



RIVERINA LOCAL
LIVESTOCK UPDATE

October



Local Land
Services

Case study: Crisis averted!

By Dione Howard, District Vet

🔍 Sheep

CASE HISTORY:

A producer called after noticing 10 small/premature lamb foetuses in the paddock when moving a mob of 700 ewes. The ewes were about a fortnight from the start of lambing and making their way closer to the yards for pre-lambing drench and vaccination.

The producer conceded that pre-lambing yarding would ideally occur earlier, however wet weather had prevented this. Holding off the pre-lambing yarding had also delayed moving ewes to lambing paddocks, and extra grazing pressure had been placed on the paddock where the foetuses were found.

As the vet arrived on farm, a foetus was found in a laneway the ewes had been through that morning. Not a good sight to happen upon but ideal for sample collection and determining potential cause of the losses. The ewes were in good condition and appeared otherwise healthy.

CLINICAL EXAMINATION:

Several lamb foetuses were collected from the paddock and examined. The most notable abnormalities were small white foci (dots) about 2-3 mm diameter over the surface of the liver and yellow discolouration of sections of the liver [Figure 1]. This suggested that the cause of the foetal abortions could be bacterial.

DIAGNOSIS:

Liver samples were cultured and grew *Listeria ivanovii*. Campylobacteriosis infection can cause similar lesions in the liver, so this was also tested for and ruled out.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Listeria ivanovii is one of two species of *Listeria* which cause disease in animals.

L. ivanovii causes abortions and gastrointestinal disease, and *L. monocytogenes* causes these conditions as well as brain infections.

L. ivanovii is considered zoonotic so care must be taken and PPE worn if this disease is suspected. *Listeria* are present in the gut of normal sheep, and are hardy bacteria – they are tolerant of a wide range of environmental conditions and can multiply in faecal material and soil.

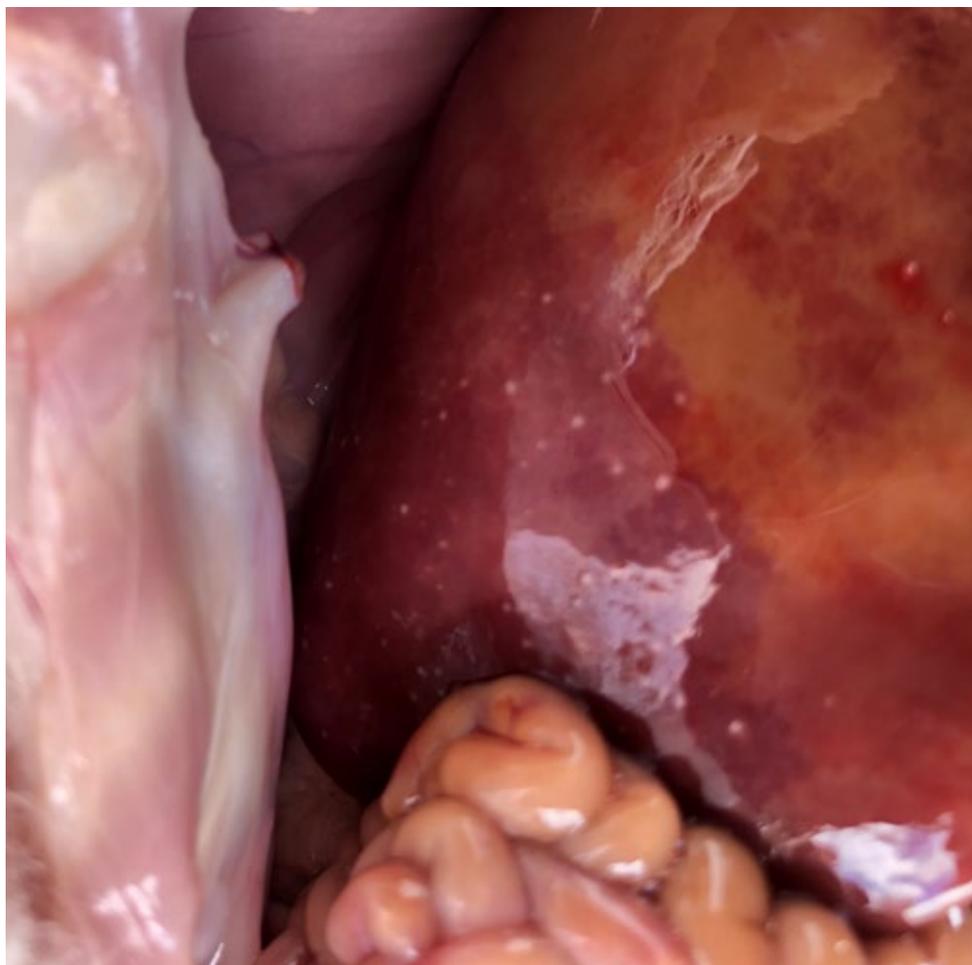


Figure 1 – Small white foci over the surface of the liver and sections of yellow discolouration.

The disease is usually sporadic and low prevalence, and risk factors include wet, muddy conditions. More commonly infections are associated with feeding spoiled silage.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT?

In this case, no further abortions were detected in the new paddock closer to the yards. The ewes had been removed from the contaminated paddock with shorter feed and therefore reduced the risk factors. Decomposing plant litter and feed provide suitable sites for growth of this bacteria to cause disease.

In this case, an abortion-storm crisis was averted - however the key takeaway is that if you think it's time to move ewes to lambing paddocks, and can balance keeping feet dry and ewes and lambs healthy – it's probably for the best!

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

[Listeria abortion \(flockandherd.net.au\)](http://flockandherd.net.au)

Case study: Preventing Neonatal Calf Losses

By Emily Stearman, District Vet

🔍 Cattle

Wet winters in the Riverina sometimes challenge us more than the dry ones. It is not uncommon in years such as this that we see an increase late-term/neonatal calf losses in first calving heifers. We will briefly discuss some of the most common, preventable causes for these losses, for consideration in preparing next year's heifers for calving.

NUTRITION

Most producers are aware of the body condition score targets for joining and calving but these are often difficult to manage in good season. Over-fat heifers have an increased risk of dystocia (birthing difficulty).

If nutrition is rapidly increased in the late half of the third trimester, calf birth weight substantially increases. High birth weight calves are disproportionate to the heifer, in some cases resulting in obstruction of or malpresentation in the birth canal.

If the heifer is over fattened in the first and second trimester, the high percentage of body fat at the time of calving can reduce the effectiveness of hormonal and metabolic pathways, reducing the effectiveness of uterine contractions during labour.

Managing body condition score to reduce the risk of these two scenarios will substantially reduce the risk of dystocia and increase neonate survival. Aiming to reduce weight in heifers during pregnancy should be avoided where possible.

Across the Riverina we commonly see a subclinical calcium issue that results in delayed progression of labour, this is referred to as Lazy Calving. The heifer does not appear uncomfortable like she would with a mispresented/obstructed calf rather, due to poor uterine contractions, there is an extended delay from the onset of contractions to the point of delivery.

This occurs in appropriately conditioned heifers, that are grazing adequate, nutritional pasture at the time of calving.

Why is this?

Frequent rainfall events in the peri-and post-parturient period significantly reduce the amount of fibre in plant material.

Fibre in the diet is important for many reasons, in relation to Lazy Calving fibre encourages chewing of the cud, this promotes increased saliva production and absorption of calcium present in the diet.

Without fibre, calcium supplementation alone will not be effective in reducing the effects of this condition.

What can we do?

A constant supply of quality cereal hay should be made available when grazing fresh winter pastures.



Where possible, avoid grazing cereal crops during the calving period as the plant material is naturally lower in calcium. If poor quality pastures are unavoidable during calving, high quality legume hay is recommended. Heifers should have constant access to loose licks rich in calcium and magnesium, continued through early lactation.

When calving heifers in high-risk years we recommend early intervention at the point of calving, if the calf has not progressed within 30 minutes of labour manual examination is recommended.

VACCINATION

We are fortunate in Australia to have an array of vaccinations available that help prevent the common reproductive disease such as Leptospirosis, Vibriosis (Campylobacteriosis) and Pestivirus (Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Virus).

It is important to maintain a thorough vaccination program or routine monitoring so that these diseases do not result in lost calves on your farm.

Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection that results in abortion and often retained foetal membranes. Cattle can remain infected for up to 3 months. This bacteria is contagious to humans concurrently, and vaccination not only protects the animal but reduces the human health risk.

Vaccination can be given as young as 6 weeks of age with a booster 4-6 weeks later. In Australia Leptospira is included in any 7 in 1 vaccine; if this is not given as a calf, heifers should be vaccinated twice, with the second dose given 2-4 weeks prior to joining.

Vibriosis or campylobacteriosis is another bacterial cause of mid-late term abortion in cattle. This disease can have longer lasting impacts on herd fertility with extended return to service and reduced back in calf rates.

In closed herds, the best preventative vaccination program is to vaccinate the bulls. This is a two-dose program, given 4 weeks apart with aim of the second vaccine being administered 2-4 weeks prior to joining.

Vaccination of bulls should be carried out annually thereafter.

Pestivirus or Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Virus is a virus that has circulated in Australia's cattle herds for over half a century. The heifer group of females are the most like to be unexposed to this virus on your farm. Pestivirus can present in many forms including early foetal losses, malformed calves or persistently infected calves that are often ill thrifty and die before 2 years of age.

It is recommended that you know the exposure of your herd by serology testing at least every 2-3 years. Regardless of this many producers find vaccinating first calving heifers to be a business insurance. Vaccination of heifers is a two-dose program.

The registered product in Australia has some variation between the timing of doses, however you should aim to have heifers fully vaccinated prior to joining to reduce the impacts of virus exposure during this period.

Prevention is always better than cure. If you wish to discuss a vaccination program for your herd or require more information about how to manage heifer nutrition please contact your local veterinarian.

Announcements and additional warnings

PRE-JOINING CHECKLIST FOR EWES & RAMS

By Emily Stearman, District Vet

It's approaching that time of year again where we should be thinking about how we prepare for joining.

Ewe Checklist

We aim to join ewes in BCS 2.5-3/5.

- Body condition score of ewes at weaning - in a year where spring feed may be limited weaning is a good time to draft ewes into two condition score groups - those to maintain and those to increase condition
- six weeks prior to joining both mobs should be reassessed and additional, high protein feed provided for those still below condition
- Clostridial vaccination boosters are typically not required if ewes were vaccinated prior to lambing. If vaccinations for *Campylobacter* are used on farm consider that the recommended vaccination protocols for these products are observed.
- Assessment of other health conditions should be conducted. Heavy worm burdens and foot health can impact significantly on fertility.



Ram Checklist

Six weeks prior to joining rams should be assessed for BCS:

- Feeding a high protein diet in the 6 weeks leading into joining increases semen quality. Where rams are found to be <BCS2.5-3/5 addition of high energy feed may be required concurrently.

and the 4 T's:

- **Testicles** - Palpate the testicles to identify any lumps or variations in size or texture. If you are unsure about how to palpate or concerned about lumps you have found, you should seek a veterinarian's advice or assistance.
- **Toes (Feet/legs)** - Visualise the ram walking to identify any lameness. Closely inspect the feet for signs of abscess or footrot and examine the legs, especially joints for swelling.
- **Teeth** - especially in older rams. Consider culling any rams with a broken mouth as they may be less capable of maintaining weight and achieving maximum performance during joining.
- **Tossel (Penis)** - examine for cuts and ulcers in a tipped ram, understandably this may not always be practical. At a minimum, the prepuce should be inspected and the penis palpated through the prepuce to identify any obvious swellings or lumps.

Additionally:

- If buying new rams, it is highly recommended that the rams are purchased from an ovine brucellosis accredited flock and a National Sheep Health Declaration is requested from the seller.
- Once the new rams arrive, a quarantine drench with a combination product should be given and rams should be kept isolated for as long as possible to monitor them for signs of lice or footrot.
- Clostridial vaccination boosters are recommended 4 weeks pre-joining in rams.

SHEEP CARCASS CONDITIONS

Learn more about sheep health conditions with a virtual interactive carcass

Visit Now
sheepcarcassconditions.web.app

ARTHIRITIS
SHEEP MEASLES
RIB FRACTURES
GRASS SEEDS
PLEURISY-PNEUMONIA
ARTHIRITIS

360° FULL VR CONTROL

Sheep producers generally understand the negative impact animal health conditions can have on the productivity and profitability of their business, but the losses become particularly apparent when discovered at the abattoir, rendering large portions of an animal unusable.

Many conditions remain 'sight unseen' because they are not detectable in a live animal, so, to help producers get a better understanding of the impact some sheep health conditions have on the carcass, Animal Health Australia (AHA) and the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) have developed a virtual reality tool for producers *Sheep Health Conditions – Carcass Impacts*.

The visualisation tool was developed to complement AHA's National Sheep Health Monitoring Project (NSHMP). Six conditions are showcased – pleurisy/pneumonia, sheep measles, grass seeds, arthritis, rib fractures and vaccination lesions. Within the tool, there are also fact sheets which include further information including how producers can prevent or manage each condition on their property.

The Sheep Health Conditions – Carcass Impacts tool [can be accessed through the AHA website](#)

2021 GRAHAM CENTRE LIVESTOCK FORUM RECORDING NOW AVAILABLE

Sheep and beef producers can now tap into new research and panel discussions on key industry issues in recordings of the 2021 Graham Centre Livestock Forum.

The online Forum, on Friday 30 July, brought together hundreds of producers, advisors, and industry representatives.

If you missed the event now is the perfect time to catch up by [watching it on the Graham Centre's YouTube channel](#).

- <https://youtu.be/U2VRQXhdZAI>

Upcoming events

WEBINAR - WINNING WITH WEANERS ONLINE

21st October 2021 1pm-2pm

Sheep Connect NSW is excited to once again deliver one of our popular Flagship workshop in an online format. Join Megan Rogers as we explore key management strategies that will assist you in improving the performance of your Merino weaners, thereby optimising their performance in your flock for their lifetime.

Register here: [Registration \(gotowebinar.com\)](https://gotowebinar.com)

WEBINAR – AN INTRODUCTION TO SHEEP REPRODUCTIVE BIOLOGY

28th October 2021 1pm-2pm

Join Dr Simon de Graaf from the University of Sydney as he delivers an overview on the science behind sheep reproduction. This will be an excellent webinar to get the WHY explained before we tackle management strategies to improve reproductive performance over the coming weeks.

Register here: [Registration \(gotowebinar.com\)](https://gotowebinar.com)

WEBINAR – PRE-JOINING EWE NUTRITION

4th November 2021 1pm-2pm

Following on from Simon's webinar last week, we will be joined by Nicole Logg to look at ways to optimise pre-joining ewe nutrition to maximise breeding success this season.

Register here: [Registration \(gotowebinar.com\)](https://gotowebinar.com)

PODCAST SPOTLIGHT

The Big Shift for Small Farms

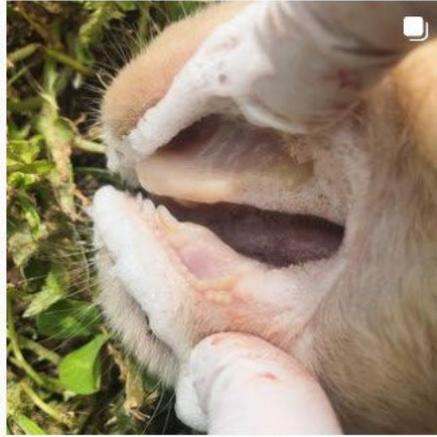
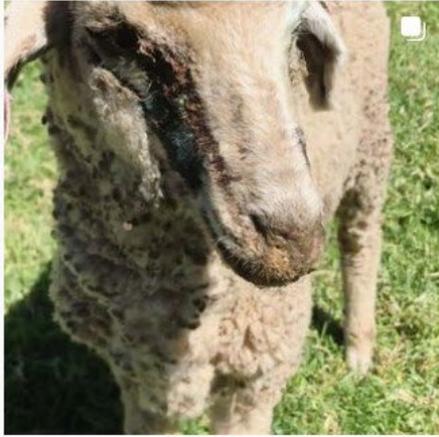
From soil health to mental health this podcast discusses the need for A BIG SHIFT in our farming systems.

The Big Shift for Small Farms podcast includes a broad range of expert advice and information for growers and producers running a variety of business from industry experts and their farming peers.

[Listen here.](#)



Follow us at [@locallivestockvets](https://www.instagram.com/locallivestockvets) on Instagram to see photos and videos direct from the paddock!



CONTACT YOUR CLOSEST DISTRICT VETERINARIAN

WAGGA

Emily Stearman - 0437 644 714 or 6923 6300

Dione Howard - 0428 115 134 or 6923 6300

NARRANDERA/GRIFFITH

Georgia Grimmond - 0427 418 006

HAY

Georgia Grimmond - 0427 418 006

GUNDAGAI

Amy Underwood - 6940 6900

YOUNG

Rhys Powell - 0427 147 939