

## **Livestock need vaccination too!**

In a previous article, we covered vaccinations for cattle. Vaccination against common disease should be thought of as an investment in the health of your herd, not just as an additional expense. Prevention of disease is a far more effective way of reducing production losses than treating disease. Similar to cattle, there are a number of different vaccines available for sheep which are discussed below.

## **Sheep Vaccinations**

As with cattle, sheep should be vaccinated against the 5 common clostridial diseases: tetanus, malignant oedema, black disease, enterotoxemia, and blackleg. “6 in 1” vaccines are often preferred in sheep – these include protection against caseous lymphadenitis (cheesy gland or “CLA”) in addition to the clostridial diseases. 2 in 1 (pulpy kidney and tetanus) or 3 in 1 (pulpy kidney, tetanus and CLA) vaccinations are also available for sheep.

Sheep should receive two doses of these vaccines, 4-6 weeks apart and then a booster 12 months after the initial two doses. For lambs, it is recommended that the first dose is given at marking and the second dose 4-6 weeks after marking, then an annual booster 12 months after that. This vaccination protocol generally gives lifelong protection against the major clostridial diseases. Annual boosters are required to maintain immunity against cheesy gland. Annual boosters may also be required to maintain immunity against black disease in some areas.

Vaccinations supplemented with selenium are recommended for areas such as Cowra with selenium deficient soils but it is important to check they contain the right dose – if lambs are given an adult dose they could be poisoned, whereas a ewe given a lamb dose may not receive sufficient selenium to protect their lambs from getting white muscle disease.

Scabby mouth vaccination is available but is generally only recommended for properties known to have scabby mouth. Initially, all animals should be vaccinated, as vaccinated animals can serve as a source of infection to unvaccinated animals. A single vaccination gives lifelong immunity and can be given to lambs 2 days after birth. Pregnant ewes should not be vaccinated 6 weeks within lambing. Humans can also be infected with the scabby mouth virus – a disease known as “orf”.

Vaccination is also available for Ovine Johnes disease (“OJD”). The vaccine reduces the risk of becoming infected by OJD and also lowers the numbers of Johnes bacteria excreted by infected sheep. Mortalities can be significantly reduced in heavily infected flocks but the vaccine is only effective if given before the animal is exposed to the Johnes bacteria, therefore lambs should be vaccinated as early as possible, ideally at marking. All vaccinated animals must be identified and wear a ‘V’ tag.

If you would like more information about suitable vaccinations for your sheep, please contact the helpful team at Cowra Veterinary Centre.