

## **BESTWOOL/BESTLAMB Newsflash – 15/1/2010**

This Newsflash email is funded by [Australian Wool Innovation](#) and [Department of Primary Industries](#).

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### **Perennial Pasture Information Day**

**WHEN:** Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February

**WHERE:** Whorouly Recreation Reserve

**TIME:** Starting at 9.00am

Topics include: perennial pasture sowing and management - Soil fertility and fertilizer needs of perennial pastures - Weed control strategies - growing fodder crops - Pasture cropping - Rotational grazing

Speakers include: John Mulvany - Kim Virgona - Kate Sargeant - Tim McNamara

**For further information contact Tim Ekberg on 5727 3931 or 0427 573 535**

### **Peter Westblade Memorial Merino Challenge 2010 - 2012**

The Peter Westblade Memorial Merino Challenge 2010 - 2012 has been developed to assist merino breeding operations make more informed decisions on their merino genetics. It has been deliberately designed to show the entrants in the trial and the wider sheep industry the genetic opportunities that exist for them to be more financially sustainable into the future.

Nomination form and more about the challenge can be accessed from the BWBL website under the events tab.

**To be part of this challenge contact Craig Wilson Livestock on 0428 250 982 or [craigwilsonlivestock@bigpond.com](mailto:craigwilsonlivestock@bigpond.com) closing date for nominations is 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010**

### Lesser Loosestrife Could Cause Strife for Young Sheep

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is warning farmers of the risk of exposing young sheep to the common weed Lesser Loosestrife (*Lythrum hyssopifolia*). DPI Project Manager Paul Beltz said the weed has the potential to cause large losses in young sheep when good spring and early summer rains have occurred. During the current harvest period Lesser Loosestrife has been found in many stubble paddocks across the Wimmera owing to the recent rain. In the majority of cases it is the predominant weed species present. It's known to have killed sheep across Victoria since 1974, with the most recent case of a large number of fatalities occurring last year. The weed contains an unidentified toxin which is capable of causing massive damage to the sheep's liver and kidneys which, depending on the dose, may kill in one or two days. If sheep have taken in a smaller dose, the damage may lead to death up to three weeks later. The principal signs in affected sheep are severe abdominal pain, jaundice, photosensitisation, loss of appetite, depression, lethargy and extreme weight loss due to liver and kidney failure. Sheep which die quickly often have large amounts of yellow clear fluid in body cavities due to leakage from the damaged liver and may show slight yellowing of body fat. Most losses have been seen in younger sheep, as they seem to have a tendency to eat the green weeds first and may consume a fatal dose quickly if the weed is prolific in the stubble. Older sheep are not as commonly affected. This is thought to be due to their experience with the weed and their choice of other safer and more palatable weeds and grain present in the stubble. Lesser Loosestrife prefers to grow in depressions and wetter areas of paddocks, however recent rainfall events have created good conditions for wide-spread growth. Its growth is aided by cultivation and soil conditions that favour ease of germination, hence its presence in stubbles. If you have any questions or are concerned about losses that may be caused by Lesser Loosestrife or other summer weeds, **call your local Animal Health staff or the DPI customer service centre on 136 186.**

### Clostridial Diseases

With the diagnoses of multiple cases of pulpy kidney last year, it might be time to revisit the group of five Clostridial diseases that affect sheep and cattle. These diseases can be devastating to your herd and or flock, causing sudden death and high mortality rates. The good news is they can be easily prevented with vaccination.

**'Pulpy kidney' (*Clostridium perfringens* type D)** 'Pulpy kidney', also known as enterotoxaemia, is caused by bacteria which produce toxins that damage small blood vessels in the brain, kidney and gut. The disease typically occurs when sheep have access to lush pasture or a grain diet. It is most often seen in lambs aged three to 10 weeks of age but may occur in animals of any age if unvaccinated. Usually the 'best' lambs in the flock are affected. The clinical signs include sudden death, depression, green pasty diarrhoea, convulsions and death in two to 12 hours.

**'Tetanus' (*Clostridium tetani*)** Tetanus is a sporadic bacterial disease that affects all species of animals. The spores are present in the soil wherever livestock are kept. Tetanus tends to occur in outbreaks and usually shortly after marking. The clinical signs are typically muscle spasm, stiff gait, tail held out and eventual death with convulsions.

**'Blackleg' (*Clostridium chauvoei*)** 'Blackleg' is a soil borne bacterial infection with spores localising in muscles. If there is any muscle damage the spore will germinate and multiply rapidly. This process produces toxins that enter the blood stream leading to death. The typical clinical signs include severe lameness, depression, fever and finally death in 12 to 36 hours.

**'Malignant oedema' (*Clostridium septicum*)** 'Malignant oedema' is caused by multiple bacteria but *C. septicum* is the primary agent. It is a soil borne bacteria that causes disease sporadically. This disease is usually associated with a wound and the typical clinical signs include fever, depression, a painful doughy swelling at the wound site which later becomes gangrenous and causes death in 24-48 hours.

**'Black disease' (*Clostridium novyi*)** 'Black disease' tends to occur in fluke infested areas. The spores localise in the liver and disease occurs when the liver is damaged. The sheep are typically found dead, however, if seen alive, the signs include fever, depression, rapid breathing, weakness and finally death in a matter of hours.

As you can see from the disease description, rapid death is the primary sign and very often sick animals are not seen. Even if clinical signs are detected early, treatment is not usually effective. The 'Clostridial' group

of bacteria are widespread in the environment and impossible to eliminate. Prevention by vaccination is the key to minimising losses from Clostridial diseases. The vaccines are cheap, easy to use and very effective.

### **Vaccination protocol**

**Lambs** - In the initial program, use two injections four weeks apart. The first injection primes the immune system and the second dose starts the production of antibodies - which ensures a high level of protection. This initial program usually starts at marking.

**Adult sheep** - Yearly boosters are required to maintain immunity.

**Pregnant ewes** - Ewes that have been successfully vaccinated pass this immunity onto their lambs in the colostrum or first milk. This will protect the lambs for approximately six weeks after birth. A yearly booster given in the last six to eight weeks of pregnancy will ensure good immunity in the ewe and thus the colostrum will provide protection to the lamb in the first few weeks of life.

### **Sentinel Flock Project**

Eighteen sentinel prime lamb and wool flocks and two goats herds across Victoria will be monitored for three years. The aim of this project is to identify the causes of mortality and identify diseases that have an impact on production and measure the financial impact due to these losses.

### **Early Detection of Emerging and Exotic Diseases in Sheep and Goats**

Abattoirs and saleyards will be visited by DPI Animal Health staff regularly to inspect sick sheep and goats and recent in-transit deaths. Post mortems of recently deceased animals will be performed to determine the cause of death. Please note only 'fit to load' stock should be transported to either abattoirs or saleyards.

### **Ram Sedation and the Concurrent use of Eureka Gold®** *Published with permission from Craig Stevenson, Technical Manager: Ruminants, Coopers Animal Health*

With the increasing use of sedation while shearing rams it is important to recognise potential interactions between veterinary chemicals/drugs associated with this practice. Acepromazine is a phenothiazine sedative commonly used for the purpose of ram sedation and is known to potentiate (increase) the toxicity of organophosphates (OPs).

The manufacturer has recognised that rams sedated for shearing with acepromazine and treated **on the same day** with Eureka Gold® (which contains diazinon - an OP) may be at risk of poisoning. Organophosphate poisoning presents as severe depression, respiratory distress and collapse, usually within hours of exposure. The manufacturer recommends that producers delay treatment with Eureka Gold® until the following day after sedation with acepromazine (but within a 24 hour period to ensure the efficacy of Eureka Gold®) to minimise possible adverse effects. **At this stage there have been NO reported cases of toxicity.**

Further information can be sought directly from the manufacturer, Coopers Animal Health on 1800 226 551

### **The Elmore Charity Ball Committee is inviting applications for a \$5000 Rural Scholarship**

The scholarship aims to provide a young member of the rural community with the opportunity to further their education in an agricultural field by assisting with the cost of accommodation for the first year of their agricultural course at a TAFE or university.

The scholarship is open to students who wish to take up farming as a career, provide consultancy, research, technical and other services to agriculture.

Students may apply if they are entering their first year of full-time study in an Australian Tertiary Institution or TAFE course related to agriculture, and require accommodation during the course of study.

Applicants must be Australian citizens or permanent residents under 24 years of age on January 1, 2010.

Applications close on January 31, 2010 and application forms can be obtained by emailing

elmorecharityball@iinet.net.au or from [www.elmoresummersendoff.org.au](http://www.elmoresummersendoff.org.au) for more information call Sam Shotton 0418 506 228

### **Towards Soil Health**

A website designed to help growers manage their soil better can be accessed at

<http://www.soilhealthknowledge.com.au/>

The Soil Health Knowledge Bank, developed as part of the Healthy Soils for Sustainable Farms program, contains an overview of current soil health knowledge, lists characteristics of healthy soils and 'habits' of

farmers with healthy soil. It also provides tools to assess soil condition and a diagnostic tree for decisions impacting on soil health.

### Tools for Southern Agriculture

The certainty that phosphorus fertiliser will become more limited and more expensive urns up a red flag for producers in Australia's P-responsive southern livestock production systems.

Fortunately, research is already pointing the way to more effective use of this finite resource.

The Farm Nutrient Loss Index (FNLI) developed by DPI in cooperation with multiple industry partners, identifies whether physical conditions( pasture species, soil type, slope) and proposed nutrient application rate may combine to pose a risk of significant phosphorus or nitrogen loss to waterways, groundwater or the atmosphere.

The FNLI computer program allows alternative management practices to be evaluated for separate paddocks, so that the producer can assess how best to manage each environment.

The tool can be applied to any pasture-based grazing system in southern Australia or eastern Queensland. It is available online at [www.asris.csiro.au](http://www.asris.csiro.au)

### Getting the Most from your Supplement Dollar *Kondinin Group, Farming Ahead*

- Treating deficient livestock with mineral supplements can be profitable and there are a variety of supplement types produced to meet different mineral and management requirements.
- Livestock will only respond to minerals supplements if they are deficient in those minerals. When supply is already sufficient, feeding extra will not provide additional benefit.
- Intraruminal supplements of selenium, cobalt and copper provide highly effective, convenient and long-term treatments for grazing livestock. Products tend to be similar across different brands.
- Fertilisers are mostly used to improve plant growth: increased minerals to grazing livestock are a secondary benefit. Specialised selenium fertiliser is the exception and it can provide long-term protection from deficiency.
- Short-acting injectable minerals will improve selenium and vitaminB12 status for 6 - 12 weeks and are appropriate for young animals. There is variation in product content.
- Drenching with minerals is generally not an efficient method of supplementation.
- Licks and blocks have no magical properties: they simply represent an alternative method of supplying essential nutrients.
- Do not presume that because a mineral is listed in the table of contents of a lick or block supplement that the dose contained will be effective or appropriate. Further investigation is required.

**For more details on the registration and monitoring of supplements or to search for registered products visit the [www.apvma.gov.au/guidelines/g17\\_stockfeed.shtml](http://www.apvma.gov.au/guidelines/g17_stockfeed.shtml).**

One of the most successful inventors of all time was the man who invented the hay-baling machine. Needless to say, he made a bundle.

Have a good weekend, Annette  
BESTWOOL/BESTLAMB Administrator