



THE  
WOOD  
VETERINARY  
GROUP



## Keep an eye out for Barber's Pole Worm!

Barber's pole worm (*Haemonchus contortus*) is a blood sucking parasite of sheep. Not all farms will have a problem with *Haemonchus*, so this will not apply to everybody but if you have had a history of this worm on your farm or buy in sheep then you are likely at risk. We've seen nasty outbreaks these past few weeks, so be vigilant when gathering groups of sheep and keep an eye out for clinical signs.

*Haemonchus Contortus* is a small round worm, which live in the abomasum (4<sup>th</sup> stomach) of the sheep and suck on blood resulting in anaemia. The amount of worms present will dictate the level of anaemia in the sheep. Females are very prolific and produce eggs in their 1000's.



Clinical signs include:

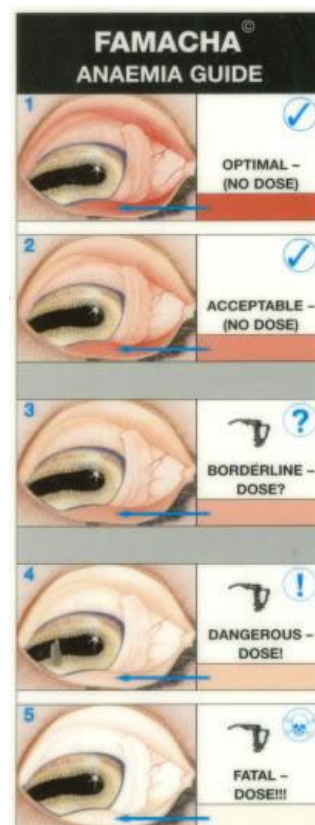
- Lethargy and slow sheep when gathering
- One of the most common signs is sudden death of adult sheep during the summer and autumn months
- Increased respiratory rate
- Pale mucous membranes. Looking at the lower eyelid can be a good indicator as to whether the sheep is anaemic or not. As shown on the image on the right, a FAMACHA test chart can be used to determine if sheep are anaemic or not
- Very high spiking WECs

There are many other diseases which can cause an anaemia, so the clinical picture must be looked at in its entirety before deciding to worm your ewes. Please speak to use at the practice if you are concerned

Monitoring is performed via worm egg counting every 4-6 weeks and by keeping vigilant for any of the clinical signs detailed above. If you do have a suspicion and are concerned about this parasite in your sheep please speak to us at the vets so we can advise you further, or ask us on farm if you would like a demonstration of interpreting the FAMACHA test findings. Avoid over treating sheep with wormers as *Haemonchus* develops resistance very quickly and we already are aware of some farms that have resistant *Haemonchus* burdens making treatment a challenge.

If we do advise treatment for Haemonchosis, then we will likely advise a narrow spectrum product like Closantel unless many other worms egg types were also seen. Broad spectrum products like Ivermectin can be used, but should be avoided if it is mainly *Haemonchus* eggs seen on the egg count, due to the speedy development of resistance for these worms.

A vaccine has been licensed in Australia against *Haemonchus contortus*, so under special circumstances we could have this tool in our armoury too! Be vigilant of poor doing ewes that have plenty of grass!



## Teaser rams

July is the month where you should be thinking about getting a teaser done if you use them in your flock. Having a teaser tup is a cheap and effective way to tighten up your lambing period and can be used to advance the breeding season by up to two weeks. When choosing a sheep to make into a teaser, there are many criteria that should be met. Pick a good sheep, not one of the ropey ram lambs that didn't make it to market! One with good expected longevity; this procedure will cost and therefore making sure he'll be around for a long time is important!

- A fit sheep, fitter than a true ram as they will be getting around more ladies!
- Avoid using very young or old rams
- If wanting to vasectomise lambs they can be done from around 8 months old but don't overuse them until they're shearlings, as they will have more of a libido once they are that bit older
- Use a breed that mates naturally during the months you plan on using them. The Poll Dorset breed is good for earlier in the season, Suffolks and Charollais are another good option
- Choose an easily identified animal to prevent mistakes when introducing the teaser vs the fertile tup – a different breed, long tail, or known character will avoid slipups
- Choose ideally a shearling, even better than this would be to use a two year old sheep that was used the year before, with a proven libido
- Look for good teeth (no overshot jaw) and good shaped feet with no history of lameness
- If possible, choose a sheep originally from your flock, therefore with the same health status, rather than buying in a sheep for this purpose



The procedure can be performed on farm, with the sheep under light sedation. Its best if the tup is starved overnight before the procedure. We have been using a wheelbarrow or sheep chair for some years now to avoid too much wriggling and it's kinder to everyone's backs!

Once you've had the teaser rams produced, they can be used 6-8 weeks after being vasectomised. This allows for any sperm in the tract to become unviable and allows for the incisions to heal before mounting.

Using your Teaser:

- We suggest that a ratio of one teaser to 50-100 ewes
- Male sheep produce pheromones which produces a hormonal response in ewes. When a teaser ram is introduced, the ewes will ovulate 3-6 days later, known as a silent heat. The ewes will then short cycle, 7-10 days later or more commonly 17 days later. Two peaks in oestrus will occur, one at 18 days and one at 26 days after teaser introduction
- The teaser should not be in for any more than 14 days but can achieve this effect by being in for just 2 days, after a maximum of 14 days the teaser should be immediately swapped for fertile rams.