



GENSTOCK NEWS

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ANIMAL BREEDING & FLEECE TESTING SERVICES

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Welcome to the winter edition of the Genstock Newsletter. We focus on the major topic this season:

Ovine Johne's Disease

As you are probably aware, Ovine Johne's Disease has now been detected in an increasing number of W.A. flocks. At last count, the number of confirmed cases was 18, with approximately 40 flocks currently undergoing testing.

To keep updated with current developments, I have attended a Veterinary Workshop on OJD and the Market Assurance Program, as well as becoming accredited for the distribution of the GUDAIR vaccine.

Under the national OJD scheme, which was due to expire on June 30th 2004, W.A. has now exceeded the threshold of infected properties to maintain its status as a Freezone. It is up to the Primary Industries Standing Committee to formally change W.A.'s status and until they do so, W.A. farmers can continue to trade with the status of being a Freezone.

Due to the number of properties infected, it has become apparent that OJD has been present in W.A. for a long time (>10 years), and that the initial source of the infection is unlikely to be determined.

Also due to the insidious nature of the disease, a positive test will confirm that the bacteria has probably been present on the property for a minimum of 5 years. Realistically this means that some properties will currently have Johne's Disease present, but will not be diagnosed for several years.

In my opinion there are two important points for all breeders to be aware of:

- Firstly, this disease cannot be eradicated, as has been proven by our Eastern States counterparts, and it is highly likely it will keep spreading throughout the W.A. flock.
- Secondly, and probably most importantly, the disease is manageable and if handled properly will have minimal economic impact on any sheep enterprise.

Producers have a choice of 3 management options:-

1. Maintain current management procedures with increased awareness of older sheep that may lose weight and die. If suspect, it would be advisable to have such sheep post mortemed. At that stage, if warranted, undertake management procedures to minimise impact of disease.
2. Undertake a Market Assurance Program (MAP), which involves a long term testing approach in conjunction with an accredited veterinarian to give assurance your flock is free. May also vaccinate if you wish.

A WORD FROM CRAIG

3. Undertake a vaccination program that will prevent OJD from having any significant impact in terms of both clinical cases & spread of the disease, however this may not be economic on all properties.

It is most likely that sheep producers in higher risk areas, that sell stock other than for slaughter or export, will undertake a vaccination program. This will not only prevent this disease from having any impact on their own flock, but will also minimise the risk of transmitting the disease to other breeders.

Commercial sheep producers that sell only to export or slaughter may be advised to undertake option 1, and only initiate a vaccination program if suspect (or proven) of having the disease.

The vaccine (known as "GUDAIR") will only be available from approved Veterinarians. It is only given once to an animal and preferably as a lamb. Genstock will have the vaccine available at the following prices (GST EXC) :-

Up to 500 doses	\$1.90 / dose
500 - 1500 doses	\$1.85 / dose
1500 to 3000 doses	\$1.80 / dose
3000 to 5000 doses	\$1.78 / dose
> 5000 doses	\$1.75 / dose

Packs are in 250 doses, and terms will be strictly **payment before dispatch.**

Please complete the attached form to pre-book your vaccine.

Genstock is well aware of the implication of Ovine Johne's Disease and the potential effect it could have on our breeding services. As OJD is a disease of the gastro intestinal tract, contaminated pasture must be ingested, for an animal to become infected.

Obviously with the large number of recipients passing through our Embryo Transfer Centre, there is a risk that Ovine Johne's Disease could be introduced.

As it is envisaged that the majority of our **Embryo Transfer** clients will be undertaking vaccination programs, pregnant recipients can be vaccinated prior to introducing them to client's flocks. For those clients that wish to undertake the Market Assurance Program, and wish not to vaccinate, "On-Farm" embryo implantation would be recommended.

Rams visiting Genstock for Semen Collection, can be kept on grating and supplementary fed with any infection risk being negligible.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and if you would like to discuss any of the veterinary matters further, please do not hesitate to contact me on (08) 98341020.

Best wishes

Craig



Genstock were proud to support the Grand Champion and Reserve Poll Merino Champion at this year's Woolarama. Well done to Colin & Rae Lewis, Kolindale & to all our clients at Woolarama and Williams, 2004

GENSTOCK: FOR WHEN RESULTS REALLY COUNT

SEMEN FREEZING

Development of spermatozoa within the ram's testicles takes six to eight weeks. Therefore any stress to the ram two months prior to use can affect his fertility. Factors that affect fertility are numerous such as heat stress, poor nutrition, transporting, bullying by other rams and shed preparation for showing.

Western Australian farmers will generally mate from November to March. This equates to the hottest time of the year. Please ensure rams have access to plenty of shade, water and feed to minimize over exertion in the heat. If rams are shedded, please make sure that there is good air movement. This can be achieved by installing fans, keeping doors/vents open, minimizing bedding and running the rams outdoors with adequate shade.

Infertility in rams can result in a major dilemma for any sheep breeder during the season. Another major worry to farmers is that sheep always find the wrong time to die. Death is indiscriminate from your newly purchased sale ram to your five year old stock ram.

Freezing semen during late winter/spring when the rams are not in use helps to relieve these pressures. For Western Australian rams, this is the ideal time to freeze semen. As mentioned earlier, semen is produced two months prior to ejaculation. During this time, the rams have had access to green feed to improve nutrition and reduced temperatures ensure the testes have not been overheated.

Before bringing your rams to the centre please check the penis and testicles for sores or swellings, trim their feet and horns and if the ram is close to full wool, please shear. If he is being shedded, then please clip wool from around his pizzle. A ram should be in good condition, please ensure he is on a rising plane of nutrition. If the ram is nervous in human company please bring him into the shed for 1 week and spend time customising the ram to your presence. If the ram has not worked, try and get him used to mounting by introducing some cull ewes to him.

GENSTOCK can accommodate your rams individual needs, please advise us when you book them in. All rams are individually penned and all biosecurity measures are followed on entry.

7 GOOD REASONS TO FREEZE SEMEN

1. An inexpensive form of insurance against death or infertility
2. Incapacitated but otherwise quality rams can be frozen (ie. Rams suffering from brisket sores or arthritis)
3. It enables farmers to purchase semen from rams that they may not have been able to buy. Sharing rams can be made easier using frozen semen.
4. The long term storage of frozen semen from valuable rams can secure superior genetics for future use. The true genetic worth of some rams often does not become evident until they are 4-5 years old. Rare breeds can also be preserved.
5. Frozen semen eliminates the risk of introducing genital infections and other health problems into your flock. GENSTOCK tests all rams having semen frozen for sale for Brucellosis and Actinobacillus seminis.
6. Semen from rams with show, progeny and performance records can sell from \$20 to \$75 per dose. This has become an important additional source of income to many pedigree breeders.
7. Frozen semen can be easily transported nationally or internationally in the current "welfare friendly" climate, it eliminates the unnecessary stress on the animal and time for the farmer.

Pregnancy Scanning

As our Newsletter goes to print, our pregnancy scanning season is easing down. With the increasing demand for multiple birth scanning, two New Zealand sub contractors were employed along with our five trained operators. It is encouraging to be involved with so many commercial breeders requesting multiple birth diagnosis. Many of these breeders are implementing management procedures that increase fecundity of the ewes and increase lamb survival rates. Many breeders are also involved in double mating to help lift overall conception rates.

Pregnancy Toxaemia

With the current unfavourable start to the season in many areas of the state, breeders should be increasingly aware for the potential of Pregnancy Toxaemia. It is most common in heavily pregnant ewes (often carrying twins), that undergo a nutritional stress period eg. sudden changes in weather, shedding for crutching or shearing or simply low feed supplies. It is very important to keep energy levels up to these ewes as prevention is always better than cure.



Colostrum Production

Genstock in conjunction with Rob Davidson of UWA has recently been involved in an intensive trial to determine colostrum production rates in response to different supplementary feed rations.

Genstock provided 62 twin bearing, date mated ewes for the trial at the CSIRO Animal House in Shenton Park. At this stage final data analysis has not been completed, but there are some very exciting results, in particular with a barley ration.

Conception Rates

If you AI'd with GENSTOCK last season, you should have received a conception results form in the mail. To enable us to continue offering the highest standard of service, please complete this form and return it as soon as possible. If you would like to discuss your results, please feel free to contact us.

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