

Parasites most expensive sheep disease

VACCINATIONS, parasite control and nutrition is effectively the foundation for the health of an animal for the whole year, according to Virbac Animal Health area manager Murray Green.

Mr Green was speaking at the Challara stud's on-property open day and his presentation focused on pre-lambing nutrition and parasite control.

Mr Green said according to Meat and Livestock Australia statistics, parasites were the most expensive sheep disease which cost the industry \$380 million dollars every year with 80 per cent of this unrecognisable production losses.

"By the time you see a dirty sheep, you have already lost a lot of production," Mr Green said.

"The consequences of not cleaning out parasites include weight loss, increased susceptibility to disease, reduced milk and therefore poorer lamb growth."

Mr Green said due to Peri Parturient Rise (PPR), it is vital to administer a pre-lambing drench.

PPR occurs about two weeks prior to lambing and for up to

six weeks post lambing where the foetus and lamb draw large amounts of protein from the ewe placing pressure on her immunity levels.

Mr Green said good nutrition and body condition scores go along way in helping but cleaning out worms and clean paddocks is also good practice.

"If you use a shorter acting drench, you have to ensure they go onto a clean paddock because if there is a large worm infestation in the paddock, they will be affected," he said.

"If you're a winter lamber, it's good practice to drench now and do faecal egg counts prior to lambing to see if another drench is required."

Mr Green said egg counts didn't have to be very high to have an impact during the PPR period.

"If you have dirty pastures and high stocking rates, then a longer lasting drench could be an option."

Mr Green said research and trials have shown that trace elements given with a vaccination lifts the antibody response of the vaccine as they are directly related to the immune system.



□ Badgingarra sheep producer and past Challara client Joe Felber (left), Badgingarra, caught up with guest speaker Murray Green, Virbac Animal Health, at the Challara stud's on-property open day at Badgingarra last week.

"B12 is vital in stock, it increases its appetite and prevents ill-thrift in lambs," he said.

"Ever since I was a kid growing up on the farm, my father taught me that stock can't do without selenium on the west coast.

"It's important for maintaining health and fertility and prevents White Muscle Disease (WMD) in lambs.

"Ewes also need the boost in trace elements, particularly through the demanding PPR period."

Mr Green said to avoid

drench resistance, it's important to rotate your drenches.

"If your using an ML drench that is less than 90 per cent effective, you can get into some big trouble with resistance," he said.

"Although it can be an expense, it's recommended you get a drench resistance test done every few years."

Mr Green said it's not difficult to monitor your worm burden.

"If you don't know your worm status, you're guessing as to what drenches to use and when," he said.

Producers of the month at Dumbleyung

INTRODUCING rye corn as a cereal pasture crop and working to improve the survival rates of their Prime SAMM twins are two of the ongoing missions Dumbleyung lamb producers, Dale and Terry Cronin are using to reduce costs in their sheep operation.

Their Bunkin Farming Enterprises has just followed its inaugural September 2011 success as winner of WAMMCO's Producer of the Month, with the title for March 2013.

Their winning line of 103 lambs was processed at WAMMCO Katanning on March 18 and averaged 24.52kg at an average price over the scales at \$3.44 per kg

to return \$84.44 per head including a \$2.43 skin.

"The financial difference in being WAMMCO's producer of the Month for September 2011, and March 2013 is around \$60 per head less on a similar line of lambs with a similar average weight," Dale said.

"That means that we have had to alter course to reduce sheep costs and to try to maximise our returns.

"Last year, mainly because of the diminishing incentives to produce lambs out of season, we moved lambing from April to July, and changed from lotfeeding to paddock feeding with lick feeders because it involves less labour and seems to

result in less stress on the animals.

"We also decided not to mate ewe lambs this season but will consider doing so again if prices improve."

Jonathon English from the Department of Agriculture and Food in Narrogin encouraged the Cronins to introduce rye corn as a cereal pasture and then as a brown manure crop with some excellent results last year.

"This year, we seeded about 80ha of rye corn at Easter after 44mm of rain in March and it germinated in four days and is still holding on well," Dale said.

They continue scanning and selecting for twins, but have shifted the focus to

improving twin survival rates.

Dale said the removal of WAMMCO Select was a significant loss to producers not only as a production yardstick but also because of the incentives it provided.

The bonus on his March 2013 draft would have added \$4.10 per head on 41 qualifying lambs.

"Many producers who have invested in quality lamb production and out of season lambs and who have stayed loyal to WAMMCO because they recognise the vital role of the co-operative, are hoping that they will continue to be supported in the future, and that an upward price trend can continue," Dale said.