

ASHEEP News



a s h e e p

Esperance

Harvesting Serradella Pod- The DPIRD guidelines



Department of
Primary Industries and
Regional Development

Harvesting French serradella

Article written by Angelo Loi, DPIRD

Cultivars of French serradella (Eliza, Cadiz, Erica and Margurita) and yellow serradella (Charano, Santorini and Yelbini) have been developed with the aim of reducing the cost of seed production. Most of these varieties grow relatively upright when ungrazed and have good pod retention at senescence, allowing them to be more easily harvested using conventional grain harvesting machinery. For the hardseeded cultivars further processing is necessary to enhance germination

One of the important qualities of French serradella is that it grows erect and holds onto its pods for a few weeks after maturity. During the harvesting process pods break up into individual segments with one seed inside each segment. Eliza and Cadiz are about 99% germinable when harvested and is sold in pod form. Erica and Margurita, on the other hand, are hard seeded cultivars and will have less than 10% germination at harvest. These cultivars do need to be dehulled and scarified to increase germination rates to a level suitable for new sowings. Harvest yields for French serradella are generally in the range of 300-700 kilograms per hectare of cleaned pod. Pod of the hard seeded french serradella cultivars are 65% seed.

When to harvest

Serradella pods can be collected using a standard grain harvester as soon as the majority of the vines are dry and brittle. In some situations the crowns and lower parts of the vines may still have a little greenness but this does not usually affect harvesting. If left too long, the pods will begin to shed, but if harvested too early the green vines will tangle and block the header front. A high moisture level can also reduce the efficiency of the dehulling process for yellow serradella. Check to make sure that at least 90% of pods are dry before starting harvest.

Desiccating broad-leaved weeds

You may need to desiccate wild radish, wild turnip and other green broad-leaved weeds before harvest by applying diquat (such as Reglone®), plus wetter, 4-7 days before harvest. Green radish and turnip may cause blockages to the harvester and radish has affected the germination rates of other stored seed. The spray application also desiccates any green serradella but can also significantly affect seed viability if the chemical is applied too early. This technique can be useful to even up a stand that has varying levels of greenness.

Best harvesting results

Use a conventional (standard or rotary drum) open-front grain harvester, with a finger tyne reel. The machine settings are similar to those for wheat, except the drum speed should be at a minimum and air strength reduced to about half. When the drum is set correctly the pods should break up into individual segments. If the pods are not broken into single segments the drum speed should be increased. If there is naked seed in the harvested sample then the threshing is too aggressive and drum speed should be reduced and/or the concave gap increased.

The air strength should be set at a level where some pod is blown out the back of the harvester. This removes empty and light pods as well as light weed seeds such as silver grass and capeweed and ensures a clean harvest sample. It is better to sacrifice some pod out the back of the harvester rather than pay extra cleaning costs. We recommend that crop lifters should be fitted to the platform every 30cm. Short season upright crops may be successfully harvested without crop lifters, but thick and lodged crops can be difficult to harvest without them.

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Newsletter # 50

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Harvesting Serradella Pod-The DPIRD guidelines

French serradella harvest checklist

- Desiccate green weeds before harvest.
- Finger-reel open fronts work best.
- Crop lifters are recommended, fitted 30cm apart.
- Harvest in warm to hot weather conditions.
- Use trial and error to obtain a good clean sample.
- Seed of Erica and Margurita needs to be dehulled and scarified to increase germination.

Handling the seed

French serradella pods auger easily and can be stored in grain bags, bulk-a-bags or in grain silos. If weeds are present then you can store it on the farm in bulk and then take the sample to seed cleaning businesses during January and February when most other grain cleaning has finished.

Cleaning the sample

Seed should be cleaned of weeds before use on farm or for dehulling in the case of Erica and Margurita. If using a commercial seed cleaning service, ensure they have the right cleaning apparatus and preferably are experienced in cleaning serradella. Some farmers have successfully used mobile seed cleaning machinery. If you have your own seed cleaning equipment, try using a slotted screen that allows the pod segments to pass through the slots but separates the larger weed seeds. Then put it through again using a smaller screen to remove all the small seeds and retain the clean pod.

Harvesting yellow serradella

Grain harvesters can be used successfully to collect the pods of hard seeded yellow serradella, but the harvesting machine requires different settings than for French serradella. The pod also requires further treatment as the seed left inside the pod is hard seeded and will have germination rates of less than 10%. Yellow serradella must be dehulled and scarified in order to obtain the highly germinable seed that is best suited for normal pasture establishment. Charano, Santorini and Yelbini are favoured for pod collection with a grain harvester. They also have pods that are easier to dehull.

Setting up the grain harvester

When harvesting yellow serradella, the drum needs to be running at high rpm and the concave gap set as close as possible in order to break up the whole pods into smaller segments. Yellow serradella pods do not flow freely and

can be difficult to auger. Before starting, lower the cover plates on the floor auger in the grain tank and empty the grain tank when about one-third full. The fitting of de-awning plates (as for barley) will help to break the pods into small segments. It is unlikely that more than 10% of seeds will be removed from the pods during the harvesting process. The harvested sample should be as clean as possible to assist in the dehulling process.

Treating yellow serradella pods

The harvested sample should be cleaned to separate any free seed and remove foreign weeds. Dehulling the cleaned pods can then produce additional seed. Any residual pods that still contain seeds should be retained because they will have higher germination levels than untreated pods (usually between 20-50%). These pod segments, called 'germination enhanced pod', can then be sown at a sufficient rate (dependant on germination percentage) to ensure a successful pasture establishment. Any residual hard seed will germinate over following seasons.

Yellow serradella harvest checklist

- Harvest as soon as vines are dry.
- Desiccate green weeds before harvest.
- Finger-reel open fronts work best.
- Crop lifters are recommended, fitted 30cm apart.
- Harvest in warm to hot conditions.
- Pods are difficult to auger.
- Empty grain tank regularly.
- Seed needs to be dehulled and scarified to increase germination.

Selling serradella seed

The serradella cultivars Eliza, Cadiz, Erica, Margurita, Santorini, Charano and Yelbini are protected under the *Plant Breeders Rights Act 1994*. Under the Act there is no restriction on producing seed for personal use but only a licensed marketer can sell or trade seed and royalties apply.

Acknowledgments

The Grains Research and Development Corporation and Australian Wool Innovation contributed to this research through the National Annual Pasture Legume Improvement Program. Also the contributions from farmers who passed on their experiences are greatly appreciated.

Harvesting Serradella Pod-The DPIRD guidelines

Serradella at the perfect stage to harvest pod



Serradella that is ready to be desiccated

Serradella that is too green to be harvested



Pictures & information provided by Angelo Loi, DPIRD. For further info contact Angelo on 0429 378 279

Harvesting Serradella Seed/Pod– A Local Case Study

Scott & Odile Welke farm at Cascade as part of the larger Welke family business. Scott is known to grow a great serradella crop and has fine tuned his harvesting process. Here Scott will let us in on how he goes about it.

Farm Business Name– Welke Bros

Location– Cascades

Farm Size– 150,000ha

Average rainfall-400ml

Soil type & pH– Sand over gravel duplex and deep sand, pH 5-5.5 through to Mallee pH 6.5-8 (the high pH areas are not serradella country)

Current enterprises– Wheat, Barley, Canola, Vetch and 8,000 merino ewes

Typical rotation– We don't have a typical rotation but common one is wheat, barley, vetch or serradella

Stocking rate– 8,000 ewes and lambs, plus 1,800 hoggets on 2,800 winter grazed area so approx. 3.5 head/ha or 6 DSE/ha

Can you describe your pasture program? Every year 2,000 ha of vetch or serradella is sown as improved pasture. Generally the serradella is sown as early as possible (late summer/early autumn) if there is moisture but we will go in dry from mid March onwards. This year serradella was sown in February. The idea with this is to get it out of the way before cropping starts, to get maximum growth and to give it an equal footing with weeds.

Do you manage serradella that you are going to harvest for seed differently compared to your other pastures?

Any serradella paddocks that are planned to be harvested are grazed normally early on. Usually they get grazed twice and then locked up from the end of July onwards. Weed control is typically a pre-emergent application of spinnaker or raptor post-emergent along with grazing. This year a litre of jaguar was used post emergent to get the broadleaf weeds so it will be interesting to see how that affects seed set. Grass control is easy with a select/verdict brew used.

Generally the serradella is seeded into a barley stubble so sowing can happen early without the risk of blowing. That way there is also a bonus of early feed from volunteers. Serradella is seeded shallow, similar depth to Canola, and banded with 20kg MAP under the seed and Alsoca granule is applied using a separate bin.

Reg Legged Earth Mites and Aphids have not been a problem. For seed crops a spray is applied for Bud Worm when they are around, usually in late September. This is

more important for French than Santorini. It's a good idea to use a sweep net to monitor bud worm numbers when the serradella is podding as they can decimate a seed crop if left, especially in French varieties.

How do you determine if a serradella paddock will yield enough to be worth harvesting?

The decision is based on how desperate we are for seed. Even heavily grazed paddocks will set good seed but you may have to use a clover harvester to get it. If there is enough vine to get lifters under, similar to peas, then you should be right.

How do you determine the right time to harvest the serradella?

The right time to harvest is when it is ripe and that is when you are usually busy with other crops! The later you leave it the more the plants will drop to the ground and the harder it is to pick them up with the header. I've had success with swathing 75-80 senesced and then picking up the windrows at the end of harvest. The dryer the serradella seed is the better so I try to pick hot days to harvest it.

Do you desiccate before harvesting?

I do more of a spray top for Santorini rather than a desiccation as it needs to be super dry to harvest. The spray top is more for weed management. If there are no weeds it can be left to ripen on its own. I generally don't harvest until close to Christmas but if we want to harvest French serradella early than we desiccate it at 75% senesced.

How do you set up your header to harvest the serradella?

The settings we use for French Serradella are pretty much the same as Canola. For Santorini we use minimal concave clearance and we generally still can't break up the pod with that setting. Every header is different so it is hard to pick a definite setting. You will need to muck around with your own machine. The main thing is the seed is bullet proof so go hard. One thing to be careful of is filling the box too much if the pods are still intact or you'll have a lot of shovelling to do (think the barrel of monkeys game).

Do you get the seed scarified at cleaning or keep as pod?

I scarify most of the Santorini but keep French as pod for summer sowing (Margurita) or Autumn sowing (Cadiz).

Harvesting Serradella Pod– A Local Case Study



Above- Scott's 2018 French & Yellow Serradella seed crop



Above– In Scott's Santorini Serradella seed crop at the 2016 ASHEEP field day. This was sown in March at 10kg/ha

Your ASHEEP Committee

Chairman:

Simon Fowler
0428 750012
simon-
robynfowler@bigpond.com

Bob Reed
90713655
bob.reed@westnet.com.au

Basil Parker
90711 128
basil.w.parker@gmail.com

Vice Chairman:

Mark Walter
0427 951 417
marknliv1@bigpond.com

Thomas Pengilly
0438 657 739
Penrosepollmeri
no@hotmail.com

Secretary/Treasurer:

Alan Hoggart
0428 320 755
alan.hoggart@bigpond.com

Dave Vandenberghe
0427 786 049

John Wallace
0428 383 606
wal272@bigpond.com

wattle-
dale@vandenberghepartner
s.com.au

Karl Witt
0488 717 678
karlandkatie@bigpond.com

Scott Welke
0427792044
scottwelke@bigpond.com

Todd Fiegert
0477 766 018
tagzh@outlook.com

Tim Starcevich
0448 896 960
timstarcevich@gmail.com

Executive Officer:

Emma Graham
0457 937 774
eo@asheep.org.au

Project Officers:

Anita Chalmer
0488 724 888
projects@asheep.org.au

Jolie Delroy
0427 756 049
pastures@asheep.org.au

Book keeper:

Jan Clawson
0407 990 497
janclawson@bigpond.com



asheep Esperance Spring Field Day

- Wednesday 3rd October 2018 -

All farmers are welcome to join **ASHEEP** on their Annual Spring Field Day.

- 10:00am** **Bus Departs Esperance Yacht Club**
- 11am** **John Wallace– Plowman Road**
Red clover disease testing results and aphid strip tests. Management and grazing of **Casbah Biserrula**.
- 12:45pm** **Lunch**
- 1:45pm** **Ron Yates DPIRD—Esperance Downs Research Station**
Vetch spray trial showing tolerances and effect on nodulation and herbage of the Imi's, atrazine and simazine.
- 3:15pm** **Nick Ruddenklau– The Oaks, Gibson-Dalyup Rd**
Silage production system with some numbers on cost of production and method of production. Current status of **clover production system**
Barloo vetch on acidic soil for fattening lambs.
- 4:45pm** **CSBP pasture fertilizer trial– Telegraph Rd (John Sharpe)**
Boston Whooley from CSBP will run through a trial on **response to P, K & Lime fertiliser** on a predominately rye grass pasture.
- 5:15 pm** **BBQ dinner & drinks in the paddock at John Sharpe's sheds**

\$15 registration fee

Registrations to Jan Clawson on 0407 990 497 or janclawson@bigpond.com

'Show us your Nods!' Competition

ALOSCA Technologies Pty Ltd



Bring along a legume pasture plant with the biggest and healthiest nodules you can find for your chance to be crowned the 2018 Nod King. **First prize winner will get a 500kg bulk bag of Alsoca (any group) kindly donated by Alosca.** Only plants commonly used for grazing are eligible.

ALOSCA Technologies Pty Ltd



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ASHEEP Projects Update

NYPA Forage

ASHEEP committee member Basil Parker secured some NYPA forage plant runners after seeing an impressive stand of the plant at Raymond Matthew's Wickopin property. NYPA is a salt tolerant perennial grass native to America. It may help regenerate salt scalded areas that are prone to water logging. There is the potential it could be a companion species to other salt tolerant plants such as salt bush and messina. Half acre plots were planted at two different locations by the ASHEEP committee & other volunteers. We will now monitor the progress of the NYPA. Thanks to the volunteers for getting the job done. Thanks to Raymond Matthews for the expertise and John Leake for supplying the NYPA plants.



Above- Karl Witt & Scott Welke using the Welke's 2-person tree planter to plant out the NYPA runners. The method worked well and meant the rest of the volunteers were relegated to supervisory roles.



Above- NYPA being planted into salty country the old fashioned way, with a shovel and some elbow grease



Above- A freshly planted NYPA runner

Funding- Funded by ASHEEP

Merinolink Flock DNA Profiling

ASHEEP Project Officer, Anita Chalmer, took tissue samples from 23 different ewe weaner flocks across the Esperance district as part of this project. The tissue samples were submitted to Sheep CRC for genomic analysis. The results gave each producer an overview of how their ewe flocks are performing in relation to the Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBV's). A workshop was held in August for the producers who had ewes tested to gain a good understanding of how to use their results to make breeding objectives and, based on that, to then make this year's ram buying decisions using the RamSelect system. The participants will have their ewe weaner flock tested again in 2021 to see what genetic progress has been made towards their set breeding objectives. The workshop was very well attended and everyone is eager to see what progress they have made in four year's time.

Right- Participants at the August workshop



Funding- Meat & Livestock Australia Donor Company

ASHEEP Projects Update- Wormboss Drench Resistance Testing Project

ASHEEP are involved with a project being run by Wormboss and the Uni of New England to conduct drench resistance testing on flocks in the Esperance area. The project covers the cost of the testing, you just need to supply 160 lambs. Initially producers are to conduct a worm egg count on their lambs (preferably pre-weaning). If the results come back above the required threshold (>200epg roundworms and 500epg barbers pole) ASHEEP project officers Anita & Jolie will come out to conduct the drench resistance test. Two weeks later another WEC will need to be done on those lambs. **If you are interested in being part of this project please contact Anita Chalmer on 0488 724 888.**

Funding– Funded by Australian Wool Innovation

What factors increase your risk of developing drench resistance?

- **Under-dosing:** it is important that sheep weights are correctly estimated and the dose is set to treat the heaviest in the group.
- **Frequency of use:** the more that worms are exposed to drenches, the greater the chances that resistant worms will survive. Drench use should be restricted to treat worm disease outbreaks or in preventative programs.
- **Long-acting drenches:** drench products that remove 'susceptible' (non-resistant) worms living in the gut and also kill incoming susceptible larvae from the pasture bias the population in favour of resistant worms that can survive the treatment. The benefits of protection from the effects of worms must be balanced against the risks of resistance and long-acting products should be used only in a planned program to ensure some non-resistant worms survive.
- **Use of less-effective drenches:** the more worms that survive a drench, the larger the number left to produce eggs and increase the resistant population. This is especially important where there are few worm larvae from non-resistant worms to dilute resistant types (see below).
- **Programs that allow only resistant worms to survive:** drenching onto 'worm safe pastures' where there is no pick-up of larvae from drench-susceptible worms allows the resistant worms that survive treatment to become the major source of future populations. In WA, the classic situation is with 'summer drenching', where the downside of good worm control is an increased risk of resistance. [Sheep worms – sustainable summer-autumn worm control](#) outlines recommendations to manage drench resistance while achieving good worm control.
- **Introduction from other properties:** worms with a higher level or different pattern of resistance can be imported from other farms. Sheep should always be drenched with a combination of several drench groups whenever they are moved onto a new property.

Drench group	Estimated prevalence of drench resistance
Table 1 Estimated prevalence of drench resistance in WA from recent DAFWA test records. (Resistance refers to less than a 95% reduction in worm egg count in a WECRT.) Note: *Teladorsagia: commonly known as black scour worm, previously named Ostertagia.	
BZ drenches (benzimidazole, white)	99% of WA properties
LEV drenches (levamisole, clear)	99% of WA properties
BZ/LEV combination drenches	80% of WA properties
Macrocyclic lactones (ML) : Brown stomach worm (<i>Teladorsagia</i> *) only-ivermectin (IVM)	At least 80% of WA properties
Macrocyclic lactones (ML) : Brown stomach worm (<i>Teladorsagia</i> *) only-abamectin (ABA)	At least 30% of WA properties
Macrocyclic lactones (ML) : Brown stomach worm (<i>Teladorsagia</i> *) only -moxidectin (MOX)	At least 20% of WA properties
ABA/BZ/LEV combination drenches: <i>Teladorsagia</i> * only	At least 5% of WA properties
Organo-phosphate (OP) plus BZ/LEV combination drenches	Less than 95% effective on 40% of WA properties and varies with worm type, but usually over 90% effective
Monepantel	No drench resistance known in WA
Derquantel-abamectin combination	No drench resistance known in WA
Closantel Barber's pole worm (<i>Haemonchus contortus</i>) only	Resistance in <i>Haemonchus</i> is common in northern New South Wales and south-east Queensland but not reported in WA

Source– DPIRD

ASHEEP projects update

Phosphorus Efficient Pastures Project

This trial involves applying 3 different rates of phosphorus (high, med & low) to serradella pastures on very low P country to see if there is a significant response in production of the serradella. The sites are located on sandy sites at Grass Patch & Neridup. The aim is to see if serradella can be productive with lower levels of P than is what is currently thought.

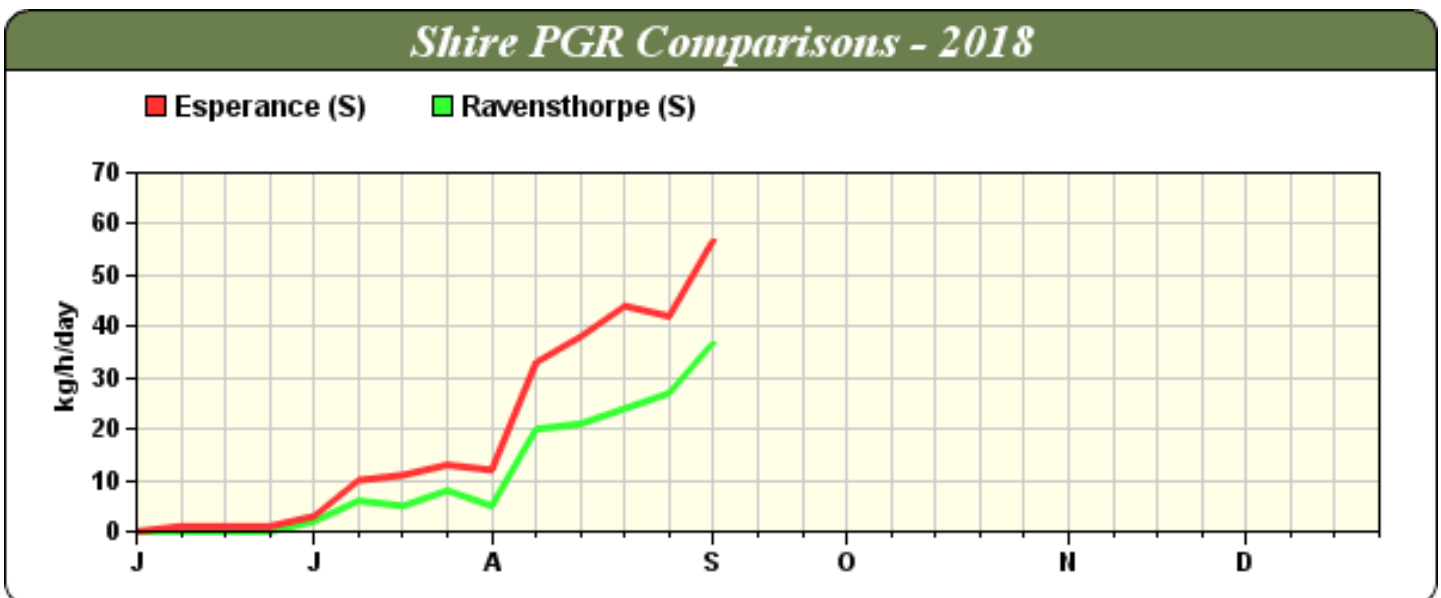
2018 season update- Both sites were cultivated at the start of the season to incorporate serradella pod that was sitting on the surface. Due to a very dry start there was not much germination of the Serradella at the traditional break. Some later rain caused a 2nd round of germination so we had plants at different growth stages which made picking the right time to do germination counts difficult and not reflective of the Serradella's regeneration due to a combination of it's hard seededness and staggered germination. More rain has since fallen and we are hoping to see some good data come from dry matter measurements taken later in the season. Cape weed is a continual issue and the site has been sprayed and mowed several times to try to control it. The phosphorus fertilizer treatments have been applied for the 2018 season and now we wait!

Funding– This project is supported by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources as part of its Rural R&D for Profit programme, Meat and Livestock Australia, Dairy Australia, Australian Wool Innovations Ltd, and the participating research organisations and farmer groups

Right- A photo showing Serradella competing with cape weed on sandy soil at the Grass Patch site after a very dry start. There is also a significant amount of pods still on the surface.



Esperance & Ravensthorpe Pasture Growth Rates





WORKSHOP INVITATION - ESPERANCE

WHERE: Glenn Quinlivan's Shearing Shed on Boydell Road, Gibson.

- If coming from the Coolgardie/Esperance Road end(East) on Boydell Road, travel for just over 6km(don't go off the bitumen), and on the right will be a set of double steel gates just before the creek crossing, the shearing shed is through the gates 150m.
- If coming from the West on Boydell Rd, go past Dwyer road and turn left immediately after getting on the bitumen a set of double steel gates will be on your left and the shearing shed is 150m in from the gate.

WHEN: Thursday, 27 September, 2018 from 8:30 am (9am Start) to 2:00 pm

PRESENTER: Dr David Swan, Principal Vet/Owner, Swans Veterinary Service.

COST: \$75 per person – including morning tea, lunch and workshop materials. Catering by Tiff Brown.

RSVP: ESSENTIAL – online at <https://sheepsback.com.au/events/>

WHAT WILL BE COVERED

- Importance of pre-joining ram preparation
- Ram anatomy and physiology
- Animal health – must do's
- Ram inspections – 4 T's (practical activity)
- Best practice ram management
- Timing of preparation
- Ram joining %
- Economics of ram purchases (why best practice pays off)

A practical, hands on and interactive workshop that will provide you with the most up to date information from experienced sheep veterinarians on how to optimise ram performance.

We hope to see you there – all welcome!



Phytoestrogens– not just a clover problem Can medics cause fertility problems in livestock?

There has been talk around the effect some older varieties of clover can have on ewe fertility due to their formononetin content (see ASHEEP newsletter #47 August 2017), however there is evidence that in some scenarios Medics can negatively affect ewe & heifer fertility as well. Locally, there has been anecdotal evidence of this effect recently and so this article will explore the issue more.

Phytoestrogens & Medics

In some scenarios legume pasture plants produce compounds that reduce reproductive performance in livestock when ingested at high enough levels. These compounds are called phytoestrogens and reduce reproductive performance by mimicking the hormone estrogen and interfering with the oestrus cycle. In clovers the phytoestrogen compounds produced are Isoflavones. In *Medicago* species, including medics and lucerne, the phytoestrogenic compounds are coumestans.

In green, healthy medic plants levels of coumestans are insignificant and will generally not have any effect on ewe fertility. The problem is with medic plants that are under stress, whether it be due to seasonal, nutritional, disease or pest factors. The levels of coumestans can increase to levels that will impact ewe fertility in these scenarios, especially as the plant is nearing senescence. In WA a small amount of testing was conducted from 1989 to 1992 and problematic levels of coumestans were detected in plants affected by fungal stem disease. Insignificant levels of coumestans were detected in medic pastures that were either healthy & still green or healthy before senescence.

Coumestans– the effect on fertility

Coumestans can suppress oestrus in sheep by interfering with the ovarian secretion of oestrogen. The number of twins conceived has also shown to be reduced when high levels of Coumestan are present. This can mask the effect on fertility because you may still get one lamb from that ewe, but had they not been affected by the phytoestrogen they would have conceived twins.

On the plus side this effect on fertility is temporary and can be avoided by not grazing ewes on stressed medic until after they have been joined. Maiden and young ewes are particularly susceptible to the effects of coumestans.

Heifers are also effected by coumestan compounds. When ingested at a high enough levels, heifer oestrus is suppressed and genital growth can be affected.

There is no definite figure for what level of coumestans need to be present in medic to produce an effect on livestock reproduction. However as a guide, anything containing over 100 parts per million of coumestan compounds can be a problem. The severity of the effects are related to the level of concentration in the plant. Pasture containing high levels of coumestan are shown to inhibit both oestrus and ovulation. Where as pasture with medium levels of coumestan are shown to only depress ovulation.

What can be done?

In the case of phytoestrogens in clovers, the impact has been reduced due to improved cultivars of clovers becoming available that produce much lower levels of Isoflavones. Unfortunately medics have not received the same attention and there are few varietal options available that have been bred to have reduced levels of coumestans. There is one new variety of strand medic, RM-250, developed by SARDI that has improved resistance to powdery mildew. The variety has shown to have a 10-fold reduction in coumestan levels compared to varieties susceptible to powdery mildew. This variety is also SU tolerant and will be available commercially in 2019.



Above– New strand medic variety RM-250 developed by SARDI. Image source- <http://sagit.com.au/projects/development-strand-medic-cultivar-resistant-powdery-mildew/>

Phytoestrogens– not just a clover problem Can medics cause fertility problems in sheep?

Due to the temporary nature of the infertility caused by medic it can be managed on-farm by not grazing ewes on stressed medic pre-joining. It is also suggested that pastures with higher levels of grasses and other fodder plants mixed in with medic can also reduce the risk to ewe fertility. Maiden and younger ewes are most susceptible so keep these animals off medic-dominated pastures until after joining if there are signs of stress in the medic.

The local scenario

Locally, reduced reproductive performance has been reported in medic paddocks affected by powdery mildew in the big medic years of 2015, 2016 and to a lesser extent 2017. The grower noticed poorer conception and increased prolapse in the young ewes in these paddocks compared to ewes in paddocks without stressed medic. Whilst this is a correlation and no causation was proven it did make the producer think about the timing of grazing of these paddocks with timing of joining. Any paddocks that showed signs of mildew or aphid stress were not grazed by ewes until after joining.

References-

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Crocker KP, Barbetti ML, Nichols PGH. (1994) Incidence of coumestrol on medic pastures in Western Australia. Proceedings of the Australian Society of Animal Production Biennial Conference.

For more information on RM-250 Medic contact-

Ross Ballard
SARDI
08 8303 9388
ross.ballard@sa.gov.au

WA Shearing Industry Association AGM update

The WA Shearing Industry Association held its AGM on 23rd of June 2018 and the minutes were provided to ASHEEP. The Association has had a busy year and they look to continue their work to better our shearing industry in the coming year.

Here are a couple of topics raised at the AGM that ASHEEP members may be interested in-

Shed Safety Program– The WASIA has developed a program proposal which was put to AWI for funding support in February. Part funding was provided by AWI in June 2018. The aim of the program is to-

- Improve conditions for shearing shed workers
- Improve compliance with modern workplace standards
- Reduce risk of injuries to workers
- Reduce insurance and worker's comp claims.

The first step of the program is develop & distribute surveys for shearers and farmers. The association will

also begin to develop shearing shed best practice guidelines and risk & hazard assessment criteria & tools.

OHS– A question was raised around asking employees for drug & alcohol tests. An insurance broker in attendance, Craig Shand, advised that as long as you have a drug & alcohol policy in place and you can prove that your employees are aware of it, you are able to request a drug & alcohol test from your employee. There are copies of drug and alcohol policies in the member area of the WASIA website. Contact the ASHEEP office for log in details.

For a full copy of the WASIA AGM minutes contact the ASHEEP office.

WASIA website- www.wasia.com.au



WA SHEARING INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION (INC)

Market Update: Wool Rabobank

Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger

*By Georgia Twomey, Rabobank
commodity analyst*



The growth in 'value' of the Australian wool industry has been exceptional in recent seasons. The 2017/18 season saw \$3.8 billion dollars of exports recorded, up 22 percent on the previous season, and the highest value of exports since 1994/95.

While current volumes of merino wool are low compared to the historical highs of the early 1990s, in the context of more recent times, total Australian wool production is only marginally below the average of the last eight seasons.

Fierce demand from early stage processors demonstrating a 'willingness to pay more' for apparel wool has been an important factor in the performance of the market through the last three seasons. The volume of wool shipped to China, Australia's largest market, lifted by four per cent and some 22 per cent by value in the 2017/18 season.

This ongoing demand is critical to underpinning prices and while current market conditions are set to get even tighter, prices are in uncharted territory so demand is certainly being tested.

As eyes turn to the 2018/19 season, dry conditions throughout eastern Australia will keep both shorn sheep and fleece weights constrained. Wool production nationally is forecast by the official Australian wool production forecast committee to be down some two per cent, however expectations are that their forecasts will be revised down further in coming weeks.

Locally, even though seasonal conditions in Western Australia have seen improvement in recent months, the eight per cent decline in WA wool

production in the 2017/18 season will be difficult to turnaround this season.

With limited supply coming into the market, price direction will remain in the 'hands of the buyers'. Early stage processing demand continues to show strength, with volumes to the key markets for Australian wool all boasting lifts through the 2017/18 season. While the signals from processors indicate the pipeline remains relatively empty, and demand will be maintained, there are some risk factors accumulating.

Trade figures for wool products to major import markets like the US and Japan remain subdued, despite improved appetite for textiles and apparel in those markets. China, the largest market for wool at retail is also one to watch. The opportunity of increasing consumer wealth is certainly a positive within this market, however uncertainty surrounding trade relations and ongoing economic growth will be important factors influencing demand for wool.

The other risk factor lies in wool's competitiveness. Positively other fibres have seen improved prices in the last couple of years, however not to the same degree as wool, making it increasingly important to demonstrate the value proposition of the wool fibre to users throughout the wool supply chain – a challenge faced by both growers and processors.

Overall, with the limited supply coming to market through the next season the outlook for merino wool prices remains positive. The risk factors accumulating at the far end of the supply chain though are important to watch, particularly if there is any slowdown in use of wool products.



For further information on Rabobank's latest research please contact Ryan Meldrum, Rabobank Esperance branch manager on (08) 9076 4200.

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Rural & Regional Esperance



Chris Wilson

Senior Relationship Manager

Mobile: 0429 102 322

Email: chris.wilson@bankwest.com.au

Rebecca Cole

Relationship Manager

Phone: 9072 3815

Email: rebecca.cole@bankwest.com.au



Peter Fox

Relationship Manager

Mobile: 0472 863 563

Email: peter.fox@bankwest.com.au

Vanessa Rui grok

Assistant Relationship Manager

Phone: 9072 3814

Email: vanessa.rui grok@bankwest.com.au

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Brydie Creagh

WA LTEM Coordinator

Mob: 0400 814 306

Email: bcreagh@rist.edu.au

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PO Box 2445, Esperance, WA 6450

Contact: Emma James Phone 0457 937 774 or Email: eo@asheep.org.au