

## Sheep producers face wet season challenges

**With a wet summer coming off the back of last year's strong rainfall, NSW sheep producers have been facing animal health issues, including high worm pressure, flystrike and lameness.**

Elanco account manager **David Rathbone** says the impact of NSW's succession of wet seasons has been evident in discussions with producers right across the state's ewe competitions.

Elanco sponsors around 15 ewe competitions every year, which draw in up to 30 producers at each event across the state.

Mr Rathbone said many producers he has met recently are facing a range of 'wet'-related challenges, from problems associated with wet feet to the impact of drench resistance.

"This is the third wet year in a row. Between restocking and an increase in the number of producers trading lambs, there's been more sheep movement, which is exacerbating some of the issues that producers are currently seeing."

Mr Rathbone said drench resistance was one of the major topics of conversations right across the state's many ewe competitions.

"The wet and mild summer has made for perfect breeding conditions for barber's pole worm, along with high grass cover and the absence of prolonged periods of high temperatures that usually dries pastures out and kills worm larvae.

"At the same time, many producers have been taking advantage of favourable seasonal conditions and increased their stocking rates, which means less clean paddocks and subsequently, increased worm pressure.

"The conditions have been favourable to barber's pole worm now for three summers, which has meant larvae numbers have been able to build up considerably.

"This has been exacerbated by the use of sub-par drenches as producers are unknowingly using drenches that are leaving an alarming number of worms behind, which is impacting productivity."

Mr Rathbone said an increasing number of producers were undertaking pre-drench worm egg counts (WEC) to determine when a drench was necessary and conducting larval cultures to determine the species of worms present in animals, to decide their drench selection.

However, he said there was still a lack of producers doing post-drench checks, which meant drenching programs that have not been adequate are not being identified, allowing the parasites to thrive.

Producers at the Elanco Crookwell ewe competition.





“The second, post-drench checks are the ones that are more likely to get missed. Often, it’s not until producers start losing sheep or have underperforming flocks that they look to do this. Subclinical production losses are less obvious, and therefore the value in doing post-drench checks is high.

“We strongly recommend farmers take advantage of the complimentary pre- and post-drench checks offered by Elanco to check how their drench program has performed and pick up any problems before they arise.”

Mr Rathbone said further exacerbating the situation has been the trade lamb market, resulting in increased movement of stock around NSW.

“This means more sheep are being transported from different properties, where there might be different drench resistance profiles.

“As producers don’t know the resistance status of stock they are bringing onto their property, it’s critical they quarantine drench appropriately.”

He said industry best practice for quarantine drenching is to use four unrelated actives, with at least one being monepantel (Zolvix) or derquantel (Startect).

“It is important to note this typically requires going down the race twice to administer the correct combination of actives, as most drenches should not be mixed manually.”

As well as the impact of drench resistance, Mr Rathbone said many NSW producers were also experiencing increased fly pressure.

“High scour worm burdens, along with the increase in lush green feed means there’s more scouring and dags, which attracts flies. Flystrike prevention requires an integrated approach. When using chemical protection, it is important producers make sure they apply products correctly as per the label directions.



Australian Wool Innovation industry specialist, Stuart Hodgson with Elanco’s David Rathbone at the Taralga Ewe competition.

“For example, it’s a common misconception that CLiK Extra will move around the sheep and prevent flystrike regardless of how or where it is applied. However, CLiK Extra must be applied directly onto the areas where protection is required, making correct application critical for effective flystrike prevention.”

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