GENSTOCK NEWS

AUTUMN 2021

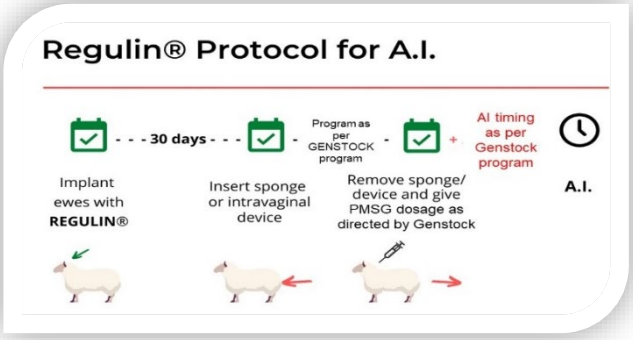
ANIMAL BREEDING & FLEECE TESTING SERVICES
PO Box 21 Kojonup Western Australia 6395
Phone (08) 9834 1038; Fax (08) 9834 1062
EMAIL info@genstock.com.au
WEBSITE: www.genstock.com.au

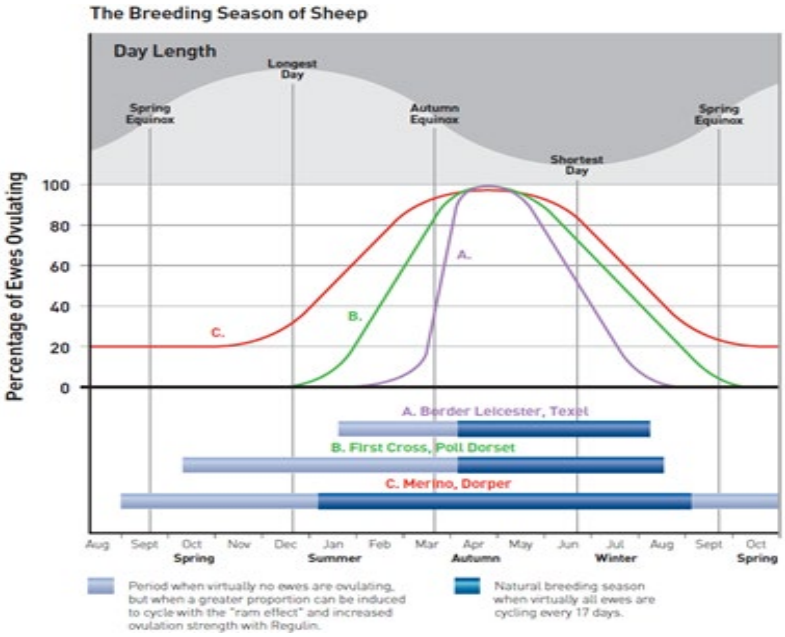
Melatonin Implants are shown to Improve Natural & AI Conception Rates

Regulin® is a small pellet that is implanted under the skin behind the ear in sheep & it releases Melatonin. Melatonin is a hormone the body releases as the day lengths shorten – thus mimicking the natural breeding season of sheep (as the day lengths shorten after the 22 December we progress towards the natural breeding season of sheep). Obviously British breed sheep are more seasonal than Merinos but studies have shown that we can have some effect in Merinos.

Numerous studies have shown that by implanting melatonin 40 days prior to joining or 30 days prior to CIDR insertion for an AI programme we can mimic the natural breeding of sheep and improve conception rates of "out of season" joining. There are different recommendations for different breeds and we advise you discuss with our team the best outcomes for your breed. Simon Kerin from the Ashbourne White Suffolk stud in Katanning reported 85% conception rate to natural service in December using Regulin® compared to 61% without. AI conception was 87% with 151% lambs.

The rams can also benefit from Regulin implants. Melatonin is a potent anti-oxidant and there are numerous studies demonstrating the positive effects on semen in rams that have melatonin implants. Genstock has recently been implanting rams with sub fertile semen with Melatonin implants. Semen has improved by next semen cycle.





A Word from Craig

International demand for sheep-meat products continues to be strong despite the COVID 19 pandemic. The cattle industry is at a decline to levels mainly due to restocking post drought. Recent heavy rains through NSW and QLD will only increase demand for restocking in both the sheep and beef industries.

AI and ET pregnancy scanning results are showing good conception rates this season, especially from clients utilising vasectomised rams pre-joining.

Due to restraints on international travel our vets are available for farm visits or tele-consults for any flock health concerns. Please contact us to arrange a suitable time or if you wish to book in some ram vasectomies prior to use next season.

Cheers

Craig

Teat Damage Affecting Lamb Rearing

Genstock vets are still noticing the evidence of teat damage from shearing / crutching. Once the tip of the teat is cut, the duct will seal over and that side of the udder is rendered useless.

On a cold night, if a new-born lamb does not suckle colostrum in the first 30 minutes, its chance of survival is reduced by 50 %. Obviously, a non-functional side to an udder diminishes the chances of survival and decreases the growth rate of that lamb due to obtaining only half a milk supply over the lactation period. For twin lambs the result is only exacerbated.

Because damaged teats are rarely visualised, the best way to remove these ewes from the flock is at weaning or lamb marking time. Wet/drying or palpation of the udder will detect any abnormalities and these ewes identified and then culled from the post weaning.

ATTENTION SHEARERS

OUR EWES' TEATS ARE IMPERATIVE TO REARING LAMBS. PLEASE TRY TO AVOID CUTTING THEM. WE WOULD PREFER TO LEAVE WOOL AROUND THE UDDER THAN TO HAVE CUT TEATS.
PLEASE IDENTIFY ANY EWES WITH DAMAGED TEATS OR AN ABNORMAL UDDER.
THANK YOU

We have these signs (60 x 45cm) available for sale @ $55 ex GST, for producers to hang in their shearing sheds to help highlight and hopefully improve this issue.

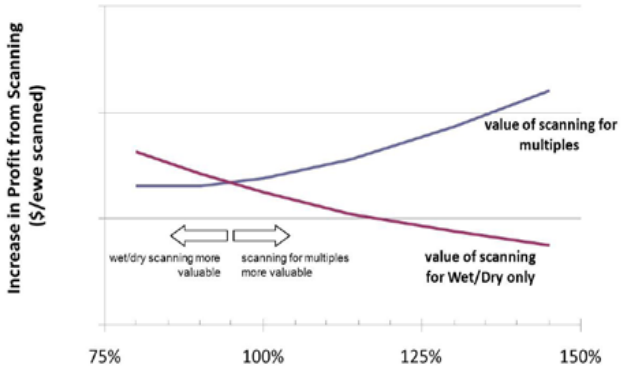
GENSTOCK: FOR WHEN RESULTS REALLY COUNT

Mercardo Report on Analysis of the National Sheep Flock

Historically the Merino sheep industry has been the mainstay of Australian broadacre farming, however it is no longer only option for many producers. Mecardo explored the shifts and analysed the trends in the Australian sheep flock. Traditionally the WA sheep flock has relied on wool and the live export of Merino wethers for sustainable revenue. The Mecardo study suggested that in WA there is a risk of a continued move away from wool/sheepmeat production towards cropping, which could lead to less diversity of the income stream for farming enterprises in WA. The factors that have a key role in determining the future growth or decline in the WA sheep sector are price consistency/reliability, supply chains reliability, seasonal conditions and access to services (such as shearing teams and transport operators). As new regulatory measures provide greater assurances on trade access and there is security in financial returns there is the potential to maintain producer confidence in their sheep enterprise. MLA is continuing to work with industry to invest in research & development, marketing and market access to ensure the WA sheep industry has access to diversified markets. It is important for the WA sheep industry that producers have access to as many markets and channels as possible to ensure healthy competition and a more robust and resilient industry. If the demand indicators are correct (domestically, internationally, and also in the live export trade) and the seasons are favourable there is a positive outlook for the WA sheep industry.

Pregnancy Scanning

The benefits from determining pregnancy status relies on the proportion of drys, singles and twins in the mob. As the scanning rate (foetuses/100 ewes) increases, the benefit of scanning for multiples increases compared to the benefit of scanning for just wet/dry. Above 90% scanning (90 foetuses/100 ewes joined) the value of scanning for multiples becomes higher than the benefit for scanning on wet/dry alone. Please contact us if you wish to inquire or book in some Pregnancy scanning this season.



Source: Making More From Sheep

Keep an Eye on Stock Water Supply

As water supply for the state continues to be tight it is important, we continue to monitor the quality of the water supplied to our stock. If the water quality is poor stock may drink less than they need and as a consequence, they will eat less and lose condition. Often in WA we have issues with water salinity. Livestock have no adverse effects when water has TDS (Salinity of water) 4000 mg/L, however we need to take into consideration the feed animals are receiving, such as grazing dry feed or salt bush or a high salt diet compared with grazing green feed which will dilute the salinity levels of the water. Sheep grazing lush green feed can tolerate a lot higher salinity levels and sheep can adapt to gradual changes in salinity levels. As levels of water get low, we also need to consider water contamination, such as blue green algae.

In recent months we have post mortemed stock poisoned by water contaminated with blue green algae and their toxins. Blue-green Algae can produce blooms appearing like iridescent green paint or curdled greenish milk on the surface of the water. Algae multiply rapidly in shallow still water when water is contaminated with plant nutrients (organic and faecal matter and phosphorus). The toxicity can change rapidly, especially if the algae dies, and some toxins can persist for more than 3 months before being degraded. Blue green algae can produce neurological signs and/or liver damage (jaundice, photosensitisation, ill thrift). As the clinical signs are similar to reportable diseases, we recommend having a post-mortem performed and we can often claim this under the significant disease investigation scheme- meaning a majority of costs are covered by the government.

Water can also be contaminated by faecal matter or run off which can also result in lowered production, disease, and deaths, such as Salmonellosis. If you are concerned by possible water contamination, please do not hesitate to contact our staff to discuss options for testing and or managing the risk.

Other Water considerations.

- Cloudy or muddy water can be a nuisance, but it rarely harms livestock.
- Large paddocks: When feed is dry and paddocks are large (greater than 100 hectares), two watering points or a moveable trough will allow better use of the entire paddock, reduce localised erosion risk, and allow better animal performance.
- Warm water: Stock avoid warm water in hot weather, so deeper or shaded water sources will generally be preferred. Pipes carrying water above ground may deliver extremely hot undrinkable water to troughs.
- Large mobs on troughs: With large mobs of sheep (more than 600), the tail of the mob may not drink enough water before the sheep move away. The flow rate in troughs needs to be sufficient to keep water in the trough while all sheep drink. Allow at least one metre of trough per 130 sheep.
- Finding water, recognising troughs: Sheep not used to water troughs may take time to learn to drink from them. Young sheep are less adept at finding water so always push them onto water in a new paddock.

Pain Relief Options for Lamb Marking

This season we wanted to provide our clients with information on pain relief products to enable them to make an educated decision when determining which products will best fit in their management systems. We have attended various producer days, hosted a free online webinar and talked at various agricultural colleges in WA.

We know that there is no difference between treated and untreated in weaning weights due to the compensatory growth in lambs but there is more to the equation than weaning weights, such as mortality, immune competence, and longer-term growth. More studies are required to quantify this.

Consumers know that lamb and wool are amazing products, we do not need to sell this to consumers. We need to give the modern consumer confidence that they are making a responsible decision when purchasing our products. The story we should be promoting to the consumers is that Australian sheep producers are the world leaders in the adoption of pain relief in sheep production enterprises.

Below are some comments from some of our clients in regard to using these products;

Emily Stretch (Kojonup) – Non-mulesed Merino Flock – ***"Applying Numnuts® on testicles doesn't slow our marking operation down, however, it takes time to get used to a different motion with the Numnuts® device. The device does release far more easily on small testicles. We will be making Numnuts® a standard application for testicles on all lambs born on farm. Why?.... we have seen how quickly lambs mother up with no testicle pain. Less time off the ewe means less chance of mis-mothering or growth reductions."***

Audrey Bird (Wickepin) – Merino flock & Prime Lamb flock – ***"We have used pain relief on the marking cradle for the past two years and consider it normal practice now. The prime lambs in our flock receive two different types of pain relief. First we use Numnuts® on the tail and testicles. The Numnuts® dramatically reduces the wether lambs lying on the ground thrashing about in pain. Secondly we use the oral Buccalgesic® to assist with the pain over the next few days. The mulesed lambs receive the Buccalgesic®, Numuts® on testicles and then Trisolfen® on the wound. We have observed better mothering up and better ease of walking back to their paddocks."***

Steven Bolt (Corrigin) – Merino Stud and Commercial Flock **- *"This season we added Buccalgesic® to our lambing marking procedures so that our lambs received a combination of short acting pain relief from Tri-solfen® and the longer acting pain relief from Buccalgesic®. We found it easy to administer and it did not slow down the lamb marking process. As we were still feeding ewes after lamb marking, I took daily videos of our lambs post marking and I was impressed in how they recovered from marking with the addition of Buccalgesic® in our program. For me, the investment in the two modes of pain relief is well worth it with the production gains from better mothering up outcomes, wool growth and growth rates in my lambs."***

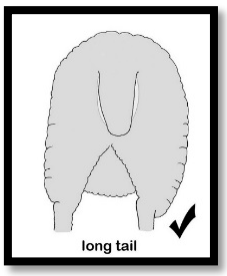
Brand	Buccalgesic®	Metacam 20®	Tri-Solfen®	Numocaine®
Type of drug	Anti-inflammatory	Anti-inflammatory	Local Anaesthetic	Local Anaesthetic
Docking / Castration	Yes	Yes	Knife only	Ring only
Mulesing	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Time to effect	From 15 minutes	From 15 minutes	<1 minute	<1 minute
Duration	48+ hours	48+ hours	8+ hours	2+ hours
Application method	Oral	Injection	Spray application	Injection
Vet prescription	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Meat WHP	10 days	11 days	90 days	0 days
Cost ex GST per 15kg lamb	$0.45-$0.63	$0.70 - $1.00	$0.79 - $1.05	$0.60 per dose

OPTIONS FOR PAIN RELIEF	
RINGS (tail & castration)	Numnuts® Numnuts® + Anti-inflammatory (Buccalgesic® or Metacam20®)
HOT KNIFE (tail) and RINGS (castration)	Numnuts® Anti-inflammatory (Buccalgesic® or Metacam20®) Numnuts® + Anti-inflammatory (Buccalgesic® or Metacam20®)
HOT KNIFE (tail) and KNIFE (castration)	Tri-solfen® Anti-inflammatory (Buccalgesic® or Metacam20®) Tri-solfen® + Anti-inflammatory (Buccalgesic® or Metacam20®)
MULESING	Trisolfen® Trisolfen® + Anti-inflammatory (Buccalgesic® or Metacam20®)

Tail Length & Fly Strike

Studies on the tail length of sheep in Australia have been occurring since the 1930s. They have widely demonstrated that the preferred length of docking is the 4th joint or 9 to 10cm long tail that extended just below the natural border of bare area.

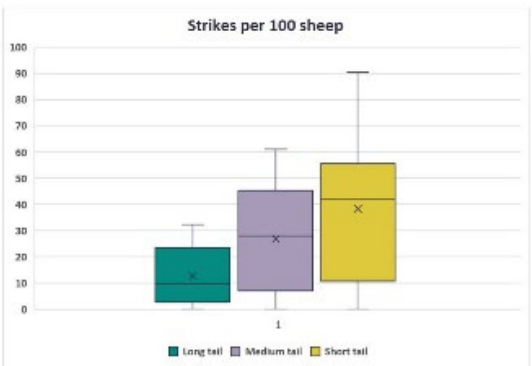
The shorter tail length ewes are 3 times more likely to become struck than ewes with a longer tail. The longer tail diverts the urine and loose faecal matter away from the animal and can reduce the incidence of fly strike.



Studies have also demonstrated delayed healing in shorter docked tails. The recent studies have showed an association between short tail length and bacterial arthritis.

Long tail = **decreased fly strike**, **decreased arthritis** post marking**, decreased risk rectal prolapse** (especially if coughing from dust or pneumonia) and **decreased risk of skin cancer**.

Source: Dr Joan Lloyd



Pre-Lambing Confinement Feeding

With the late breaks and lack of pasture growth we have seen a lot of our clients implement confinement feeding of pregnant ewes prior to lambing. Confinement feeding does have many advantages - preventing soil erosion, reduced labour costs associated with feeding mobs, allowing the pasture density to increase after the break, more targeted feeding regimes and preventing sheep expending their energy requirements with chasing the green pick. This can add an additional 10-40% energy depending on the grazing conditions.

There are several health considerations that should be addressed to ensure you are maximising your gains from confinement feeding.

1. Ensure adequate roughage. Diets in confinement require a minimum of 10-15% effective fibre to stimulate the rumen, encourage chewing of cud, rumen motility and reduce the risk of acidosis. Straw or low digestibility hay can be used and ideally 1 to 1,5kg per head per day is usually ideal. We advise feeding the roughage prior to feeding grain or pellets to minimise the risk of acidosis. We have also seen several cases of Vitamin B1 (Thiamine deficiency) – Star gazing, associated with prolonged grain feeding with inadequate roughage and also in cases of sudden changes in diet or a stress event (such as a bad weather event).
2. Pre-confinement booster vaccination for prevention of Pulpy Kidney and other clostridial diseases.
3. Ensure clean and adequate water (4-6L per sheep per day). If the water gets contaminated, you will see a reduction in water intake.
4. Try to have confinement location where stock can be protected from the sun and wind (if available trees or sheds outside can reduce the wind). Last year in the pre-lambing season we saw a lot of cases of pink eye in stock in confinement.
5. Split ewes into pregnancy status groups for confinement feeding to target their nutritional requirements. In the last 6 weeks of pregnancy if there is inadequate energy intake ewes are at risk of Pregnancy toxaemia. Fat twin bearing ewes are the most at risk and events can be precipitated by severe weather conditions, sudden changes in diet and periods of time when ewes are off feed. We recommend keeping either Ketol® or Ceton® on hand so you can readily treat any ewes that are suspected of having pregnancy toxaemia.
6. Calcium supplementation. Ewes on long term grain feeding (> 6 weeks) are at risk of hypocalcaemia. Other risk factors include a stress event, twin bearing ewes, and ewes with low or high body condition scores. As ewes greater than 5 years of age are more susceptible due to the depletion of the calcium in their bones after multiple lambings, we have seen more producers selling on ewes that are greater than 5 years of age. The susceptibility to ewes to Hypocalcaemia increases from about 6 weeks prior to lambing to about 3 to 4 weeks after lambing. During the last few weeks of gestation, the lambs skeleton is mineralising. We recommend adding 1 to 1.5% limestone to grain or having a loose lick available ad lib to ewes (1-part salt to 2-parts finely ground limestone). Both hypocalcaemia and sub-clinical hypocalcaemia (when we do not see any outward signs of disease) have supressed rumen and abomasal motility and appetite, thus are predisposed to pregnancy toxaemia. Hypocalcaemia also predisposes ewes to other conditions such as dystocias, mastitis, retained placenta, and uterine infections.
7. Before placing ewes in confinement, we recommend assessing the worm status of the ewes with faecal egg count, and if required, drench ewes with an effective drench.
8. If feeding in troughs raise them above the ground to reduce faecal contamination. Similarly, use hay racks or sound large bales to prevent contamination. In several instances we have had cases of abortion due to Salmonella and other bacteria due to the bacteria load in confinement situations.

There also need to be considerations when transitioning pregnant ewes onto pasture to minimise any animal health issues as well as ensuring wool quality is not affected.

1. Assess paddock conditions to ensure sufficient Feed on Offer (FOO), pasture growth and pasture quality. Ewes in late pregnancy should not be released from confinement without supplementation until there is a minimum of 1000kg DM/ha of pasture available (a higher FOO is desirable for twin bearing ewes).
2. We recommend you continually review your plan by assessing your pasture growth so that you can remove animals from confinement as soon as possible.
3. Ideally, have your twin bearing ewes going to maximum FOO paddocks as close as possible to confinement to reduce the risk of stress induced pregnancy toxaemia and hypocalcaemia.
4. Provide access to ad lib good quality hay prior to releasing to minimise risk and animals gorging when released and subsequently dying from Clostridial diseases. If ewes have not received a booster vaccination in the previous 3 months we highly recommend vaccinating ewes at least 10 days prior to release from confinement. Maybe consider releasing ewes later in the day after they have fed.
5. It may be worthwhile considering releasing ewes in the initial 5 day period for short periods each day to control their intake and then increase grazing by half an hour each day. Alternatively, the confinement ration can be continued in the paddock to allow time for the rumen to adjust to the pasture over a 1 week period.
6. Any change in diet to a lush pasture with a low dry matter content can reduce calcium absorption associated with the increased flow rate of digesta. We recommend having loose lick available to ewes and producers to consider adding Caumag or Dolomite to the mix (A mix of 40:40:20 – Causmag or Dolomite: Lime: Salt).

To optimize your outcomes from confinement feeding, it is recommended that the feed intake is controlled per animal based on their nutritional requirements <u>rather</u> than adlib feeding. If you are considering confinement feeding please call our veterinarians for advice.