

ASHEEP NEWS



Case Study: Notes on managing an unmulesed merino sheep enterprise; evolution not revolution.

ASHEEP interviews Michael & Helen Palmer, Arrandale Farms

With major retailers David Jones, Country Road Group, Target and Kmart announcing their intention to move away from mulesed wool late last year, the practice was once again brought to the attention of mainstream media and consumers.

So what does the non-mulesed flock look like in our local area? Have you considered or started transitioning?

A number of local farmers are in the process of making the move away from the practice and some have already done so. ASHEEP has been working with AgPro Management to give local producers an opportunity to take part in a supported transition project in collaboration with MLA. Contact ASHEEP to be put in touch with this project.

Continued over page. Image: 12 week old lambs at weaning, non-mulesed, supplied by Michael & Helen Palmer.

Highlights

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With the non-mulesing conversation hot at hand, ASHEEP would like to thank Michael and Helen Palmer from Arrandale Farms for taking time to share their experience of managing a non-mulesed flock. The Palmers are based in Jerdacuttup and ceased mulesing in 2008. They now report achieving a breech flystrike rate equivalent to their mulesed flock management system, with 98% of their flock free of breech strike.

The Decision to Stop Mulesing

With the 2010 deadline to ban mulesing approaching, the Palmers thought then, and still believe now, "that it would be better for us to evolve a flystrike management system that did not involve mulesing, so that the welfare of our sheep and the profitability of our sheep enterprise could not be harmed by the political controversy surrounding the issue."

"Given our breeding background and management we believed that the next step in evolving a merino flock that didn't need mulesing was to actually stop mulesing." From 2008, the Palmers then ceased mulesing their lambs.

Flock Breeding Background Prior to Ceasing Mulesing (2008)

- Ewe flock was the product of 20 years selective breeding in an environment conducive to flystrike
- Plain sheep (Cranmore genetics), with very low incidence of body strike (<1%, requiring treatment)
- Breech strike well managed with mulesing, worm management and tactical preventative chemical treatment (2% requiring treatment, mainly in period immediately before shearing in October)
- Rams produced on farm for 8 years prior to ceasing mulesing in 2008, from AI of selected flock ewes (120)
- Selection process to lower dag score in ewes and rams in place for 8 years

Snapshot

Location: Jerdacuttup, 10 km from south coast.

Enterprise Mix: 1200 ha grain, sheep and cattle. 500 ha crop, 700ha pasture.

Rainfall: 500mm annual av. rainfall (350mm Apr–Oct, 150mm Nov–Mar). Frost free.

Feedbase: Kikuyu and annual legume pasture grazed at 9 DSE/ha, plus some stubble grazing in summer.

Flock: 650 merino ewes, self replacing. All lambs, except ewe lambs retained for breeding, fed and sold as prime lamb (22kg CWT) at 10-12 months. Adult ewes produce 5kg of 18.5 micron wool annually, wean 110% lambs.



Image: 8 week old lambs at marking.

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What has been learnt

In the course of transitioning their flock, the Palmers have gained key insight into the need to carefully integrate all available management tools to prevent breech flystrike; shearing, crutching, worm management, preventative chemical treatment and selective breeding. Following is summary of their learnings and the preventative measures they have implemented.



Shearing & Crutching

- Meeting shearing withholding periods for preventative chemicals makes the few weeks prior to shearing a risk period which we have only been able to manage with “bunghole” crutching close (1 month) to shearing. This also improves stain and dag management in the woolshed.
- We now shear our ewes, ewes hoggets and rams every six months, except in below average seasons when we have elected not to shear, but crutch, lambing ewes in spring, because the staple length is less than 60mm.

Worm Management

- Minimize scouring; worm management has to be good, particularly in young sheep.

Preventative Chemical Treatment

- We are using a breech Clik treatment on all sheep post shearing, to provide baseline flystrike protection between shearing and crutching.

Selective Breeding

- The breeding progress we had made prior to ceasing mulesing helped, and we have continued to make progress since ceasing mulesing.
- Minimize breech wrinkle; target breech wrinkle score 1 sheep, in the absence of mulesing.
- Select for low dag score; when selecting flock ewes for breeding cull the ones with the highest dag scores (4,5), in the absence of mulesing.
- For our AI ewes and rams we apply higher selection pressure for these traits.
- We now make use of ASBVs for breech wrinkle, dag score and FWEC when selecting our AI sires.
- Being able to access genetics from breeders who have also ceased mulesing has helped us to improve these traits, without compromising our production traits (fertility, fleece value, carcass weight).



Costs

The Palmers report that managing breech flystrike without mulesing is currently costing them an additional \$4.00/adult sheep/annum. This includes extra crutching, chemical treatment and associated handling.

Management outcome:

"We are now achieving a breech flystrike rate equivalent to our mulesed flock management system; 98% of our sheep don't get breech strike."



11 month old wether lambs (sale).



Maiden ewes and ram 4 months wool, adult ewes 10 months wool.

From the ASHEEP desk

Sarah Brown, Executive Officer, ASHEEP

After hitting the ground running as ASHEEP's Executive Officer in October last year, I've enjoyed the opportunity to meet and work with Committee, members and a great group of very engaged sponsors. ASHEEP's work is known around Australia and local producers have earned a reputation for being proactive in advancing the livestock industry in our region. I'm looking forward to contributing to this over the year to come.

The ASHEEP Committee and Cattle Sub-Committee have both met over recent weeks and plans are underway for a year of interesting field days, courses and events. First up for the year is the Low Stress Livestock Handling course that we have teamed up with Esperance Livestock Transport to deliver on the 16th & 17th March.

We continue to progress work on a number of projects in regards to pasture trials, drench resistance, biosecurity, AI and genetics. More recently, ASHEEP has made an application to host an MLA Producer Demonstration Site project showcasing a range of pasture variety trials in the different rainfall zones of our area. We have also been working with AgPro Management to give local producers the opportunity to take part in a non-mulesing project.

The annual ASHEEP Census is due out in the near future and we request all members to complete it to give us a good picture of how people have farmed in our region in 2019 and what areas ASHEEP should focus resources on.

Feel free to get in touch with event ideas or information to share.

Animal Welfare Act Meeting - Katanning 31st January 2020

Jan Clawson, ASHEEP

Jan Clawson attended the Animal Welfare Act consultation meeting on behalf of ASHEEP in Katanning on Friday 31st January 2020. Following is Jan's update on how that meeting went.

The meeting was well attended with local farmers as well as representatives from WAFarmers, Livestock and Rural Transporters and other farmer group organisations. There was a good cross-section of people and knowledge in the room.

The meeting was chaired by lawyer Linda Black and attended by other panel members Dominique Blache (UWA Animal Ethics), Di Evans (DPIRD Moora Vet), Catherine Marriot (Cattle Industry), David Marshall (Albany Vet). These people were selected by Hon. Alannah MacTiernan MLC (Minister for Regional Development; Agriculture and Food; Ports) to review the Act, which was last reviewed in 2002.

Some of the reasons given for the review, as I recall, were to prevent acts of cruelty from happening, changing the powers of an inspector and the ability to prosecute someone who has been cruel to animals as well as prevent them from owning animals again.

While Linda Black did a good job of chairing the meeting, people did get stuck on animal welfare issues as opposed to the Act itself and the proposed revisions. One of the biggest challenges identified was that the Act has to cover all animals from a budgie in a cage, to animals on a farm, as well as those in the wild and everything in between.

Some issues that were presented included:

- The right of entry and was suspicion required before entry or could an inspector just roll up to your door unannounced.
- How is cruelty identified? Could having animals in condition score 4 and running them down to condition score 2 in drought be deemed cruel because you are restricting food?
- Wording in the Act, for example, allowing an animal to express its innate behaviour was seen as open to opinion and should be changed to something more appropriate or specific.

The meeting finished with Linda Black running through the key points that they had identified as needing to be updated in the Act. Unfortunately, she ran through them very quickly and then closed the meeting.

I felt we missed an opportunity to perhaps spend 10 minutes discussing each key point. I did highlight this to one of the Panel and they were going to review this for the next meeting. It also didn't give me time to note these key points down, which may be why they chose that method!

The Panel were holding a final meeting in Perth, which I believe was attended by a lot of activists. The next step for the Panel was to then review the submission and to report back to the Minister with recommendations on changes to the Act.

I personally believe we will end up with more standards and a code to run by similar to the McGowan Government's Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Bill 2019, as one act simply can't cover all animals. I think ASHEEP needs to stay engaged in this process so we get the best outcome possible.

The Esperance Livestock Transport journey continues....

John Mitchell, Esperance Livestock Transport

As mentioned in the earlier newsletter article, we have clear aims on what value and values we want to bring to the Esperance district.

Some of you may have seen our new convertible 7 deck sheep C Train around the traps, with Hendo at the helm. This unit represents the absolute latest in design and technology. We have included new features that make the unit safer for the operator and has better outcomes for the sheep. The vehicle is 100% compliant with all loading and route access regulations. This gives our customers piece of mind that they won't get caught up in issues like overloading or being off route.

The C Train configuration is the same as our cattle C trains, which are our own patented design and have been tested for on road safety against other configurations and comes up as arguably the safest livestock vehicle configuration on Australian roads.

Our transport scheduler Bill Kammann has retired from the business, both Lisa and I wish Bill and Jenny all the very best and thank them for their involvement in Esperance Livestock Transport over the past eight months. We can say that Steve Crawford and Jan Clawson will be manning the phone for the foreseeable future.

During April we will be moving the business premises to 639 Myrup Road, "Bridges Block". Lisa and I have recently purchased the property from Heather Bridges. It is a lovely property and we are looking forward to creating a solid base to operate from.

Finally, the **Low Stress Stock Handling School (cattle and sheep)**. As you would know we are hosting our first Esperance school on the 16-17th March. Thanks to the Wongatha CAPS school for allowing the school to be operated from their property. You may have winced at the cost for the two days, which is understandable. I haven't had anyone come away from our 18 schools that has not been super-satisfied with the two days. (Search "twitter cattle collective John Mitchell")

Low Stress Stockhandling Pty Ltd offers 100% money back guarantee if you are not completely satisfied with your investment at the end of the school you attended. Discounts also apply to multiple participants within the one business.

1st Person - \$880.00 Inc GST

2nd Person and there after - \$660.00 Inc GST

Children under 16 - \$440.00 Inc GST

Contact: John Mitchell, 0418 420 880



Low Stress Stock Handling School

With trainer Grahame Rees

16th & 17th March, Esperance

ASHEEP and Esperance Livestock Transport have teamed up to deliver this acclaimed course. Contact Lisa Mitchell - 0403 758 418 or accounts@esperancelivestocktransport.com.au to register.



Kane Page, WA: "I attended a Low Stress Stock Handling (LSS) school two years ago. After gaining this imperative knowledge I put the LSS techniques into practice immediately. I am absolutely wrapped with the way our sheep have calmed down and become easy to work, peaceful animals. We hosted a school with 31 participants last week and I am so glad that we (Bec and I) could be a part of all these people experiencing the LSS techniques so they may enjoy sheep work in the future like never before. I just wish I had been exposed to these methods 20 years ago. I truly believe everybody who runs stock on their properties today must attend a Low Stress Stock Handling school."

Market Report: Wool

Danny Burkett, Auctioneer/Key Account Manager, Westcoast Wools

At the time of writing the wool market has had no major impact from the corona virus. Sale F32 5th and 6th of Feb proved to be volatile in price however I don't buy into the commentary that the corona virus was the cause as the previous 6 - 8 trading weeks have proved to be just as volatile.

In comparing this outbreak to the SARS event is a relatively easy process on paper, however we are living and trading in a completely different environment. I will make the points that SARS was responsible for one of the biggest falls we have seen in the market which did not happen as the virus first spread it happened sometime after and then took 18 months to recover, there was also a very handy wool stock position in Australia! There was also the fact that contracts were cancelled with Australian exporters leaving them with unpaid wool on the water, at port and in stores that were all allocated to orders.

Business today is more mature with the Chinese than 18 years ago, on the flip side though the wool industry is more reliant on the Chinese consumer as domestic consumption within China accounts for approx. half of their wool imports. There is also some commentary in the market place that the second round of tariff (repair) talks between the US and China could be delayed due to China shifting their focus inward, and whilst not directly impacting on wool it certainly will not help confidence.

With that being said the market is trading at the top of its range it formed after the \$7.50 fall in the indicator prior to the recess.

Spreading risk is a great strategy no matter what you look at, putting today's price in relation to the market before the late 2017 into 2018 super cycle, today's price for 19.5 micron merino fleece wool in the preceding 5 years sits at the 100% decile, 19 micron at the 95% decile and 18 at the 85% decile, still good money.

There is another point to make, at present there is approx. 95 000 bales sold less than this time verses last year, yes production is down 5.3% and accounts for some, the greater point is there has been grower resistance in the market place and the vast majority of this hold wool will be sub 19 micron Merino fleece wool. This could, as it has in the past, subdue a rally as more wool comes onto the market to meet any additional demand.

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Market Report: Meat

Article provided by Landmark

By Leon Giglia, Western Region Livestock Manager, Nutrien Ag. Solutions

Beef Cattle

The National Beef Cattle herd is forecasted to reduce to its lowest level in more than 20 years. The past year has been extremely challenging for livestock producers right across Australia. The global and domestic demand for red meat is at an all-time high which has been a key element to the cattle prices maintaining the current levels.

Cattle supply over the next two years is expected to tighten considerably, to what extent will be determined by seasonal conditions and global influence such as USA and China trade relations as well the value of the Australian dollar.

The current slaughter rate of females is 48% of the kill, the key drivers here has been season conditions as well as the number of male cattle consigned to live export. It is suggested that for the Australian cattle herd to commence a growth period, the number of female slaughtered must be 42% or below before a rebuild can be considered.

Industry analysts proposed that December 2018 was the bottom of the cattle price cycle, the market was on the move. In following the markets their prediction has substance with 2019 seeing solid returns with a strong slowly rising market. It is given that seasonal conditions throughout the country was a significant factor seeing market fluctuations. However, the prime and slaughter cattle have been well sort after. The demand was domestic and export, with live export in WA playing a major role.

External influencers contributing to a strong local WA market has been the falling domestic beef supplies with Chinas rising demand is pulling product away from the US. The price for 90cl trim has risen to similar levels as seen in 2016.

The spread of Swine Fever throughout China is seeing an unprecedented demand from that country for alternative sources of protein. In 2018 China accounted 14.5 % of beef exports from Australia, in 2019 saw China rise to 24.4% of beef exports. When you also consider the increased volume of Mutton this country imported their needs are significant and are about to decline the short to medium term.

In moving forward, the seasonal conditions will be the key influencer of the national and WA cattle prices. As previously stated international factors, overseas production and the demand from key export markets will all contribute to a strong cattle price.

The most recent East Coast rains has seen the East coast market move upward. Along with the market move has come interest in the WA market from east coast re-stockers and breeders.

In considering the mentioned influences, particularly the return to a normal / average season, historically high cattle prices are likely to be reached and maintained in the short to medium term 2-3 years.

Sheep & Lambs

The National sheep flock is currently at its lowest since 1898, it is estimated to be at 66 million with Western Australia's flock hovering around 13 million. The comparison of today's sheep flock is vastly different to that of 1898, data shows that only 45% of the flock is Merino. The flock estimate represents a decline of 6.5% year on year, the key drivers of such have been high slaughter prices, poor joining and lambing rates compounded with below average seasonal conditions.

The record pricing levels throughout the past year are a direct result of a very strong international demand for all classes of lamb and sheep product, live export, chilled, frozen and boxed which is further supported with the lower than anticipated domestic supply. The International trade has received the benefit / assistance of a depreciating Aussie Dollar. All of the stated significant contributing factors to current pricing.

With the massive drop in pork production in China due to the Swine Fever outbreak the demand for secondary mutton cuts has underpinned the never seen before pricing for mutton. This pricing and the extremely poor seasonal conditions throughout Australia, along with the compounding water shortages has and will continue to influence the very slow rebuilding of the sheep flock.

Live port of sheep and lambs continue to play a role despite a tightening of the window for shipments being granted permits. The past year saw just over 1,1 million live sheep exported out of WA compared to 2018 with just under 1 million exported. Moderate but positive increase.

Whilst considering the flock projection, the tight supply is anticipated to continue for some time. Analysts are forecasting for 2020 and into 2021 that both mutton and lamb slaughter will decline.

It has been stated that approximately 12% of the national flock or 8.5 million sheep are in the east coast bush fire zones. It is quite acceptable to realise that this devastation will impact on sheep supply. This will only exacerbate the tight supply and rebuild challenges caused by the ongoing drought.

There are no indicators suggesting a slowing of the demand for Australian Lamb and sheep meat, with such the outlook presents very promising for sheep and lamb producers.

In the event of the return to an average wet year, the desire to rebuild the flock will no doubt become a key market driver coupled with the given growth in red meat demand one could only look to the future with optimism and confidence.



Three month outlook:

The following article has been provided by DPIRD as a useful guide for sheep producers for the next three months.



Making good decisions

Danny Roberts, Veterinary Officer, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Introduction

1. Focus on the next 3 months. Work to a plan with discipline. The plan can be modified when new information on the probable timing of the 'break of season' is received.
2. Understand your position – physically, financially and emotionally.
3. Be objective about the risks, rationale about the cost of providing supplements and water to sheep in the worst case scenario.
4. Monitor sheep, land, water, people, supplement and budget. Recognise critical or trigger points and take timely action.
5. Cash in bank and bank finance will put some constraints on what you can do and what the time frame is. Without finance, time constraints are tight and sheep producers need to act quickly.
6. To help make good short and/or medium term decision about your sheep business you may consider seeking professional advice on how to manage the physical and financial constraints. Seek information earlier than later.
7. **Keep talking to someone** as it is normal to be stressed in these times but if stress affects decision-making it creates problems for the business. Look after yourself and family.

Outlook for February to May 2020

As of February 11, 2020

- Most international climate models are showing a shift to normal rainfall chances for most of WA for Feb to Apr 2020.
- BoM seasonal rainfall outlook for March to May 2020 indicate near-normal rainfall chances over most of WA. See the BoM's seasonal outlook video for more details.

Strategies and tactics for Summer and Autumn 2020

Feed to achieve targets

Ewes are the powerhouse of the flock
Strategies and tactics for the next three months before the expected break of season in May 2020

Targets

- Maintain ewe condition during pregnancy
- High ewe and lamb survival rates
- Minimal deaths from metabolic disturbances in the last 50 days of pregnancy
- Minimise undernutrition and other animal welfare concerns

Feed to achieve targets

Outcomes

- Profitable to provide feed to maintain condition during pregnancy
- Target condition score for a twin bearing ewe is a minimum of 3 and a single bearing ewe is a minimum of 2.5 at the start of lambing
- Optimises ewe and lamb survival in environments susceptible to poor lambing conditions
- Ewe management targets are based on Lifetime Ewe Management (LTEM)

Want seasonal info from DPIRD?

DPIRD's Season 2020 webpage has been set up as a one-stop-shop for timely info to assist landholders to navigate the season. Covering crops, livestock, water supply & quality advice, land management & wellbeing.

Search "Season 2020" at www.agric.wa.gov.au



Feed pregnant ewes for maintenance with confidence that it pays – positive return on investment in 2019

Cost of mismanaging ewe nutrition:
Loss of Merino-Merino ewe

1. Non-scanned ewe is worth \$236
2. Single bearing ewe is worth \$214
3. Twin bearing ewe is worth \$280

Higher value for merino-terminal sire ewe e.g. non-scanned ewe is worth \$298

Rules of thumb

- Takes less grain (3 kg) to prevent one kg of loss in liveweight
- Takes more grain (9 kg) to regain the loss of one kg of liveweight
- Extra wool pays for 20% to 30% of your supplement costs
- Estimated value of extra merino lamb alive at weaning is \$55 in 2020

Confinement feeding

Class of sheep you should feed:

1. Feed sale sheep - 2019 male lambs (high growth rates) or 2018 male hoggets (slow growth rates)
2. Feed 2019 merino ewe lambs (gain 1.5 kg per month)
3. Feed mated adult and hogget ewes (maintain condition with increasing days of pregnancy)

With limited funds need to calculate how many sheep you can afford to feed

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- High (95%) survival rates in 2019 born lambs**
- Weaners need to grow 1.5 kg per month
 - 25 kg merino weaner requires 7 MJ of energy per day and their diet contains 12% crude protein
 - Prevent and repair muscle damage in the weaner's body by giving a vitamin E drench
 - A preventative dose is 2000 mg per head of water miscible vitamin E every 36 days until green feed is available

- Metabolic disturbance in late pregnant ewes from insufficient intake of energy or sudden cessation of eating or inadequate calcium in their diet (Pregnancy toxemia and/or Hypocalcaemia)**
- Need to progressively increase intake of energy with days of pregnancy
 - Avoid over-estimating the intake of energy by ewes grazing dry paddock roughage or when fed hay
 - Four year old ewes and older are more at risk from metabolic disturbances
- The best protective measure is to ensure pregnant twin bearing ewes are condition score (CS) 3 and single rearing ewes CS 2.5 at the start of lambing

Reduce feed demand

Background Ewes are more profitable than wethers

- Reducing number of sheep on property if sheep have a strong position in the farm business**
- Pregnancy scan all ewes and separate into groups of twin, single bearing and non-pregnant animals
 Sheep to retain in decreasing order of priority:
1. Adult pregnant ewes (2017 and 2016 born)
 2. Mated hogget ewes (2018 born)
 3. Adult pregnant ewes (2015 born or older)
 4. Non-pregnant ewes (2017 and 2016 born)
 5. Ewe lambs (2019 drop)
 6. Non-pregnant ewes (2015 born or older)
 7. Wether lambs (2019 drop)
 8. Wether hoggets (2018 born or older)

- Ensure early sales of surplus or low priority sheep**
- Animals in good condition get a higher sale value
 - Save feed for high priority sheep
 - Sell more lower-priority sheep if cash flow is restricted
 - The greater the cash flow restriction the early and higher number of sheep sales

- Agistment off-farm**
- Reduce number on property at home but maintain flock size for when the season breaks
 - Maintain good on-farm biosecurity practices for all sheep coming back onto the property

Medium term strategy for sheep

- Rebuilding margin**
- The rebuilding margin for each business is different depending on the role of sheep in the business
 - Use DPIRD online flock composition calculator to determine impact on flock structure over 6 yrs when retaining or selling different classes of sheep

- Alternatives are**
1. Sell surplus and low priority sheep now and buy in ewes later in the year
 2. Sell surplus and low priority sheep now but increase flock ewe numbers over the next few years
 3. Sell surplus sheep and retain all mated sheep and ewe lambs
 4. Sell all sheep and go cropping
- Producers that maintain their sheep will need to ensure they are still valuable and can be sold later if required.

- What to pay for ewes if intending to rebuild flock in 2020**
- The breakeven purchase price for ewes is dependent on:
- difference between the sale and potential purchase price
 - the alternative or opportunity cost of the area now grazed by sheep

Water demand for summer and autumn 2020

- Need to provide adequate good quality water with safe access by livestock**
- Good quality livestock water has:
- Salinity within the acceptable range (EC of less than 700 mS/m or total dissolved solids (TDS) less than 4000mg/L)
 - Water pH between about 6.5 (acid) and 8.5 (alkaline)
 - Freedom from toxic elements and chemicals
 - No contamination with toxic algae or putrid materials

- Cost of providing water in summer and autumn (Cost of providing water has not been included in return on investment calculations, strategies and tactics in the next three months listed above or the rebuilding margin)**
- Infrastructure and cost needed to cart water to property
 - Labour (time) to collect and distribute water on-farm
 - Additional on-farm infrastructure to provide safe access to water for all sheep
 - Restriction on what paddocks are available for grazing by sheep during summer and autumn 2020
 - Length of time water carting is anticipated to continue for

- Reduce water demand**
- Sell the lowest priority sheep - reduce water demand based on maximum intake of water per day**
1. Wether hoggets or older (10 litres per day)
 2. Non-pregnant ewes (10 litres per day)
 3. 2019 wether lambs (5 litres per day)
 4. 2019 ewe lambs (5 litres per day)

Sell 2015 born or older pregnant ewes Sale needs to occur 4 weeks before the start of lambing (10 litres per day)

- Rules of thumb**
- Need safe access to a constant supply of good quality water so the group as a whole can drink a maximum of:
- Adult pregnant ewes require 10 L per day
 - Young sheep require 5 litres per day
 - Lactating ewes require 14 litres per day

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Management of sheep in dry seasons

Information in this article is adapted from presentations by Ashley Herbert, *Agrarian Management (2017)* and John Young, *Farming Systems Analysis Service (2017 and 2019)*.

Confinement feeding of sheep

- Sheep in containment need to be provided with 100% of their specified diet including energy, protein, minerals and roughage
- Recommended maximum mob size per pen for adult ewes is 500 and young sheep is 200
- For 500 pregnant ewes – pen needs to be minimum of 2500m² or 50 m x 50m or 25m x 100m
- Convenient to yards, silos, a water source and have well-drained soils
- Provide sufficient trough space to allow daily intake of feed and water
- Use checklist when selecting a good site for confinement pens
- If using lick feeders - maximum mob size is 200 sheep per lick feeder
- Wheat barley, triticale, peas and faba beans with their high starch content are more likely to cause grain acidosis
- Sheep should be introduced slowly to any new ration particularly grains with high starch content e.g. three week introduction required for barley when final feeding rate is greater than 400 g/h/d
- It takes six weeks for the microbial population in the rumen in sheep to fully adapt to the high starch content of a barley or wheat diet so the feed-to-energy conversion from barley is initially less during this period, compared with lupins or oats
- Use DPIRD online feed cost calculator to work out a specified ration using three different feeds
- Different ration specifications are required for maintenance or growth for each class of sheep and days of pregnancy for each frame size of ewe (small, medium or large)

Table One: Feeding barley to a large frame (60 kg) Merino ewe with different days of pregnancy based on Feed Budget Tables for dry conditions (lifetime wool).

Large frame (60kg)	Maintain at CS 3	Maintain at CS 3	Maintain at CS 2.5	Maintain at CS 2.5
Days of pregnancy	Paddock (MJ)	Confinement (MJ)	Paddock (MJ)	Confinement (MJ)
Not pregnant	9.3	7.8	8.7	7.3
50	9.7	8.1	9.1	7.6
70	10.1	8.4	9.6	8.0
100	11.5	9.6	10.8	9.0
130	14.4	12.0	13.1	10.9
Large frame (60kg)	Barley	Maintain at CS 3	Barley	Maintain at CS 2.5
Days of pregnancy	Paddock (g/h/d)	Confinement (g/h/d)	Paddock (g/h/d)	Confinement (g/h/d)
Not pregnant	832	698	778	653
50	867	724	814	680
70	903	751	859	715
100	1028	859	966	805
130	1288	1073	1172	975

- Cereals, like barley, oats, wheat and triticale are low in calcium and will need 1.5 per cent of finely ground limestone to restore the animal's calcium-phosphorous balance
- Potential for grain acidosis may occur with a change in batches of pellets or when introducing new source of barley or other types of grain – manage each change of source of feed carefully
- Give young sheep a vitamin E drench (2000 mg per head of water miscible vitamin E)
- Remove pregnant ewes from the confinement feeding pen and return them to the paddock two weeks before the start of lambing – monitor the ewes closely for evidence of metabolic disturbance
- Avoid lambing in the confinement pen as ewes tend to steal lambs from other ewes once they have a lamb, and can accumulate three or four lambs. When this happens ewes are not able to care for all the lambs.

State-specific confinement feeding resources

- NSW DPI – Confinement feeding stock
- Agriculture Victoria – Stock containment areas
- SA Natural Resources – Stock containment areas
- WA DPIRD – Confined paddock feeding and feedlotting of sheep



Contact Danny Roberts DPIRD for further information on this article or the referenced resources:
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ASHEEP Autumn Field Day

Confinement Feeding

The ASHEEP Autumn Field Day is set for 26th March 2020. Line up & site visits to be advised via email in the coming days.

Contact:
Sarah Brown, Executive Officer, 0409 335 194, eo@asheep.org.au

26 March



The importance of monitoring trace elements in pasture



Article by Summit Fertilizers

Trace elements (or micro nutrients) are only required by plants in very small quantities, but nonetheless, are absolutely vital for healthy plant growth and in turn healthy livestock, high yields and profitable returns. In the past, trace elements (TE's) have been applied to cleared soils at robust rates. Anywhere up to 2kg/ha of copper or Zinc, or 0.2kg/ha of Molybdenum was the consensus at the time and it was thought there would be no need to reapply TE's for a couple of decades at least. Modern farming practices have evolved however, and the general consensus now is that TE's should be applied more frequently than in the past. As production has moved from predominantly legume to ryegrass pastures (a mixture of both is always best) and as liming becomes more frequent, we are observing changes in the availability of some trace elements.

Copper (Cu)

Amongst other growth attributes, copper is required for nitrogen fixation by clover nodules. It is also important for lignin production, which is responsible for stem strength and rigidity especially in ryegrasses and cereals. Organic soils are commonly copper-deficient. The first signs of Cu deficiency, especially for clover, may be a wilted look regardless of soil moisture status. Copper has variable mobility in the plant. It may move from the oldest leaves as nitrogen moves, but in nitrogen adequate situations where the plant will continue to draw nitrogen from the soil, copper will not move. The earliest symptoms appear on the youngest growth.

Zinc (Zn)

Zinc is important for the synthesis of plant growth substances (hormones), enzymes and is essential in some metabolic reactions. chlorophyll and carbohydrates. Zinc is immobile within the plant, so symptoms first appear on the younger leaves. Zinc become less available under high pH conditions. Concentrations of 20 ppm are usually adequate in most cases in the youngest leaves but as production systems attain higher yields, 30 ppm is probably a better target. Zinc deficiency is easy to identify in cereals, but much harder for ryegrass and clover. General stunting in pasture plants is often confused with phosphorus deficiency. In cereals, pale green stripes down either side of the main vein of fully emerged leaves indicates a mild deficiency. If leaf tissue in the stripe turns pale brown (tram lines) or necrotic, deficiency is severe.

Molybdenum (Mo)

Molybdenum deficiency is less likely in soils where lime is applied to raise soil pH to a desirable target of 5 to 5.5 (calcium chloride). Mo may benefit the nitrogen fixation process, as in deficient situations clover roots form nodules that can often be inactive. Adequate Mo availability is important in facilitating nitrogen fixation on a number of soils, particularly those that lock up phosphorus. Frequent small applications (every 3-4 years) are recommended.

Pasture Fertilizers

All of Summit's Superphosphate and Pasture and pasture fertilizers can be blended with a wide range of trace elements to suit individual needs. For further information, get in touch with your local Area Manager.

For more information on soil testing and SummitConnect, growers can contact:

Nick Donkin – Area Manager: Esperance East, 0428 715 045, ndonkin@summitfertz.com.au

Tim Donkin – Area Manager: Esperance West, 0408 092 355, tdonkin@summitfertz.com.au



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Your Worm Questions Answered

With the Wormboss drench resistance project wrapping up, ASHEEP recently sent out a survey to members asking about areas they would like to know more on. Thanks to the team at Elanco for providing the below article to answer some of those queries.

Be wary of worms when moving sheep off stubble paddocks

Dr Nicholas Rolls, Technical Services Vet, Elanco

While stubbles provide a grazing environment with low worm risk, it is important to be careful when it comes time to move stock back to pasture. Even a low worm burden at this time may be the source of a much bigger problem in the future. This is because sheep may be carrying resistant worms – depending on drench history – and these resistant worms may then be spread around the farm.



Drenched on to stubbles?

If sheep **were drenched** as they went on to stubbles, it is critical that a fully effective drench was used. If the drench was not fully effective at that time, then there will be surviving worms in those sheep that are resistant to the drench used and the stubble paddock will have subsequently been contaminated with resistant worm eggs. As there are no residual worms on crop stubbles prior to grazing (i.e. no worms in 'refugia'), there will be no susceptible worms to dilute out any resistant worm larvae. The entire worm population in those sheep (along with any larvae that manage to survive on that paddock) will be survivors of the drench used. **In this way, drench resistance can develop very quickly.**

Carry out a worm egg count (WEC) to check before moving stock back to pasture. Even a low worm burden (not necessarily production limiting) is still likely to require treatment to stop the spread of resistant worms. It is very important that this drench is different to the drench used as the sheep went on to stubble ('rotate'), and it is clearly very important that this drench is fully effective in order to remove all resistant worms.

Not drenched on to stubbles?

If sheep **were not drenched** as they went on to stubbles, then there will likely be some worms in those sheep. However, these worms should be representative of the wider worm population on that farm. This is not to say that none of those worms will be resistant – we know that resistance is common – but there should hopefully be a mix of less resistant and susceptible worms in that population. Care should still be taken to determine if a drench is necessary for these sheep as they move off stubble paddocks and back to pasture, to avoid unnecessary selection pressure for resistance. Carry out a worm egg count (WEC) to check and to avoid drenching unnecessarily. Also consider seasonal conditions and likely level of worms in 'refugia' in the paddock they are moving into.

Best practice guidelines for worm control in WA (www.wormboss.com.au) recommend delaying drenches for adult sheep until autumn. This reduces the risk of selecting for resistance, as seasonal conditions will allow some less-resistant worms to survive in the environment at that time (subsequently diluting any resistant worms) and adult sheep will not typically be compromised by carrying a low worm burden through summer.

Younger sheep (lambs and hoggets) are more susceptible to worms and should have been drenched at weaning/in early summer. Depending on the drench used, it is the worm burden in these sheep in particular that should be checked before moving back to pasture.

Resistance?

When selecting which drench to use, it is important to consider the reality of resistance. The only way to really know if a drench is fully effective on your property is to check. The most thorough and accurate way to do this is with a Worm Egg Count Reduction Test (WECRT). As an alternative, a simple indication may be gained by carrying out a 'drench check'. Carry out a worm egg count (WEC) prior to treatment and then check the post-treatment worm burden by carrying out another WEC 10-14 days later.

We know that drench resistance is common. The results of a drench resistance survey published in the Australian Veterinary Journal in 2014 indicated widespread and severe resistance to the older drench classes (whites, clears and mectins) and their combinations. [1] For example, twenty eight percent (28%) of survey farms had evidence of resistance to abamectin-based triple drenches in at least one of the major pathogenic worm species (Small brown stomach worm, Black scour worm and Barber's pole worm). Fifty four percent (54%) of survey farms had evidence of resistance to moxidectin.

Zolvix Plus?

When making drench choices for your property, Zolvix™ Plus is worthy of consideration. Zolvix™ Plus is a broad spectrum combination drench containing monepantel along with abamectin. Monepantel is able to provide very high efficacy against susceptible Small brown stomach worm, Black scour worm and Barber's pole worm – with research demonstrating efficacy of at least 99.9%. [2] Using monepantel in combination will help maintain very high efficacy and prolong its useful life on your farm for as long as possible.

Zolvix Plus - Always read and follow the label directions. DO NOT USE in lambs under 6 weeks of age or less than 10 kg body weight. DO NOT USE in ewes which are producing or may in the future produce milk that may be used or processed for human consumption. Resistance may develop to any chemical. Ask your local veterinary practitioner or animal health advisor for recommended parasite management practices for your area to reduce development of resistance. It is advisable that a resistance test be conducted before any parasite treatment is used. Use in accordance with the registered label directions and regional drench decision guidelines (www.wormboss.com.au). Meat Withholding Period: DO NOT USE less than 14 days before slaughter for human consumption. Export Slaughter Interval: DO NOT USE less than 84 days before slaughter for export. Re-treatment interval: DO NOT re-treat animals for 42 days after last treatment.

Contact – David Howey, Elanco Territory Manager – 0439 988 953

References:

1. Playford, M.C. et al. (2014). Prevalence and severity of anthelmintic resistance in ovine gastrointestinal nematodes in Australia 2009-2012. *Aust Vet J* 92(12):464-471.
2. Hosking, B.C. et al. (2010). A pooled analysis of the efficacy of monepantel, an amino-acetonitrile derivative against gastrointestinal nematodes of sheep. *Parasitol Res* 106, 529-532.

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OJD in Esperance

Sarah Brown, Executive Officer, ASHEEP

ASHEEP confirmed a sufficient prevalence of Ovine Johne's disease (OJD) to justify the recommendation in 2016 that all regional farmers should commence a vaccination program. Given a subsequent deregulation of OJD controls Australia wide there is no longer a need for a clearance test for those who tested positive previously. Ongoing vaccination is seen as the way forward to avoid sheep production losses and deaths from OJD.

Gudair in Esperance

Year	Doses sold
2018	91,000
2019	79,250

The figures beside were provided by Zoetis to give ASHEEP an understanding of the take-up of the Gudair vaccination in our region. We encourage all members to look into OJD and consider risk and management options for your flock.

For further information to assist making a decision, search for OJD on the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development website www.agric.wa.gov.au or contact DPIRD's Dr Anna Erickson (08 9881 0211 or at anna.erickson@dpiird.wa.gov.au).

Primaries Clarke & Stokes Esperance: Bronze Sponsor

Brenton Clarke - 0418 956 121, Wade Stokes - 0428 811 602

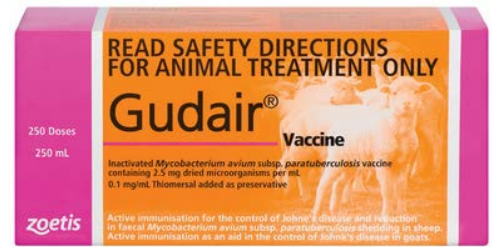


TECHNICAL INFORMATION UPDATE

Australian Study Supports Ongoing Use of Gudair

Article by Zoetis

Researchers at the University of Sydney have found that whilst Gudair reduces the prevalence of OJD within a flock, ongoing vaccination is essential to ensure the prevalence of OJD within the flock remains low, minimising losses due to this disease.



Background

Ovine Johne's disease (OJD) is an insidious disease which continues to cost farmers through lost productivity, increased stock losses and reduced trading options. Sheep infected with OJD can be actively shedding the bacteria for years before clinical signs are seen. These "shedders" will continue to be a source of infection on a property, and in a region, for many years.

In a recent Australian study researchers followed 41 self-replacing Merino flocks infected with OJD. These flocks had been consistently vaccinating lambs with Gudair for at least five years. Estimates of the prevalence of OJD within the flocks before the vaccination program commenced were compared to the prevalence of OJD within the flocks following five or more years of vaccination. In addition, the farmers were surveyed to identify which risk factors increased the likelihood of having a high prevalence of OJD infection within a flock.

Results

Dung samples were collected from all flocks to determine their OJD status and the level of OJD bacteria being shed in dung and contaminating pastures.

The key findings were:

- Gudair significantly reduced the prevalence of OJD within a flock.
- Shedding of the OJD bacteria was still detected in over 80% of flocks even after five years of consistent vaccination.
- Those flocks with a high level of OJD shedding reported that they had introduced new sheep or had straying sheep in the past five years.
- Farms where sheep were introduced were three times more likely to test positive for OJD, despite ongoing vaccination.
- The authors concluded that ongoing vaccination with Gudair is essential.

Conclusion

To control OJD it is important that flocks continue to vaccinate their lambs, take care when sourcing stock for purchase by requesting a sheep health statement and ensure any bought-in stock have been vaccinated, preferably as lambs. Don't risk your flock, your neighbours' flocks or your trading options and ensure that all lambs are vaccinated with Gudair at marking.

What does this mean?

Gudair has been shown to reduce deaths due to OJD by 90%(2). The vaccine has also been shown to reduce shedding of the OJD bacteria in the dung of infected flocks by 90%(2). However, Gudair does not completely prevent bacterial shedding in all vaccinated animals.

As many farmers with an OJD-infected flock see the benefits of a Gudair vaccination program, in the form of a reduction in visible disease and stock losses, there may be a temptation to cease vaccination.

The study reported here has shown that after five years of consistent vaccination of lambs with Gudair, there was evidence of continued shedding of bacteria in over 80% of the flocks examined. Therefore, should vaccination cease, any unvaccinated stock on the property are at risk of developing clinical disease and dying due to OJD.

In addition, buying in stock was found to be the primary risk factor in having a high prevalence of OJD within a vaccinated flock.

References

1. Windsor PA, Eppleston J, Dhand NK, Whittington RJ (2014). Effectiveness of Gudair® vaccine for the control of ovine Johne's disease in flocks vaccinating for at least 5 years, Aust Vet J, 92(7): 263-268.
2. Reddacliff L, Eppleston J, Windsor P, Whittington R, Jones S (2006). Efficacy of a killed vaccine for the control of paratuberculosis in Australian sheep flocks, Veterinary Microbiology, 115: 77-90.



For Stock Deaths or Diseases of Unknown Cause

Article by Erica Ayres

Producers are strongly supported and encouraged to contact your local vet and discuss the criteria for DPIRD's Significant Disease Investigation (SDI) Program.

If eligible, subsidies are available towards the initial field investigation and post mortems to a value of \$330 inclusive of GST. In addition all laboratory costs are covered and a travel subsidy provided for a maximum of 200kms. This encourages veterinarians and producers to carry out a thorough investigation to obtain an early diagnosis and boosts WA's capacity for early detection of diseases.

SDI criteria for livestock cases:

- cattle, sheep, goats or pigs
- have multiple animals affected (although this is flexible in cases of potentially reportable diseases)
- be a commercial herd or flock (at least 50 sheep or goats, 20 pigs or 10 cattle but again if potentially reportable may be flexible)
- include the following characteristics: an unusual disease incident, including high illness and death rates or rate of spread or signs consistent with a reportable disease without a clear alternative diagnosis or potential effect on trade, public health or the viability of a farm, industry or region.

To use this subsidy your local vet will contact DPIRD vets and seek approval to carry out the work under this program. You must have prior authorisation from DPIRD to be eligible for this subsidy.

In addition to this program if you have cattle or sheep displaying neurological signs such as loss of coordination, abnormal gait, excitability, muscle tremors, blindness, paralysis etc they may be eligible for similar investigation subsidies. In addition an incentive payment directly to producers of \$330 inclusive per cow, or \$110 inclusive for sheep, for a maximum of 2 animals per outbreak will be paid. Cattle must be 30 months of age and less than 9 years. Sheep must be 18 months of age and preferably less than 5 years. They must be seen alive by the veterinarian and post mortem samples submitted including brain and spinal cord. This program is to demonstrate Australia's freedom from TSE diseases such as BSE (mad cow disease) and scrapie in sheep to maintain access into our export markets.

Research project building capacity in disease surveillance

Reprinted with permission from Animal Health Australia

Australia is fortunate to be free of many diseases which cause significant problems for livestock production in other parts of the world. Our reputation as a clean and green source of meat and fibre products has enabled our livestock industries to access markets domestically and internationally.

Preparing for and preventing an incursion of an emergency animal disease (EAD) is vital in maintaining this reputation, which is why projects like the FMD Ready project are so important. Using foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) as a model, this project brings together researchers, livestock industries and state and territory governments to explore ways Australia can prevent and manage an EAD outbreak. The logic is that if Australia can be prepared for FMD, it can be prepared for any animal disease.

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Erica Ayers, a WA sheep and cattle farmer and veterinarian, is one of several producers working with the FMD Ready project to build greater on-farm surveillance capacity amongst farmers. On-farm surveillance is an important component of EAD preparedness, as it ensures suspected diseases are reported quickly, allowing the launch of a fast and effective response if needed. Erica worked as a veterinarian in the UK's 2001 FMD outbreak. Due to this, she has a firm grasp of the very real risk FMD poses to Australia. "I have experienced firsthand the devastating consequences of an [FMD] outbreak in the UK," she explained.



Being the vet on the ground in charge of total flock and herd slaughter on infected farms is a memory that will stay with me forever, and I hate to think that it could ever happen to my own livestock, or to anyone in Australia."

The FMD Ready project has established five producer-led pilot groups – one for each of the FMD susceptible livestock industries in Australia, which include beef, pork, sheep, dairy and goat. Pilot groups focus on biosecurity and surveillance areas of interest to them, which empowers participants and enables strong partnerships to form between farmers, vets and other stakeholders.

Erica took an interest in working with the WA sheep pilot group after experiencing the benefits of local farmers joining forces to manage ovine Johne's disease (OJD) in the region. "I thought that the opportunity to improve communication and linkages between all sectors in our industry (including agents, processors, transporters, saleyards and vets) would be highly beneficial and have positive implications in the management of endemic diseases," said Ms Ayers.

According to Erica, her participation in the FMD Ready sheep pilot group has reinforced the need for education about the signs of FMD and what to do if you suspect an EAD, and for better targeting of information to ensure that everyone who owns or works with livestock is aware of the risks. "There's a lack of understanding in the industry of the risks of FMD being introduced and spread, and the consequences this would have. As part of the FMD Ready sheep pilot group, we've attempted to educate farmers around the investigation of unusual signs and who to contact, to reduce the fear of the unknown."

"Involvement in this pilot has made it clear to me that producer groups are becoming more and more important. They're a trusted source of information for farmers and in the event of an outbreak, these groups would be invaluable to the government responding to the incident, as they can provide contacts and local knowledge as well as get information out to a lot of people in a short period of time," Ms Ayers explained.

The FMD Ready Project is supported by Meat & Livestock Australia, through funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture as part of its Rural Research & Development for Profit program, and by producer levies from Australian FMD-susceptible livestock (cattle, sheep, goats and pigs) industries and Charles Sturt University, leveraging significant in-kind support from the research partners.

The research partners for this project are CSIRO, Charles Sturt University through the Graham Centre for Agricultural Innovation, the Bureau of Meteorology and the Australian Department of Agriculture, supported by Animal Health Australia.

For more information about the project visit <http://research.csiro.au/fmd/>.

Vet Spot: Pregnancy Toxemia and Hypocalcaemia FAST FACTS

Dr. Katie Kreutz BSc BVMS, Swans Veterinary Service

As autumn lambing approaches there are two health conditions sheep producers must be aware of. These conditions, namely pregnancy toxemia and hypocalcaemia (milk fever), affect ewes in late pregnancy and early lactation. They can exhibit similar symptoms such as lethargy, straying from the herd, recumbency, tremors and death. If identified and treated promptly and with the correct protocol, affected ewes may recover. While treatment is possible, knowing how to prevent these conditions will yield far better outcomes for both producers and sheep. Keep these facts handy to help you navigate problems in your late gestation ewes.

Pregnancy Toxemia

- Caused by dangerously low glucose levels due to inadequate nutrition
- Late stage gestation and twinning ewes are most susceptible
- Identifying and drafting off twinning ewes to ensure they receive adequate feed is an ideal management strategy
- Can be brought on by lack of feed, new green feed that is high in water and low in dry matter, extreme heat or weather causing periods of inappetence
- Ewes with suspected toxemia can be diagnosed by your vet based on clinical history, nutrition status, and a urine test to check for ketones
- Treatment generally includes drenching with 160mL of Vytrate liquid concentrate – a high glucose and electrolyte supplement.
- Additional administration of 70-100mL of “4 in 1” under the skin can also aid in recovery
- In some cases inducing lambing or a caesarian section may be indicated to ensure ewe survival
- Producers should monitor feed on offer during late gestation periods and supplement with high quality hay or hard feed if necessary

HypoCalcaemia (Milk Fever)

- Caused by a calcium deficiency in the bloodstream which leads to improper muscle contraction
- The most susceptible animals are those in the last six weeks of gestation or the first month of lactation
- Stress from trucking, yarding or shearing as well as inappetence during inclement weather can also contribute to the onset of hypocalcaemia
- A vet or experienced stock person can administer calcium supplement directly into the bloodstream. Recovery is almost instant. Treatment can be repeated if necessary and additional administration of calcium under the skin may be indicated
- Good management and adequate nutrition is the key to prevention. Limestone additives or calcium licks may provide additional calcium if hypocalcaemia is a problem for your herd.

Our Veterinary Team at Swans Veterinary Services is happy to discuss management and treatment strategies with our producers. Sheep that are showing neurologic signs may qualify for subsidized post mortem testing under the National Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies Surveillance Program. And remember, now is the time to put prevention and good management strategies in place.

Contact:

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Swans Veterinary Service
08 9071 5777
katie.k@swansvet.com



Cattle Spot: Brush up for calving

With calving on the approach, local cattle vet Enoch Bergman (past president Australian Cattle Vets), has shared the following calving article produced for a veterinary conference which he spoke at. Whilst it is written to veterinarians, it encapsulates a lot of the advice that Enoch routinely delivers to his clients in dealing with dystocia.

Dystocia Diagnosis - Swapping Tricks of the Trade

Dr. Enoch Bergmen DVM, Swans Veterinary Service

We all know that reproduction is the key driver of beef and dairy economics. Just like getting cows in calf, diagnosing dole bludgers, and managing threats to the maintenance of pregnancy to term, ensuring calves hit the ground with minimum stress, ingest plenty of good quality colostrum, and get on to their chosen routine food source without drama is paramount to seeing the reproductive equation carried through. Dystocia has been shown to account for almost half of perinatal calf losses in multiple surveys coming to no surprise to most veterinarians. Heifers that require intervention have demonstrated a 15.9% reduction in subsequent conception rates, a significant flow on cost. Lastly, calving wrecks handled poorly can have a huge psychological effect upon producers, and when we are forced to provide late intervention, can have similar effects upon vets.

As veterinarians, diagnosing dystocia isn't hard, training our producers to recognize dystocia, to intervene in a timely fashion, to improve their likelihood of successful intervention, to train them to recognize when they need our help, and lastly to get us there in time so that we can do our job with the odds stacked more in our favour is the name of the game. Getting a live calf on the ground isn't the true definition of success... getting a live unstressed calf on the ground from an unstressed dam is our ultimate goal. Without our clients accepting training, many will simply delay their and our interventions to achieve that goal. Whilst there are many proactive strategies to managing dystocia, this presentation is about advising producers to intervene appropriately.

Calving! The best time of year! To me, nothing beats watching calves whipping and spurring about the paddock with their tails held high like safety antennas on miniature four wheeled motor bikes. I reckon we all love coming up the drive to see the little fellers cavorting in the front paddock, especially if we Al'd their mums, diagnosed their presence rectally, or lastly helped them to enter this world. I don't know about you, but I live a bit vicariously through my clients, and I consider most of those calves just a little bit mine!

Calving season is in effect the beef and dairy production system's harvest. Just like in the grain game, timing, know how, appropriate gear, and professional assistance can all

improve our client's bottom line. When it comes to assisting animals during calving season, the key is appropriately timed intervention. Tired heifers aren't much help at expelling dead calves. Recognizing impending parturition and lending assistance when needed is perhaps the most important job of any animal husbandryman or woman.

As cows and heifers approach their calving date their udders fill and the sacro-sciatic ligaments which support their vulvas relax. Heifers are especially easy to pick out as they bag up and get springy. If a client with a large group of heifers is experiencing or anticipating a calving wreck, bi-weekly sorting off of the "heavies" and keeping them close at hand can sometimes help them tremendously.

I try to educate my clients about the three stages of parturition. Stage one beginning with the initiation of labour and ending when the cervix is fully dilated and the amniotic sac becomes visible. Stage two lasting from that point until the calf hits the ground. Lastly stage three begins at delivery and ends when the placenta is passed. Understanding the 3 stages, when to intervene, and giving them the incentive to intervene can make a world of difference. I often have to reassure them that they aren't disrupting nature's plan as long as they adhere to a few simple rules.

As an animal enters stage one the heifer will usually begin "nesting", hunting a spot to lie down, separating herself from the remainder of the mob. She will often appear somewhat uncomfortable, shifting her weight, arching her back, or wringing her tail. This discomfort is associated with uterine contractions, progressing from about every 15 minutes to every 3 minutes throughout stage one. Simultaneous to the contraction of the uterine muscle fibres, the cervix dilates, external os first, normally becoming fully dilated by the beginning of stage two. Stage one should be considered prolonged and requiring intervention if it lasts longer than eight hours. Progression to stage two requires the head or a leg of the calf to enter the cervix, to initiate complete cervical dilatation and increased strength and frequency of uterine contractions, ie. the Ferguson reflex. I try to get my producers to make a note of animals, including multiparous cows that have been walking the fences, mildly straining, or packing their tails. If those animals have not calved within 8 hours, I advise my clients to bring her to the yards and perform a vaginal examination. She may be carrying a breech calf that has failed to enter the cervix and stimulate the Ferguson reflex. If left alone, the calf will die, and a few days later

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the cow or heifer may suffer the same fate. We have all received phone calls about cows with two tails...

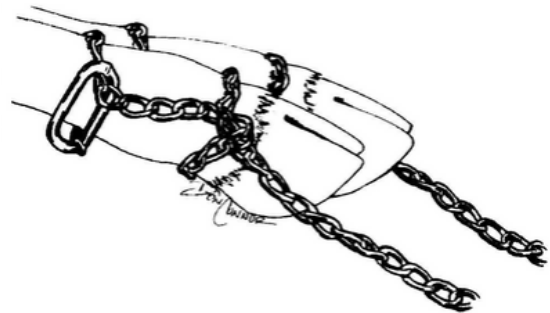
Stage two begins after the “bag” has broken. By rights, the heifer or cow should have the calf delivered within two hours and make visible progress every half hour. If either of these criteria are not met I advise my producers to bring the cow or heifer into the yards and perform a vaginal examination. Any animal with an abnormal presentation, position, or posture ie. leg back, head back, reverse presentation, etc. should be examined immediately. Calves with swollen heads and tongues or with green or yellow staining should be examined immediately. Swelling indicates prolonged time spent in the birth canal, staining of foetal fluids and the skin of the calf is from meconium, or calf faeces, which often indicates a stressed calf. If foetal parts are noted to glide in and out of the heifer’s vulva or the heifer vocalizes with each contraction, the cervix and soft tissue are likely still in the process of dilatation. Such a heifer has probably not been trying long. If that heifer does not make progress within a half hour assistance should be rendered. Alternatively, if the calf’s foetal parts fail to move with each push, the calf is probably jammed up against the pelvis and is too big for natural delivery. If the foetal parts do not appear to move with each contraction I advise my clients to intervene immediately. Oversize calves often also present with crossed forelimbs or with the soles of their forelegs rotated so that the “palms” are together. Assessing the likelihood of an oversize calf from hoof size and limb posture and intervening immediately may be the key to success in some instances. A quick and useful check when performing our vaginal exam to assist in determining whether or not we will be able to deliver the calf is to see if you or the producer can get their hand reasonably comfortably all of the way around the calf’s head. Most malpresentations are associated with foetal oversize as well, as the calf may have been trying different postures to negotiate their exit. Once corrected, we may still have a hard pull or even caesarean on our hands.



Most dystocias present normally, meaning that the calf has presented head first with all of the appropriate limbs postured appropriately, however the heifer’s pelvis is too small in proportion to the size of the calf. If the calf is in a normal position but oversized, the first step is for our

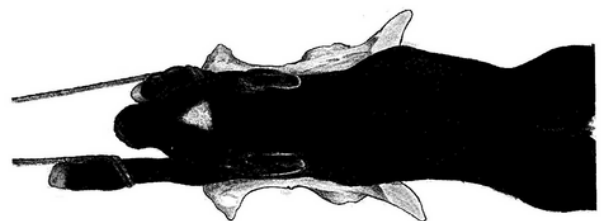
producers to work out if they can pull it without injuring the calf or the heifer.

I, and most vets, typically use long stainless steel calving chains, though some vets or producers use ropes or straps that work just as well. I try to get most of my producers using calf chains, as they are easily disinfected between calves. I am a bit pedantic about applying the chains. I advocate long chains so that producers can place one loop well above the fetlock in the diastema of the metacarpus/tarsus, followed by a half hitch placed just below the dewclaws, with the chain located dorsally. Surprisingly this is apparently the safest way to apply chains for traction. Most traction associated fractures result due to the loop being placed near the distal growth plate of the metacarpus/tarsus resulting in a physal fracture.



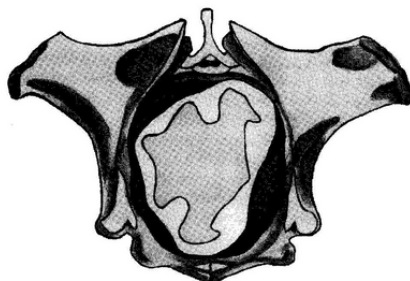
In North America, the most common method of applying obstetric chains on a bovine fetus is to place the loop of the chain above the fetlock joint and a half-hitch around the pastern. Traction is applied to the dorsal aspect of the limb. (Original art by Mr. Don Conner, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Missouri.)

The force of two men is all that should be needed to deliver an anteriorly presented calf. I try to get my producers to manually apply traction to each fore leg, using the strength of one man per leg, one after the other to walk the shoulders through the pelvis. They will know when they have pulled one leg sufficiently when each fetlock is about one hands breadth beyond the vulva. Maintaining firm traction on the first leg, traction is applied forcefully to attempt to clear the second shoulder far enough to have both fetlocks a hands breadth beyond the vulva. If this can be achieved then the calf should be deliverable. It is very important to walk the shoulders through the pelvis in this manner. If traction is applied to both legs simultaneously the shoulders may wedge in the heifer’s pelvis and the calf or heifer may be unnecessarily injured. If the force of two average sized men can’t simultaneously exteriorize both fetlocks beyond the vulva, a caesarean for live calves and a fetotomy for dead calves are the best options in my opinion. Once both fetlocks have been advanced a hands breadth beyond the vulva, simultaneous pulling can commence. I am happy for producers to use a calf jack



Continued from Page 20.

from this point forward as long as they use it properly, applying traction when the cow is pushing. The head is often the next big obstacle, if the vulva is very small, some vets perform an episiotomy in order to prevent uncontrolled tearing of the dorsal vulva and perineum. A surgical wound is easier to stitch! The incision should be placed at either the 2 or 10 o'clock position. An epidural is not required initially, as the vulva is fairly desensitized during parturition, but lignocaine or an epidural are useful when stitching up the surgical wound immediately after the calf is delivered. If it is shaping up as a hard pull, once you have pulled the calf's head through the vulva you should begin rotating the calf. If the producer is using a calf jack they will need to temporarily release pressure in order to disconnect one leg so as to be able to rotate the calf as they extract it. The widest and incompressible portion of the calf's body is across the hips. The widest aperture of a cow's pelvis is on the diagonal. If you roll the calf's body 90 degrees, typically his pelvis will roll the appropriate 45 degrees to facilitate delivery. It is the calf's femoral greater trochanters which are responsible for the majority of calving paralysis cases, by rolling the calf you can minimize this risk. The calf rolls much easier if it is gradually rolled whilst it is being extracted. Attempting to roll the calf after the pelvis of the calf and heifer are bound is futile. If I come across a hip locked live calf I try my best to repel the calf so as to rotate it properly before applying traction.



I coach my clients to not be afraid to allow the calf to catch their breath once the thorax is clear of the cows vulva, some stressed calves expire due to inability to catch a breath whilst undergoing prolonged traction. If both fetlocks of both forelimbs had been spontaneously extended a hands breadth beyond the vulva by manual traction and the calf was successfully rotated whilst being extracted to prevent hip lock, the delivery should finish successfully with minimal trauma to the calf or dam.

Calves that present backwards also benefit from rotation. If the calf is already wedged in the vaginal canal, repelling the calf may be necessary, after which the hind limbs can be crossed and whilst twisting and simultaneously pushing the calf back and forth the pelvis of the calf can be rotated in relation to the dam's pelvis. Once the calf has been rotated, simultaneous traction should be applied to both hind limbs, again with the force of two strong men. If the hocks of the calf can not be exteriorized a hands breadth beyond the vulva then a safe forced extraction is not likely and a caesarean should be

performed on live calves or a fetotomy attempted on dead calves.

When should we perform a caesarean vs a fetotomy? I believe we can be skilled at both procedures. I try to remove all dead foetuses via fetotomy, unless there is no room to speak of. Withdrawal reflex, suckling reflex, blink reflex, and anal tone are all good signs of life. Regarding the withdrawal reflex, I believe that stressed, near death, calves will sometimes respond vigorously to stimulation, so I try not to be too optimistic about the impending outcome when they are alive. Regarding anal tone, be sure you have found the top hole when checking heifer calves, a flaccid foetal vulva does not indicate a dead foetus.

When should our clients ring us? I suggest when they haven't made any progress after working away for half an hour, or sooner if they recognize that they are in over their head. If they have intervened early enough and haven't overstressed the calf or heifer, the calf can survive for four to six hours until we can arrive. Nobody likes pulling long dead calves from paralysed cows!

I believe that covers what I was set out to cover. The more we can get our clients to intervene in a timely fashion, the more likely they are to seek our intervention in a timely fashion and the more likely we are to drive back to the surgery with a smile on our face. Our clients have worked all year to get their cows to this point, lets help them get their calf harvest into the bin!

Parting Tip: Feeding heifers hay once daily, just before sunset, started a couple of weeks before and throughout the calving season will stimulate most of the calves to be born during the daylight hours. Try it!

Contact:
Dr. Enoch Bergmen
0427 716 907
Swans Veterinary Service



ASHEEP Cattle Committee Update

The ASHEEP Cattle Sub-Committee met on 19th February to cast their eyes over the year ahead.

Cattle Field Day:

Plans are underway for an early winter field day in June covering areas including filling the feed gap, pain relief, Fixed-Time AI project update and more.

Grass-finish Weaner Trial:

Expressions of interest open to take part in a weaner trial commencing June 2020. Contact for further info.

Contact:

Simon Fowler, Cattle Committee Chair, 0428 750 012
Sarah Brown, ASHEEP Executive Officer, 0409 335 194

ASHEEP Vetch survey results in

ASHEEP recently ran a vetch survey to get a better picture of its use in the Esperance region. The purpose of the survey was to feed information gathered back to the vetch breeding arm of the South Australian Research and Development Institute to assist them to argue for increased funding. Thanks to ASHEEP member Mark Roberts for driving this opportunity. 23 responses came through with results summarised as follows:

- 22 respondents planted a total of 15,813ha of Vetch in 2019
- The 1 respondent who did not grow vetch in 2019 has an interest in doing so in future
- 47.83% planted RM4, followed by Capello, Rasina, Lauguedoc, Common and Barloo
- 5 respondents planted 2 to 3 varieties

Most have used Vetch primarily for nitrogen fixing and feed. Other uses included weed control, harvesting for seed, increasing organic matter and finishing lambs.

Paraboss Alert: flystrike and barber's pole worm

Sarah Brown, Executive Officer, ASHEEP

Wish you had a crystal ball for predicting flystrike and cold snaps for lambing?

The January Paraboss e-newsletter put out an alert to producers around flystrike monitoring, directing farmers to check ASKBILL for the local risk maps. This online resource is provided by the University of New England, with "Bill" being Dr Gordon 'Bill' McClymont, the founding Dean of the University of New England's faculty of Rural Science. ASKBILL is a web-based software that claims to make timely and accurate predictions of sheep well-being and productivity using weather, stock and pasture information. This includes generating maps with predictions for flystrike and extreme weather across Australia, including flystrike in ewes and lambs, and cold snaps or weather that will impact shorn sheep and new lambs.

The platform has options for paid subscription, but also has freely available predictive maps under "Bill's Blog" at www.askbill.com.au. Take a look and see if it could be a useful tool for you.

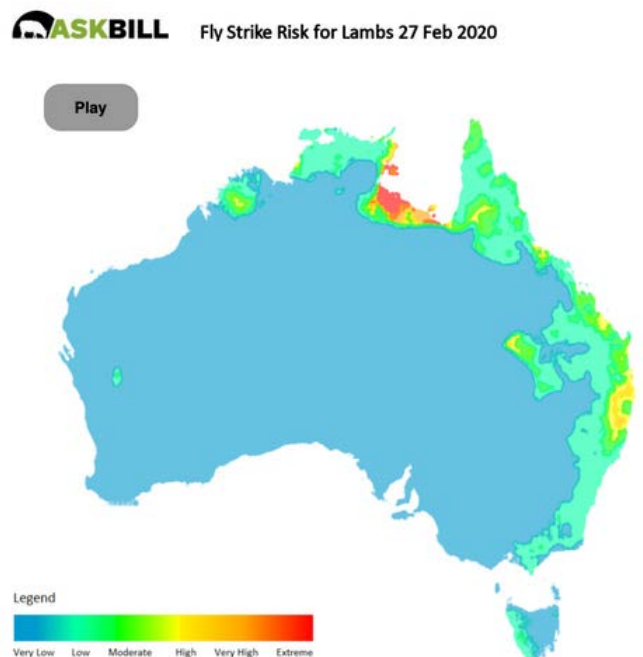
Image: Predictive Australian fly strike risk map for lambs for 27 Feb 2020 (extracted from www.askbill.com.au on 23 Feb 2020)

The Paraboss news also provided a WA state outlook reminding producers to conduct worm egg counts from 4 weeks after your first significant falls of rain (>10 mm across a 5-day period).

Dr Nicole Swan, Swan's Veterinary Services, outlined that whilst rainfall across the region had been varied, those with sufficient rainfall to promote subsequent green pasture growth should be aware of the risk of worm outbreaks, particularly barber's pole. "This risk is reduced if hot weather follows as the larvae cannot survive on the pasture in high temperatures, usually above 35°C. It is important to monitor at-risk mobs 3-4 weeks after significant rain."

To review further details of the Paraboss WA worms, flies and lice updates, visit www.paraboss.com.au/news/outlooks/wa.php.

Producers can also subscribe to the Paraboss newsletter by visiting the website.



Condingup Fair

Sat 21 March 2020

For stalls & info contact:
 Karina - nkruddenklau@bigpond.com
 Zoe - zoe.troy@live.com

WASIA Update: Shearing training, top of the agenda

Valerie Pretzel, WA Shearing Industry Association (Inc)

Everyone in the wool industry is well aware that despite high regional and youth unemployment, the WA shearing industry has critical shearer and shedhand workforce shortages.

Following the very successful shearer training schools run at Condingup in July, organized by Basil Parker, and the recent Northampton school, organised by WASIA member and Mhunga Whalla founder Bobby Pepper, WASIA has formed a working party to generate more shearer training, work experience and employment opportunities.

With a focus on taking trainees into work experience and next level improver training, the working party which includes representatives from AWI, DPIRD, the sheep exporters, WASIA and The Sheep Collective, presented a proposal to Minister MacTiernan in December which was received favourably. Funding is sought to design and document a standardised training school that can be more effectively picked up and run in various regional communities. Graduates of these schools would then have the opportunity to undertake improver training and shed hand work experience at the Peel feedlots thanks to the support of the export companies. WASIA will then connect graduates with shearing contractors for work opportunities, providing a clear pathway to placement with contractors and in sheds and into employment.

WASIA President, Darren Spencer said, "Once they have completed their initial training, we need to get students into the workforce with added up-skills training constant, so they can develop and be retained," he said. "To make up for the shearing shortfall, we are also working with the Department of Immigration which could issue three-month 400 visas for overseas shearers."

Adequate numbers of highly skilled professional staff to harvest and handle a high-quality WA wool clip in a timely manner is key to the profitability of the WA wool industry. Wool growers can assist in attracting and retaining shed hands and shearers by supporting contractors in providing a learner stand and having learners in the teams; and by upgrading and improving shearing sheds, equipment and facilities and general working conditions.

In other WASIA news, it has been a good year with a record number of new members and completing a solid financial turn around. WASIA met for our first meeting of the new year in January where about 40 members, sponsors and guests came together to hear the latest industry news and initiatives.

WASIA's next member meeting is being held in Kojonup in April and as group member's of WASIA, ASHEEP members are welcome to come along. Details will be sent out by ASHEEP nearer to the time. ASHEEP are a group member of the WA Shearing Industry Association and full details of WASIA services are available from the website www.wasia.com.au or you can contact the WASIA office by calling 0412 227 252 or emailing to admin@wasia.com.au



Photo: Mhunga Whalla camp participants in Northampton. Photo credit: Bob Garnant, The Countryman



**WA SHEARING INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION (INC)**

Serradellas and the development of more P-efficient pasture systems

Richard Simpson, Research Project Leader – Grassland Agronomy, CSIRO Agriculture & Food

The serradellas (*Ornithopus compressus* [yellow serradella] and *O. sativus* [French serradella]) have many attributes which make them useful alternatives to subterranean clover. Among these attributes is a considerably lower requirement for soil P (Fig. 1). This is not news to many farmers because serradellas have long been prized for their ability to grow on infertile soils. Recently, we have been able to estimate the “critical” soil test P (STP) concentration for yellow and French serradella and have confirmed that it is significantly lower than that of subterranean clover (Fig. 2). The “critical” STP concentration is the soil test P concentration of the topsoil layer (0-10 cm) that supports 95% of maximum yield when measured in spring (i.e. when pasture growth rates are at their highest).

Because subterranean clover has a higher P requirement than the grasses with which it is grown, its critical STP requirement has effectively set the soil test P benchmark to which we fertilise grass-legume pastures in southern Australia. We now know that the critical STP requirement of the serradellas is lower than that of sub clover.

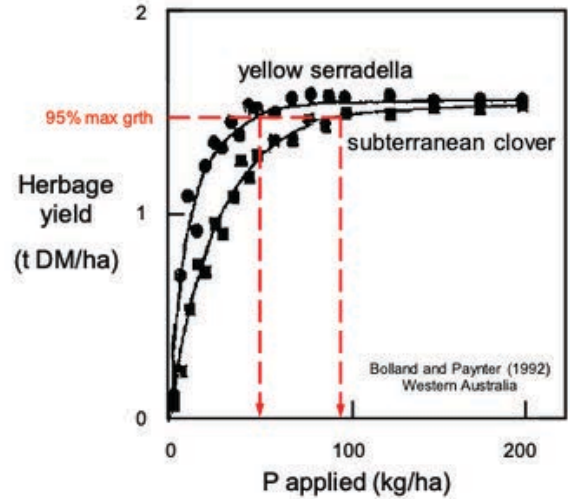


Figure 1: Early research from WA clearly showed that serradella can yield as well as sub. clover but with a much lower level of applied P.

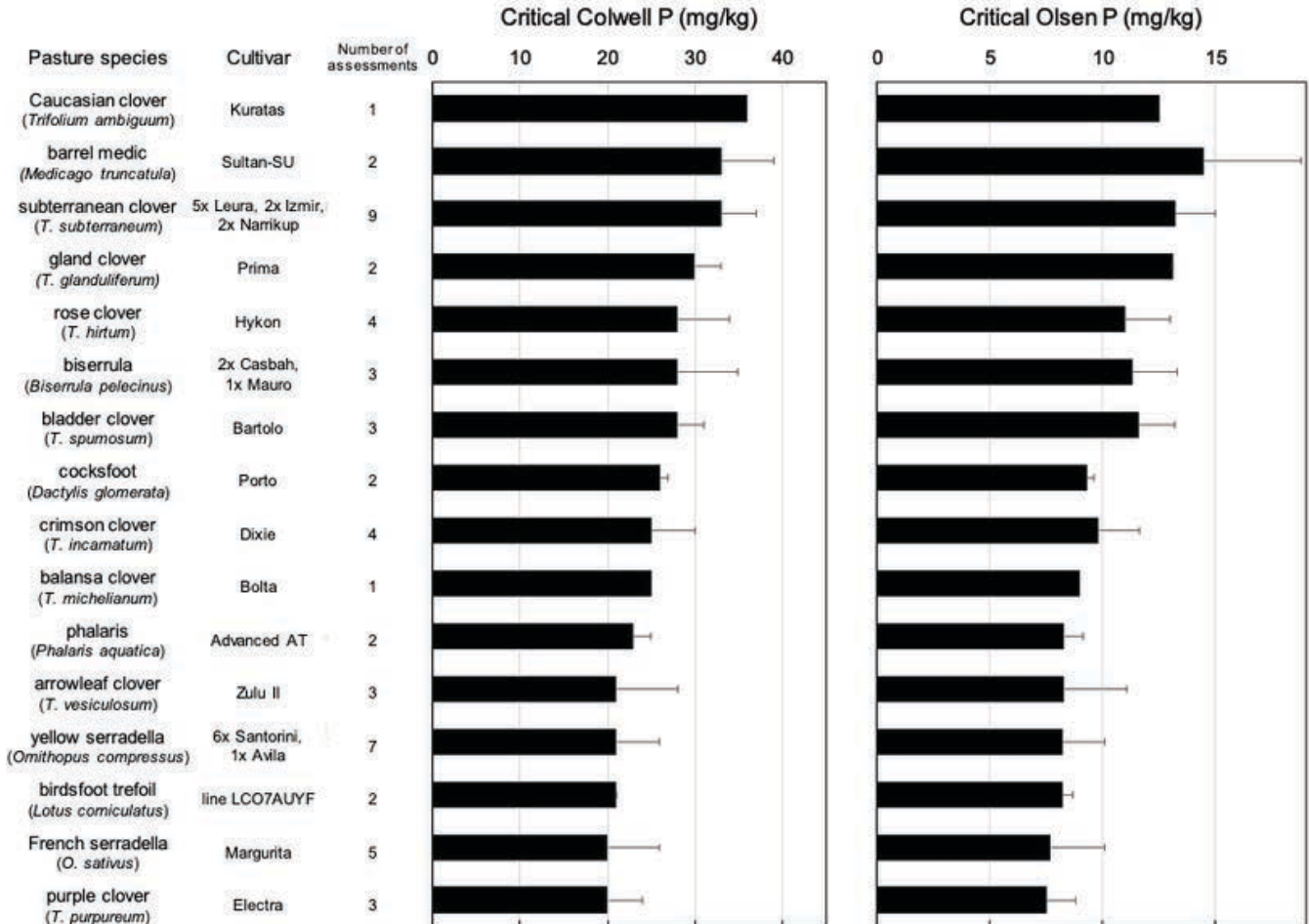


Figure 2: The critical soil test P concentration (corresponding to 95% of maximum yield) of various pasture legumes and two perennial grasses grown at up to 4 sites in southeast NSW (PBI range: 40-80) over a 3-year period (in total, 7 site-year experiments). There were no significant differences in the critical P requirements among cultivars from a single species. Bars indicate 1x standard deviation. They provide a measure of the repeatability of the critical P estimate. The graphs are drawn using data from Sandral et al. (2019).

Continued from Page 24.

This allows us to revise the STP benchmark for managing serradella-based pastures. The critical P requirement for serradella is still greater than that of some companion grasses (e.g. ryegrass, silver grass, etc.) and it is roughly equivalent to that of other grasses (e.g. phalaris, cocksfoot, etc.). Because of this, it is now feasible to use the lower critical STP requirement of the serradellas as the benchmark STP target for fertilising serradella-based pasture. In a soil where sub clover pasture needs to be fertilised to 30-35 mg Colwell P/kg soil, serradella will yield near its maximum at about 20 mg Colwell P/kg (Fig. 2).

How is the lower critical P requirement achieved?

The serradellas have long, thin roots and produce much more root length per gram of root mass (e.g. ~250-300 metres of root per gram root dry mass, compared to sub clover ~100-150 metres/gram). They also have long root hairs (~0.7 millimetres compared to ~0.25 millimetres for sub clover) (Fig. 3). The result is that serradellas develop a much larger root surface area for P uptake than sub clover and this allows them to extract more P from soil at a lower STP concentration; hence their lower critical STP concentration.

How can we apply this information in deep sandy soils?

Most of the soils in the experiments across the “P-efficient pastures” project have a low to moderate Phosphorus Buffering Index (PBI) of at least 30. These soils retain most of the P that is applied as fertiliser in the top 20 cm of the soil profile and, of that, about 70% is held in the top 10 cm. This makes it easy to soil test for P and to apply the critical STP benchmarks for soil P management.



Figure 3. Photographs of typical roots of serradella and sub. clover showing how serradellas have thinner roots with very long root hairs in contrast to the thicker roots and very short root hairs that are characteristic of the sub. clovers. These differences in root morphology explain the difference in the ability of these species to take up P from low P soils.

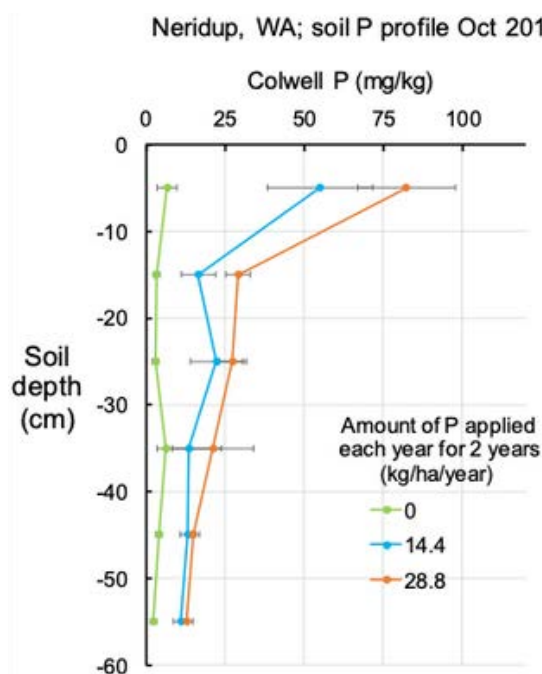


Figure 4: The Colwell P profiles of soil at Neridup after two years of relatively high P applications showing how P has moved below 20 cm depth relatively quickly. This data was generated by Dr Brad Nutt (Murdoch University) in his experiment that is adjacent to the ASHEEP plots at Neridup. The soil P profile at Grass Patch is similar.

There is a real dilemma in the deep sandy soils being managed by ASHEEP and Southern Dirt which have PBI values of 10-11 or less. These soils do not retain P in the topsoil for long and it soon moves to depth in the soil profile (Fig. 4). We believe that serradellas are well equipped to capture this P because of their deep rooting habit. However, soil sampling for P in the top 10 cm of the soil alone is unlikely to provide a useful picture of the amount of P that is potentially available to the pasture.

During the P-efficient pasture project, we have changed tack to address this issue and are now sampling soil at 0-10 cm and 0-60 cm depth with the aim of relating the amounts of Colwell P found in each soil zone to pasture growth. Our hypothesis is that deeper soil samples may better reflect P availability in these “leaky” soils. Unfortunately, droughts have been against us during the last two growing seasons so it seems unlikely, at this stage, that we will have tested the hypothesis adequately by the end of the project.



Department of Primary Industries



Welcome new sponsor Bedford Harbour Engineering

ASHEEP would like to thank and welcome new Bronze Sponsor Bedford Harbour Engineering to the team.

Bedford Harbour Engineering is a service and manufacturing company supplying the Western Australian Agricultural market. Established in 2010 out the back of a farm shed with one part-time employee, Bedford Harbour Engineering quickly outgrew its premises and in 2011 moved to a larger facility in Hyden, further outgrowing that facility and moving to Esperance in 2019. It now employs eight full-time staff and is continuing to offer its customers an increasing number of products and services. The company offers its customers four core services.

FIELD BINS - With a time proven design ranging from 45 - 80T we have a storage solution to suit your needs.

CHASER BINS - Designed, engineered and built tough for the harshest of Australian conditions, the Wildcat Chaser Bin comes in a range of sizes from 25 - 46 tonnes with a number of innovative features.

GENERAL FABRICATION - With MIG and TIG Fabrication facilities we can cover everything from header front repairs to aluminium lounge tables. There is no job too big or small. We even have a drive-through road train service!

STOCK FEEDERS - Newly introduced Sheep Feeders in sizes 6, 9 & 16T and 20T Cattle Feeders all available with optional lick feeder attachments.

STOCK HANDLING - New 52 Panel Sheep Yards

MOBILE WATERING POINTS - 9,000L cup and saucer trailer, 50,000L Water tank trailer. Ideal for fast deployment to any paddock, just hook the ute on and go.



Bedford Harbour
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www.bedfordharbour.com.au

Contact:

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National on Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme

The On Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme is available to all commercial livestock farmers and pastoralists throughout Western Australia to assist in urgently-needed on-farm water infrastructure that addresses animal welfare needs and improves the resilience of the farm business.

A rebate is available to cover costs associated with the purchase and installation of on-farm water including water storage devices, dam desilting, power sources to distribute water, pipes and bore development. Rebates are set at 25% of the costs to a maximum of \$25 000.

The scheme will close on 30 April 2021 or when funding allocation is exhausted. Applications for the rebate will be received and assessed after the works have been completed.

For further information on the rebate scheme application and website www.dwer.wa.gov.au/NOFEWIRS or contact 1800 780 300 or email ruralwater@dwer.wa.gov.au

Mad Cow or bad feed?

Extract from DPIRD's January WA Livestock Disease Outlook for producers. To subscribe email waldo@dpiird.wa.gov.au.

- 36 cattle from a mob of 200 had died within a four-week period, and five were affected with signs that included staggering, tremors and collapse when moved.
- New season hay had been brought in and fed to the cattle two months prior.
- Hay, blood and tissue samples were tested by DPIRD's laboratory
- Transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) was not detected in the brain tissues, which helped to support Australia's proof of freedom from mad cow disease and to maintain access to markets.
- **Testing of the rumen contents was positive for annual ryegrass toxicity (ARGT) and the hay sample returned a high risk rating for ARGT**, leading to the conclusion that ARGT was the likely cause of disease.
- It is recommended that producers who buy in hay request a commodity vendor declaration that states the feed has been tested for ARGT and found to be low risk. To learn more about how to reduce the risk of ARGT in stock, see the recent media release or Facebook video.
- Producers and vets who submit appropriate samples of adult cattle and sheep with neurological signs may qualify for a rebate through the national TSE surveillance program as results from testing help to provide evidence of Australia's freedom from TSEs.

WALRC Newsletter



Subscribe to the WA Livestock Research Council newsletter.



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• February •

Next ASHEEP Committee Meeting is scheduled for April 2020.

Contact a committee or staff member by Mar 31 to raise an item.

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