Ewe and lamb management at lambing

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What are the issues?

• Pre lamb treatments
• Pre lamb feeding
• Lambing paddock allocation
• Avoiding wastage
Pre lamb treatments

• Clostridial vaccinating – needs to be within 3 weeks of PSL
• Potions
• LSD
• Vita mineral drench
• Garlic and vinegar
• Drenching?
Peri lambing drench decisions

- Most top farmers do not drench (all ewes).
- Persistent acting drenches are a risk.
- Whole flock treatments are a risk.
- Think of cost benefits.
Peri lambing drench decisions

- Most top farmers do not drench (all ewes).
- Persistent acting drenches are a risk.
- Whole flock treatments are a risk.
- Think of cost benefits.
- Young ewes need more protection.
- Light ewes need more protection.
- Can you monitor the worm level?
Pre lamb feeding

• Sharp increase in energy demands from 6 (4) weeks out
  – twins need 23% more
  – triplets need 44% more
• Must not loose > 0.5 BCS
• Must increase feed intake over this time
Pre Lambing Feeding

• Hard to achieve with pasture covers alone (unless can ration).

• PGR’s/pasture quality are the vital tools for achieving this.

• MOST COMMON AREA OF FAILURE
Managing Pre Lamb Feeding

- Time of lambing
- Stocking rate
- Nitrogen
- Pasture quality
- Grazing control
- PLANNING
Lambing paddock management

• Utilise paddock history
• ID high risk ewes:
  — Young multiples
  — Thin ewes
  — Triplets
• Triplets need flat and small paddocks
Wastage

- Ewe deaths
- Lamb deaths
- Lamb growth rates
What Have We Done?

• Constant focus on breeds
• Tried more and more magic potions
• Have decreased drench inputs!
• Provided more feed as the answer to all
• Increased N inputs – esp winter
The Outcome

• No increase in lamb survival
• Increased ewe deaths
• Little change in weaning weights
Ewe Deaths

• Traditionally:
  - Throughout the year
  - Johnes Disease dominant
  - Bearings
Ewe Deaths

- Today:
  - Spring dominant
  - Bearings (just more and older twins)
  - Mature and old ewes
  - Multiples esp triplets
  - Are just tally differences
  - Not found
Why?

- Majority of ewes carrying > 1 lamb
- Old ewes
- Very fecund old ewes
- Triplets – 30+%
  - means 5% quads
- Imagine the risk of 5/6 year old triplet ewe
- Ewe quality issues
- Feed composition?
Ewe quality

- Poor constitution/low BCS
- Lame
- Udder defects
Ewe quality

- Poor constitution/low BCS
- Lame
- Udder defects
- Old
  - Teeth unreliable
  - No room to cull
- Low culling rate
- Replacements, Poor performers
Recap

• Lots of multiples
• Plenty of old ewes
• Improved feed Q
• Aggressively grown more feed, esp pre lamb
• Continued heavy P +/- S
• Ignored pH?
• Pre occupied with just more feed
Recap the outcome

- More ewe deaths
- Lowered lamb survival
- No increase in lamb weaning weights
- All of this now a very common outcome.
What could be happening?

• Many high risk ewes – age, productive potential
• Pasture diet high in potential to cause metabolic disease
• N inputs increase this risk?
• Macro element imbalances limiting lactation performance.
Managing this threat

• ID the “at risk” sheep (triplets, 5+ year ewes multiples)
• Feed modestly
• Paddock preferences
• Be careful with winter N
• Pasture monitoring
The End