



# Central West Farming Systems

FARMERS ADVANCING RESEARCH

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## YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

### Mulesing management for wool growers in Australia

Mulesing has been a controversial topic for some time with pressure from animal liberation/welfare bodies to have the industry make changes to its' current practices and formulate ways to reduce the impact of flystrike to sheep in a humane manner.

This is not an easy problem to resolve and breeding bare breeched merinos is not a short term solution but it may be one of the choices that we have is to look to with genetics for our answers.

DWA researchers Dr Johan Greeff And John Karlsson said that while they believed that it was possible to breed sheep less susceptible to breech strike, there was little hard information available.<sup>1</sup> Other factors that have to be considered when utilising genetic technology in this area is to ask the question of what impact the technology will have on other production traits and how.

Other flystrike control methods under investigation at present, are the use of protein injections. A collagen related protein applied to the breech area causes the treated skin to contract and cease growing wool. The testing for this treatment is being lead by Professor Phil Hynd at the University of Adelaide.<sup>2</sup> An injectable solution is likely to be available by 2008 with a method that will not require the attendance of a vet and can be carried out on farm.

A photosensitising compound that bleaches in response to a light source has been trialled but has proven to be uncommercial due to handling issues and the cost of the light source required.

Pain relief is another angle being used to lessen the pain of mulesing, reduce blood loss and speed healing. This is a restricted product and requires the veterinary surgeon to supply the product under a permit system. This product is currently available and allows us to demonstrate to our detractors that we are actively pursuing other avenues when it comes to flystrike prevention. There is a cost involved which adds to the cost of the exercise per lamb but it is reputed that the lambs seem to experience less discomfort than those not treated and therefore resume feeding more quickly hence reducing the weight loss associated with mulesing.

Ongoing trials are being done with clips to take up the excess skin around the breach and tail, this method should be due for commercial release next year. The skin is clipped and when the excess skin falls off the lamb is left with only a low raised scar. There are reports of a 2kg weight advantage with clipped lambs over conventionally mulesed lambs 7 weeks after the process has been carried out. This method is bloodless so may have other advantages over conventional mulesing methods.

There is no simple and immediate solution to the ongoing problems associated with fly strike but with continued innovations such as those suggested above we are moving towards a more sustainable and less controversial means of control/prevention of flystrike within our wool industry.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.woolisbest.com/latest\\_news/2005/13\\_10\\_genetics\\_solution.htm](http://www.woolisbest.com/latest_news/2005/13_10_genetics_solution.htm)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.prnewswire.co.uk/cgi/news/release?id=131619>

