

Animal Health Update

South East Local Land Services

March/April 2019

Welcome Mark Doyle District Vet Far South Coast



Mark Doyle has recently filled the Far South Coast District Veterinarian position vacated by Helen Schaefer, who is now with NSW DPI.

Graduating in 2005 from Queensland, Mark has many years of farm practice behind him in the private sector working in practices in North Queensland, various parts of New South Wales and Victoria and even a few years in the UK. Mark is not completely new to the Bega valley having worked in a local private practice from 2014 to 2017.

He and his wife have just returned from working in the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources in the fields of Meat Exports and Live Animal Exports. As part of that job he even

accompanied some locally sourced heifers on a boat to China at the end of last year. Along with his small family, Mark is looking forward to being a part of and contributing to the Bega valley community in his new role for Local Land Services.

He encourages you to get in touch with him if you have any questions or enquiries, or even if you just want to have a yarn.

You can reach him at mark.doyle@lls.nsw.gov.au or at the Bega office on 6291 7821.

Local Disease Watch

Alex Stephens District Veterinarian Yass

Pasture conditions have continued to become shorter and dryer over the last month with recent rainfalls providing some hope of autumn growth. Summer weeds have thrived in the conditions and crops and pastures have become stressed. District Veterinarians have investigated deaths due to plant toxicities with cases of:

- nitrate/nitrite toxicity in hay made from stressed crops
- oxalate toxicity in sheep yarded for drenching
- paspalum staggers in a mob of cattle
- multiple cases of photosensitisation from both panic species grasses and caltrops/cathead.

In sheep there have been reports of poor scanning results for joinings through December and January with the heat wave conditions thought to be a

considerable factor. Poor results have also been reported on some cattle properties with condition score as a result of seasonal conditions being most likely to blame.

Worm counts conducted through the lab have been low to moderate, and all have shown barber's pole to be the vastly dominant worm persisting. With pastures browning off at the end of summer we need to ensure adequate protein and energy intake in maintaining immunity against worms, particularly in our weaners.

A few 'Drench Checks' have been conducted this month. These checks provide a very valuable assessment of drench efficacy on the current parasites present on the farm, but in a few cases the samples have been taken too early or too late. Samples need to be taken within the specific timeframe of 10 to 14 days after the drench was given to be accurate. On one property the drench check showed substantial barber's pole resistance to ivermectin. Post mortem results on another property showed likely resistance to a closantel and ivomectin combination.

Fluke has been detected in cattle on a few properties this month using the blood ELISA test. On properties that have ongoing fluke issues, cattle selectively graze the greener fluke prone soaks and pick up fluke particularly during a long dry summer. These cattle can present with obvious weight loss and or bottle jaw and need to be treated with a product such as triclabendazole that kills immature as well as mature fluke. April and August are the most important times to treat cattle to strategically control fluke on your property.

NLIS REQUIREMENTS: ARE YOU GETTING IT RIGHT?

Petrea Wait District Veterinarian Monaro

Australia's livestock industry was worth \$65 billion in 2017 including a \$13 billion export market. To protect this industry we need to maintain consumer confidence in the safety and integrity of our livestock products with effective identification and tracing systems to provide whole-of-life traceability.

This is especially important in a food safety or chemical residue incident and in the case of an exotic disease outbreak, such as Foot and Mouth

Disease (FMD) where effective tracing of livestock can reduce the impact of such a disease.

In 2001 the United Kingdom suffered through a devastating outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease which resulted in the culling of millions of animals and the loss of billions of pounds to the UK economy. It took nine months to bring the disease under control as it was impossible to rapidly trace the movements of infected animals, and thousands of unaffected stock were killed to halt its spread.

Following this outbreak, the UK implemented identification and tracing systems for livestock which proved to be so successful that when another foot-and-mouth disease outbreak occurred in 2007 it was contained within days of identification, limiting infection to only four farms and eradication was achieved in just over a month.

We know that foot-and-mouth disease comes into Australia in illegally imported meat products and it may just be a matter of time before we have our own outbreak.

We have learned the lessons from the UK outbreaks and implemented a traceability system to help protect our livestock and industries. But the system is only as good as the people who use it.

It only takes a few minutes to check that your stock are tagged and your vendor declarations are completed correctly. A few simple checks could make the difference between a devastating event with months of anguish or a rapid disease response and containment.

PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION CODES

A Property Identification Code or PIC is an eight digit unique identifier for land and is assigned to individual properties by Local Land Services. Anyone who keeps or owns livestock in NSW is required to ensure the land on which the livestock are kept has a PIC.

If you **lease land or have livestock on agistment** on another property, you will need to utilise that property's PIC. Ask the property owner for the PIC details for that property or contact LLS. If the property doesn't already have a PIC, then as the lessee or agistee you must negotiate with the owner of the property to apply for a PIC, or obtain his/her permission to apply for a PIC and be the PIC manager for that property.

LPA ACCREDITATION AND NVDs

The Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) program is the Australian livestock industry's on-farm assurance program covering food safety, animal welfare and biosecurity. It provides evidence of livestock history and on-farm practices when processing livestock. You **become accredited** by contacting Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA). You must do a short online course to become accredited.

Once accredited with the LPA program you are able to access an LPA National Vendor Declaration (NVD), which is required for all livestock movements, including property to property, and movements to sale through saleyards, direct to processors and to feedlots, and to the live export trade. NVDs are available in electronic format (eDEC) or hard copy books from MLA. If you are using a **hard copy NVD book** you must ensure that it is the **current version**. **To order NVDs**, either phone MLA on 1800 683 111 or go to www.mla.com.au/lpa

NLIS REQUIREMENTS

All cattle being moved from a property **must be identified with an NLIS device**. This includes cattle being moved for sale, show, slaughter, agistment or to a different property for any reason. Once identified the device remains attached to the cattle for its life. The PIC code is printed on the outside of the NLIS device which must only be applied to cattle on that property.

NLIS devices are manufactured in two colours, which signify where the animal was identified. 'Breeder devices' are white, and applied to animals born on the property to which the PIC on the breeder device relates. 'Post-breeder devices' are orange, and applied to cattle not born on the property on which you are identifying cattle.

All sheep and goats born on a property **must be identified with an NLIS breeder tag for sheep and goats** printed with a **readable PIC** for that property before they are sent to a saleyard, abattoir or to another property. Any untagged animals that were not born on that property should be tagged with an NLIS pink post-breeder tag printed with that property's PIC before they are moved. Once an NLIS sheep/goat tag is attached, it

must not be removed until the animal is processed in an abattoir or knackery.

Producers **reselling sheep and goats** which they have bought previously can either **record on their movement document** (NVD or TSS) all the PICs printed on the NLIS tags attached to animals in the consignment, or identify each animal with an NLIS **pink post-breeder tag** printed with their PIC.

All mob-based movements of sheep and goats and all cattle movements between properties **must be recorded in the NLIS database** by recording the information contained in the NLIS movement document. Note that a mob can be as few as one animal. Saleyard operators, feedlot operators and abattoir operators are responsible for recording movement of livestock in and out of their establishments. If livestock move between properties, including to shows, agistment properties or travelling stock routes, or are purchased by private sale, **it is the livestock owners' responsibility to record the movement in the NLIS database within 2 days of the movement**.

To set up an NLIS account, go to their webpage at: <https://www.nlis.com.au/>

If you need any more information about identification of livestock or the traceability system please call South East Local Land Services local office or see our website at <https://southeast.lis.nsw.gov.au/>

Risk factors, treatment and prevention for pinkeye disease in cattle

A group of researchers, working at the Sydney School of Veterinary Science and School of Veterinary and Life Sciences, Murdoch University, are conducting research into pinkeye of beef cattle. This condition is also known as blight, and infectious bovine keratoconjunctivitis. The research is part of a Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) project. Part of the research project is a survey aimed at producers to glean information about the disease and its impact from the producer's perspective.

Pinkeye is a well-known, important eye disease of cattle, but despite many years of research

questions remain about its cause, impact and treatments. There is a sense of frustration amongst beef producers over the lack of progress with this highly visible distressing disease. The survey is being conducted to find out how common pinkeye is in different regions of Australia, its importance, and any predisposing factors. The information supplied will be used to help improve prevention, control and management of pinkeye.

You are invited to participate in the survey by clicking the link below:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YDG2KLJ>

The survey may take about 10-15 minutes to complete. Your name will go into a draw to win one of the ten **\$100 gift vouchers**. Prize winners will be selected without their responses to the online survey being identifiable.

Please note that your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and your responses will be treated confidentially. By completing this survey, you are under no obligation to participate in any future research. You may withdraw from the survey at any time without impacting on your relationship with the University of Sydney.

Thank you for your anticipated participation. If you have any questions about this survey, please feel free to contact Dr. Mac Kneipp (mac.kneipp@sydney.edu.au) or Dr. Navneet Dhand (navneet.dhand@sydney.edu.au).

Oxalate poisoning – plant toxicity

Tess Noble DVM student Sydney University

There have been a few confirmed cases of oxalate poisoning across the region this summer. Oxalate poisoning occurs when stock graze plants that contain high concentrations of oxalates. Oxalates are produced by a variety of common plants including *Rumex spp.* (docks), *Acetocella spp.* (sorrels), *Chenopodium spp.* (fat hen) and kikuyu. Poisoning is most common in sheep and cattle and can occur in horses. Poisoned animals are commonly found dead but early signs are staggering, muscle tremors, collapse and breathing difficulty.

The consumption of oxalates does not always result in poisoning. When ruminants are exposed to oxalates gradually, their ruminal flora adapt, enabling them to break down oxalates. However, ingestion of oxalates in increased quantities or without prior exposure can lead to sudden death or chronic disease. Poisoning is particularly a risk when hungry stock are suddenly exposed to plants high in oxalates, such as when moved to fresh pasture or weed infested yards. Oxalate concentrations are highest in young actively growing leaves, particularly where plant growth is boosted by nitrogen, such as in yards. Oxalate poisoning can also occur when animals are fed silage contaminated by oxalate producing fungi.

How do oxalates act as a poison?

Two separate disease patterns occur with oxalate poisoning: acute and chronic poisoning.

Acute oxalate poisoning ruminants

Animals with acute oxalate poisoning will often stagger and go down within a few hours of oxalate consumption. When oxalates enter the blood they readily bind to calcium to form calcium oxalate crystals. These crystals deposit and accumulate in tissues, causing damage to the kidneys, bladder, blood vessels and brain. **The binding of calcium to oxalates causes hypocalcaemia** which manifests as muscle twitching, weakness, seizures, coma and death. Due to their high calcium requirements, pregnant, lactating, and young animals are more susceptible to oxalate poisoning. If animals survive the initial acute poisoning they will often die later due to severe kidney damage.

Chronic oxalate poisoning in ruminants

Chronic oxalate poisoning occurs when animals consume plants high in oxalates for an extended period of time. This leads to the gradual accumulation of oxalate crystals in the kidneys and chronic renal failure. Affected animals show reduced appetite, weight loss and anaemia, increased water consumption and urination, weakness and diarrhoea. Oxalates that bind to calcium within the digestive tract can also reduce

calcium absorption leading to a calcium deficiency and skeletal abnormalities. Chronic poisoning tends to cause sporadic deaths.

Prevention

Oxalate poisoning can be prevented by being aware of and controlling hungry livestock access to plants high in oxalates on your property. Where animals are to be exposed to oxalates, plenty of alternative feed and water should be provided. Animals should be introduced gradually to oxalates, with access to plants increased incrementally. In particular producers should be cautious when animals have not recently been exposed to oxalates, or are to be exposed following a dry period or extended yarding.

Contact Us

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