# Palpating Rams

Palpating involves checking the testicles for defects to determine the ram's soundness for breeding.
It is preferable to palpate rams at least six weeks before mating, at sale time and at ram lamb weaning.
**Defects commonly detected include:**

- Mono-orchidism (only one testicle present)
- Micro-orchidism (one or both testicles are underdeveloped)
- Cryptochidism (no testicles present)
- Epididymitis (lumps/inflammation in the surrounding tubes)
- Scarring and damage to the testicle or scrotum
- Scrotal mange

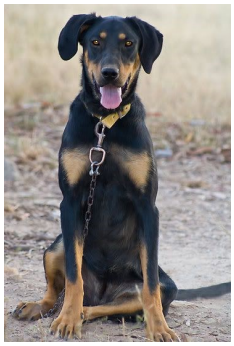
All of the above conditions can affect a ram's fertility, so detecting these problems early can help us to make decisions on which rams are best to use at mating and which rams are sound for sale. It is important to have a six-week buffer between palpating and mating so that unsound rams can be removed and replaced.

**Brucellosis**
Brucellosis is a disease caused by the bacteria *Brucella ovis*. It tends to affect mature rams and it can cause epididymitis which can be palpated as lumps in the epididymis surrounding the testicle. The disease variably affects the quality of the semen from the ram, which in turn can lead to reduced lambing performance. Brucellosis can be passed between rams by mating behaviour with each other and by mating a ewe who has recently been mated by an infected ram.
Risks include introducing a new ram to the flock and untested neighbouring rams jumping the fence. Unfortunately, not all brucellosis rams will have lumps and fortunately not all rams with lumps will have Brucellosis. Other diseases, like Histophilus, and injuries to the testicles can cause lumps, even teaser rams will have very large lumps. The way we can distinguish if a ram with lumpy testicles has Brucellosis or not is through a blood test.

**How to help prevent brucellosis**

- Keep good boundary fences
- Test any new rams by palpation and blood test if they haven't been tested before you bought them
- Get your vet to palpate rams every year pre-mating and pre-sale and blood test any with lumps

# Why is vaccinating working dogs important?



Working dogs are vaccinated against Parvovirus, Distemper, Parainfluenza, Hepatitis and Leptospirosis. Parvovirus is by far the most common of these and can quickly kill puppies – through lots of vomiting and bloody diarrhoea. It is highly contagious and especially common on the east coast of the North Island (important point if you are getting pups from that direction). Adult dogs (especially if unvaccinated) can also be affected. Any pups coming on to your property should be vaccinated – this can be done from 6 or 8 weeks old.

Distemper, Hepatitis and Parainfluenza are all much less common now. Why? Because we routinely vaccinate for them, decreasing the prevalence of this disease in the dog population. If we stopped vaccinating for these diseases it is likely we would start seeing cases again, just like measles in humans. If we consider your team of dogs as a "population", as in more than just one or two pet dogs, they are more likely to be able to spread diseases between themselves, we see this very commonly with Kennel Cough. By making sure they have "herd immunity", as in most/all of them are vaccinated, it is less likely that a disease can survive as it will have no unvaccinated animals to infect.

Kennel Cough is another vaccination we offer. In the previous few years there have been occasional outbreaks of this disease around the country, particularly in working dogs. It is highly contagious and although seldom fatal, it can take a whole team of dogs out of work for 2 weeks or more. It's a good one to consider vaccinating against especially if you are taking dogs to trials or they are in contact with a lot of dogs outside of the team regularly.

If your working (and pet) dogs are not currently getting vaccinated yearly or you would like more information about being on our 'Dog Vaccination Run' please contact us.

# DRYSTOCK FARMERS

In the past we have been accused of neglecting drystock farmers and focusing on holding the hands of the soft dairy farmers, something that Daniel is trying hard to curb, so it was great to see Daniel bring in some excellent speakers late last month. Those who managed to show up were treated to some great talks on very relevant animal health issues that sheep and beef farmers should be aware of. The overall take away message from both presenters was the implementation of appropriate treatment of the right classes of stock, along with good management, will help maximise your profitability through minimising losses and keep you farming longer.

First up we had Amanda Kilby, the technical advisor for MSD, who spoke about vaccination protocols for your sheep flock. From the farmers who attended it was evident that there are a lot of variations used for both clostridial vaccination and ewe vaccinations including Toxovax and Campyvax.

The correct way to protect your lambs from clostridial infections including tetanus, blackleg & pulpy kidney requires 2 vaccinations with Ultravac at least a month a part (can be done at docking then again at weaning). Vaccinating your ewes prior to lambing will allow transfer of protection through the colostrum to young lambs prior to their vaccinations.

Things to note were:

- The gap between the first 2 vaccines can be as long as 3 months so it doesn't matter if you wean late.
- Lambs are not completely protected until the 2nd dose so boosting your ewes pre lambing is vital for early protection.
- Lambvax only offers short term protection for tetanus and pulpy kidney and DOES NOT count as first clostridial vaccine.
- If your ewes are vaccinated prior to lambing you do not have to use lambvax at docking.
- Both Campyvax and Toxovax offer very favourable returns by decreasing lamb losses you may not know are occurring, as well as offering protection against a catastrophic outbreak!
- Getting the timing right for all vaccines is very important. Something you can talk to your vet or rep about to make sure what you do is right for your farm!

The second speaker was Anthony Oswald, who is a vet from Taihape Vets as well as a Wormwise representative. He had some very concerning information about the development of drench resistance in NZ including the progression of triple drench resistance, which is becoming a problem here in Taranaki as well, and the headaches it creates for the farms it affects. The best way to deal with this problem is to not get it. This starts by knowing what the resistance status on your farm is! Of all Anthony's clients that have developed severe resistant issues (where over 30% of worms are unaffected by triples) only one had production issues and the rest had no idea they had a problem. Once you see production losses and wormey lambs due to resistance you might as well sell your sheep and plant manuka because farming is going to become very hard to do!

The take home messages from Anthony are:

- You need to test to know what your resistance status is. Now is the best time to do it.
- Managing the problem before it arrives is the best way to avoid resistance issues.
- Drench with the most effective product possible and drench to the heaviest lamb!
- Do not drench and move lambs onto clean pasture.
- Do not drench adult sheep unless they really need it.
- Avoid lamb only blocks; use other classes of stock to reduce worm burden on finishing land.
- The most expensive drench you can use is the one that doesn't work!

There is growing concern that many experts are predicting drench resistance could be the biggest issue sheep farmers have faced and the only way to protect yourself is to know what your resistance status is on your farm. Please feel free to ring us to discuss how best to go about finding out; it doesn't cost a lot to check; the consequences of not checking are serious!

Once again a huge thank you to Daniel for organising this talk. Your support and attendance at these events is what will drive more of them in the future so please come along and if nothing else have a feed and a beer on us!