangrenous form of ergot toxicity. Once clinical signs appear they are irreversible and euthanasia is required.

Ergotism in cattle occurs as a result of consuming feed contaminated with the fungus *Claviceps purpurea*. This fungus affects the flowers of most cereal and grass species during a particular time of the plants reproductive cycle. The fungus is easily identified as it turns the seedheads black. There are certain underlying environmental conditions that are required in order for the fungus to become established. These conditions are mild, damp weather often after a period of prolonged drought. Supplementary feeds such as ryegrass baleage can be contaminated with the fungus. This creates toxic feed as the fungus remains throughout the storage period.

If you are making baleage and the ryegrass has seedheads that have turned black then it is likely that ergot is present and it should not be fed to animals. This is a rare toxicity but it can have devastating consequences.

Rebecca Morley BVSc BSc



Managing Fractures and Joint Injuries in Dogs

Fractures are quite common injuries in dogs, especially working dogs. Many fractures, can be managed without referral to a veterinary surgical specialist, as can many joint injuries. A few tips to remember:

- It's easy to focus on obviously broken bones or damaged joints (especially when cars are involved) but the animal could be suffering obvious *life threatening* injuries. Pain, blood loss, and other contributors to shock need the most immediate attention.
- Orthopaedic injuries are extremely painful as the periosteum of bones has lots of pain fibres. Pain can make the animal unpredictable and liable to bite in defence, even biting the owner. It is best to muzzle when lifting injured animals into the vehicle to get to the vet.
- Very few fractures will be immediately fixed there and then. The process requires planning and many challenges will be confronted in the process. Many will be immobilised by bandaging at the vets, before definitive repair. This is often after animals are stabilised against blood loss and shock.
- Occasionally, nerves will be damaged - or even severed - during the accident, or possibly with movement of the broken limb afterwards. It is extremely difficult to properly assess the nerves of a broken limb in a pained animal, but every attempt will be made to do so before repair.

There are many different ways to fix a fracture – and some of these are more costly than others because of the time, expertise and sophistication of metalwork involved. Whether fractures can be reconstructed into a weight bearing column will be one of the key determinants of which approach is best. The vet will discuss these options at the time. Some require referral for the specific expertise OR the specialist equipment required, but most can be done at our clinics. I have a particular interest in general practice fracture orthopaedics.

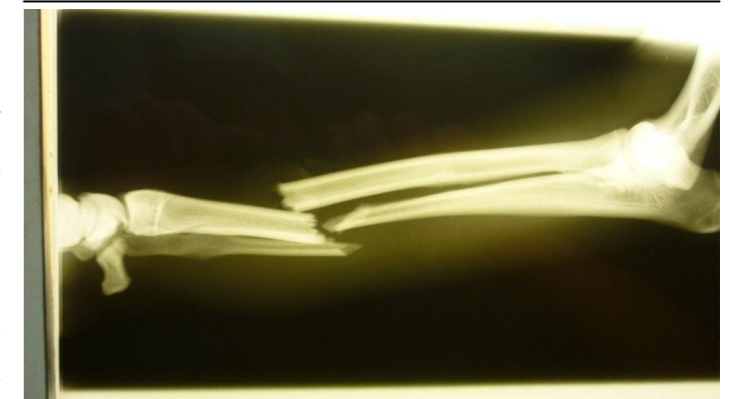
Orthopaedic fracture work can be technically demanding, but it is usually particularly rewarding provided a team approach is adopted between vet, owner and hopefully, animal! There is, nevertheless, ample scope for things to go wrong, particularly if a vet's post-op instructions are not followed properly and some animals can present a real challenge simply for their boisterous and unruly nature.

Juvenile bone growth plate fractures are one of the few injuries where it's harder to get things right than with bone injuries involving adult animals – simply because they contribute to bone lengthening yet need to be immobilised across the fracture line which usually tracks into such a natural point of weakness. The injury itself, to the repair, potentially risks damage to the bone lengthening capability of the cartilage that will become bone.

Managing fractures cont.

Fractures involving the joints themselves need to be fixed with a matter of urgency and achieving as perfect as possible an anatomical reconstruction is important. Their repair often warrants referral to a surgical specialist for the best prognosis of recovery of good function. Spinal and cranial fractures are obviously particularly serious (if not life threatening) and the former usually demand very specific technical expertise and equipment that is only available at specialists. Those spinal fractures that involve loss of deep pain sensation to the limbs carry a very guarded prognosis. Generally speaking, and contrary to popular preconceptions, ligamentous and joint-related injuries are associated with more permanent compromise to function than fracture injuries. They are more of a challenge to manage. They are, in many ways, even more satisfying to 'win' with than the repair of fractures.

N Dougherty BVSc MRCVS



Pet Reminders

- Vaccinate pets prior to boarding at kennels
- Get pets Christmas presents
- Check for barley grass
- Flea treatment
- Worm cats and dogs

Horse Reminders

- Keep bots off legs
- Hoof care
- Worming treatment for foals
- Check condition of brood mares
- Dental check horses not holding condition



Teasers

It is that time of year again – Teasers need to be 'created' at least 2 months pre-mating. Teaser use varies depending on what you want to achieve. Below are some tips.

Why?

Basically: More lambs sooner!

May: Synchronise, advance lambing date, improve lambing %, help select ewe replacements, identify drys, assess timing of mating, detection for AI.

One vet trial article I read mated a teased mob 5 days later than the main mob and had 10 % lamb on the due date with 90 % lambed in the first week compared to none on the due date and 15 % after one week in the un-teased mob!

Who?

Consider using more virile breeds for teasing such as the Finn, Suffolk or Poll Dorset. Young rams are okay but best not to use hoggets.

How?

- Ideally teasers are introduced before the ewes show heats, but not so early that they don't respond!
- For the 'ram effect' to work it is best that ewes are well away from rams for at least three weeks leading up to teasing (out of sight, smell and sound).
- If you tend to mate ewes late in the season (or are shifting mating back – say due to feed supply) ewes are probably already in their second (or more) cycle of the season and no increase in conception rate will occur *just because* you throw in a teaser. Once in the third cycle, ovulation rate will not increase. Remember to use high ratios of rams following teasers as if the synchrony works they will need to be busy to capture the benefit. Note that teasers are not immune to **Brucellosis** and should be tested for this too. The lumps that form in the testes of teasers could mask those we look for at ram palpating time.



To Shift Lambing Forward

- Use teasers to trigger early ovulation. 'Ram effect'
- 10-12 days prior to the ram – no more than 17 days prior

Most ewes will have a silent ovulation in 50 hours followed by a true heat for the ram 6 to 18 days later.

Synchronisation - To condense lambing (increase early conceptions)

This essentially also brings lambing forward by ensuring ewes are in their second (or third) more fertile and fecund heat when the rams join.

- Generally put teasers out 17-21 days prior to the Ram
- For 10 days duration.
- Ratios 1:300 or up to 1:500 on flat farms

Increase multiples

If you do not want to alter (or improve) the lambing pattern but just want to increase the chance of multiples, you can tease 34 days pre-tup.

For Hoggets

Teasers are essential for successful hogget mating. Again 17 day's prior – silent heat in 0-4 days with fertile heat 17- 21 days after that. You can use the same teasers on the hoggets as the ewes.

Ratios 1:75 ideal but can use greater ratio.

Breed for 26 days only to avoid late lambs.

Finally, don't forget to remove the teaser as they can dominate the real rams and distract them from their work!

Rochelle Smith BVSc MACVSc



Sheep Reminders

- FEC lambs—pre and post drench check
- Flystrike prevention
- Wean lambs
- Have FECRT carried out on lambs
- Palpate ewes udders 2-4 weeks post weaning—cull hard or lumpy udders

Reindeer's Story at Christmas

According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, while both male and female reindeer grow antlers in the summer each year, male reindeer drop their antlers at the beginning of winter, usually late November to mid-December.

Female reindeer retain their antlers till after they give birth in the spring. Therefore, according to EVERY historical rendition depicting Santa's reindeer, EVERY single one of them, from Rudolph to Blitzen, had to be a girl.

We should have known...

ONLY a woman would be able to drag a fat man in a red velvet suit all around the world in one night and not get lost.



Turkey Trivia

1. A male turkey is called a tom, a female is called a hen.
2. Turkey chicks are known as poults and a group of turkeys is a flock.
3. They range in size from 4 – 18kg.
4. Turkeys have excellent hearing but do not have external ears.
5. Turkeys can see in colour and have a 270° field of vision.
6. They roost in trees, on top of sheds or on gates overnight, flying up at sunset and coming down at sunrise to feed.
7. A turkey's head changes colour when it is excited or distressed.
8. Only the tom turkey gobbles.
9. Males have a fleshy protuberance that hangs from the top of their beak called a snood. They also have spurs on their legs.
10. Similar to peacocks, the male spreads his tail to attract females for mating.
11. After mating the hen makes a nest and lays one egg a day.
12. Turkey eggs are tan with brown specks and are larger than chicken eggs.
13. Once laying has finished (up to 18 eggs) she will then sit on the nest and incubate the eggs until they hatch in 28 days time.
14. Poults stay with their mother through the first year.
15. Age is a determining factor in taste of turkey meat. Old, large males are preferable to young toms but it is the opposite for females, old hens are tougher birds.

Megan Reidie BVSc



Megan and Terrance

Deer Reminders

- Fawning
- De-velvetting - 2 year olds

Ewe Management Post Weaning

Prioritising feed to light ewes post weaning has a positive effect on the following breeding season. In summer and early autumn pasture quality can be diminishing and growth rates poor especially in the face of a dry summer, therefore it is important to utilize what pasture we have optimally.

Heavier/better condition ewes:-

- Start cycling earlier in the breeding period
- Have higher ovulation rates
- Have higher conception rates
- Give birth to heavier lambs
- Produce more milk
- Wean heavier lambs with higher survival rates

Most gains can be made by reducing the 'tail' of lighter condition ewes in your flock and holding the ewes already in good body condition. Managing the ewes as one large mob wastes feed. The mob should be separated into 3 mobs based on body condition, not just weight.

- Light <2.5 BCS
- Ok 2.5- 3.5
- Heavy >3.5

Body condition and weight are related - to increase the condition score by 1 we need to gain 7-9kg live weight. But remember heavy ewes can be of poor bodily condition if they have a large frame and conversely lighter ewes with a small frame can be in very good condition. Thus weight and body condition should be used together and each ewe should be individually scored.

If you run the ewes as one mob and increase the body condition you are wasting feed by putting condition on ewes that have already reached their optimum and will not return anything extra. The extra feed would have been better lifting the tail further by targeted feeding.

- To gain 50g/d in a 70Kg ewe - requires 1.4KgDM/d
- To gain 50g/d in a 55Kg ewe - requires 1.25KgDM/d

Therefore if we had 2000, 70Kg ewes and 1000, 55Kg ewes in one mob they would consume 4050KgDM/d.

- To maintain a 70kg ewe – requires 1.12KgDM/d
- To gain 100g/d in a 55Kg ewe - requires 1.54KgDM/d

Total consumed for the same number of ewes is 3780KgDM/d.

By prioritising feed we have lifted the condition of our poor ewes which in turn will give us the biggest gain and held the optimum condition ewes where fewer gains can be made. Feed has been saved which in turn allows better allocation to other stock classes at a critical time.

Jill MacGibbon BVMS MRCVS

