

Animal health - news and advice for producers in the

Riverina



Local Land
Services



November Update

DUST STORMS

District Veterinarian Dione Howard

Many unwelcome dust storms have graced the Riverina over the last few weeks. They provide a good photo opportunity, but can also affect animals out in the paddock.

Here's some points to consider next time the dust settles:

- Even a slight contamination of trough water causes problems for some stock. Weaner sheep sometimes refuse water with a thin layer of dust on the surface of an otherwise clean trough. Check paddocks of stock to ensure that there is no problem with water sources.
- Spores of clostridial bacteria (such as those that cause pulpy kidney and tetanus) are present in soil, and are ingested or can contaminate wounds when dust is stirred up. All stock should be fully vaccinated with 5-in-1 to prevent clostridial diseases.
- Dusty conditions can predispose animals to respiratory disease. Depending on the severity of the illness, animals may be off their feed, or have nasal discharge, fever, depression, coughing and laboured breathing. Call your vet promptly if any signs of respiratory disease appear.
- The bacteria that causes pinkeye is spread by dust. Early signs are tears running down the face, followed by the classic inflamed pink eye. Most sheep pinkeye cases are self-limiting, while the preferred treatment for cattle is antibiotics and a patch glued over the eye. Contact your vet if signs of pinkeye persist (see example of pinkeye below).

A QUICK REFRESHER ON 5 IN 1 - AND WHY IT'S IMPORTANT IN DROUGHT

District Veterinarian Evie Duggan

5in1 is a clostridial vaccination – providing inexpensive protection against the deadly diseases that are caused by Clostridial bacteria, which are found in the normal healthy animal and soil. These diseases include:

- Pulpy kidney (enterotoxaemia)
- Tetanus
- Black Disease
- Malignant oedema / Blackleg-like disease
- Blackleg disease

With the current drought conditions, an environment that is more conducive to disease is created with stressed animals and supplementary feeding of grain. Lambs are more likely to be affected by pulpy kidney when fed a grain diet while rapidly growing, and older sheep when moved between variable feed types (eg. poorer to better feed) – all scenarios that are common in the current conditions. In drought lot situations increased stocking density not only increases stress on animals but also increases the bacterial load in the soil and, if trail feeding, the faecal load ingested.

Vaccination with 5 in 1 or 6 in 1 should be given twice as lambs (once at lamb marking and a booster at weaning) and then followed up annually in adults to maintain immunity. If putting stock on grain or improved pastures and they have not had a booster in the past 6 months, then a booster before embarking on this better feed can save you from unnecessary losses.

Cattle have the same risks and requirements but choices of vaccine are 5 in 1 or 7 in 1 products.

PREPARATION FOR EARLY WEANING

Final year veterinary student (Charles Sturt University) Ella Jubb

As the drought continues and the summer months are fast approaching, early weaning of calves should be considered as a way to better utilise limited feed. Usually calves are weaned from 7- 10 months, by early weaning, calves are removed from the cows between 3-6 months of age.

Calves can adapt quickly to changes in environment and diet with a sound management plan. Calves that are weaned early are relatively efficient at converting feed to gain and can weigh as much, or more than calves allowed to remain with their dams until a conventional weaning age is reached. Some things to consider in preparation for early weaning of your calves.

Before weaning

For further information on how early weaning can be utilised in your herd contact your local district veterinarian.

- Vaccination- e.g. 5 in 1, two doses 4-6 weeks apart, initial dose ideally administered 2-3 weeks before commencing weaning.
- Mark, brand and dehorn a few weeks before weaning to allow time to recover or wait at least a month post-weaning.
- Begin creep feeding for 2-3 weeks before commencing weaning to allow ruminal and palatable adjustment.
- Booster vaccination- if needed
- Worm and fly control
- Manage dust levels and delivery of hay to minimise pink eye risk factors
- It is absolutely critical to get calves to eat as soon after maternal separation as possible. Regardless of weaning age, calves that start eating dry feed immediately after weaning have a lesser incidence of morbidity (illness) and mortality (death) than calves that do not eat for 24 to 48 hours after separation.
- Clean, fresh water should always be available to calves. Water sources should be easy to find, and of an appropriate height to allow access. Feed animals of similar size and weight and ideally, keep mob size to 50 or less; definitely avoid mobs of greater than 100.