Animal Welfare Priorities and Programs for Extensively Raised Sheep

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Today’s Presentation

• Animal Health & Welfare Strategic Plan
  – Economics of disease
  – Identification of priority welfare issues
• Projects to address high priority welfare issues
• Projects to address other welfare issues
Economic modelling

- Modelled at the margin
- ABS 2001 numbers
- Stop at farm gate (excludes zoonosis, regulation)
- Annual average costs
- Flock/herd average cost
- 10 yr average prices
### Diseases of sheep in Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High economic impact</th>
<th>Medium economic impact</th>
<th>Low economic impact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abortion and stillbirth</td>
<td>Caseous lymphadenitis</td>
<td>Clostridial disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arthritis</td>
<td>Fluke</td>
<td>Dermatophilosis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blowfly</td>
<td>Foot abscess/Footrot</td>
<td>Grain poisoning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lice</td>
<td>Redgut</td>
<td>Hypocalcaemia/pregnancy toxaemia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ovine Johnes disease</td>
<td>Scabby mouth</td>
<td>Mycoplasma ovis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peri-natal mortality</td>
<td>Trace element deficiency</td>
<td>Nitrate poisoning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plant poisons</td>
<td>Yersinia</td>
<td>Ovine brucellosis, actinobacilosis</td>
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<td>Post-weaning mortality</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pneumonia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scouring</td>
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<td>Worms</td>
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National cost of disease to the sheep industry

The cost of peri-natal lamb mortality represents the return to industry for a 10% increase in lamb survival.
Attitudes of animal welfare representatives to Australian sheep welfare issues
Attitudes of producers to Australian sheep welfare issues

- Parasite control
- Mulesing
- Tail docking
- Stockmanship
- Shelter
- Predation
- Feeding
- Curfew
- Ground transport
- Castration
- Preslaughter stunning
- Mustering
- Sea transport

Relative importance (%)
Common issues

• Both groups ranked the same four issues within the top priorities
• Both groups ranked mulesing and parasite control in the top three issues
• Both groups ranked tail docking and shelter in the top five issues
Animal Health & Welfare Strategic Plan 2007-12

Program Goal

• AWI will successfully address current and future animal welfare related issues, including:

  – By December 2008 100% of woolgrowers who conventionally mules their own sheep will have had access to the accreditation training package through the National Mulesing Accreditation Program
  – By 2010 100% of woolgrowers who previously carried out surgical mulesing will have adopted a new technology for breech fly strike control
  – By 2012, 30% of woolgrowers will have increased neonatal and weaner lamb survival to at least 85%

• By 2012, 30% or 12,000 woolgrowers and 200 service providers will have adopted an AWI innovation that has reduced the national on-farm economic impact of internal and external parasites by $100 million annually
Animal Health & Welfare Program Budget

- Improved control of parasites: 40%
- Improved control of non-parasitic diseases: 10%
- Improved welfare outcomes: 50%

Total budget 2007-08 $4.5m
Today’s Presentation

• Results of MLA survey of perceptions of animal welfare
• Animal Health & Welfare Strategic Plan
• Projects to address high priority welfare issues
• Projects to address lower priority welfare issues
Mulesing

Aim

• Improve and replace current mulesing practices through a combination of accreditation, new products and breeding options
National Mulesing Assurance Program (NMAP)

A positive initiative demonstrating that Australian woolgrowers are committed to the highest standard of animal welfare.
National Mulesing Assurance Program (NMAP)

Important as part of discussions with retailers
Now a requirement in the national animal welfare codes
Progressing well – over 700 accredited
Welfare study

Conclusion for clips

“…the clip treatment has only a mild impact on the biology of lambs and thus the welfare risks are considered relatively minor…”
Parasite Control

Aim
• Develop new extension materials, tools and products for use by woolgrowers and their advisors to reduce the economic impact of internal and external parasites

Projects
• Extension of IPM strategies
• Improved test to monitor worm burdens in sheep
• Fungal bio-pesticide for control of lice
• Identification of novel targets for development of new anthelmintics and insecticides
• Lice detection test
Shelter

• Issue raised by both producers and welfare groups

• Important for the survival of ewes and lambs, especially during inclement weather

• Addressed through lamb and weaner survival program in new Sheep CRC
Tail Docking

• Essential for flystrike control
• Most recent survey of Australian sheep producers in 2002
  – 50% sheep docked with rubber ring
  – 27% sheep docked with gas knife
  – 22% sheep docked by knife or shears
  – 52% dock at recommended joint
• Welfare outcome (behaviour and cortisol)
  – Gas knife > rings > knife
Tail Docking (cont’d)

• Phasing out of mulesing presents an opportunity to improve tail docking
• As part of development of alternatives to mulesing AWI has developed a modified gas knife
• Use of this and improved technique will be promoted alongside the mulesing alternatives
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The breeding ewe plays a pivotal role in the wool production system.

It makes good sense to have her in the right condition at the right time as her condition affects:

- reproduction levels and lamb survival
- wool production of herself and her progeny
- pasture utilisation and efficient use of feed resources

lifetimewool has a series of ewe and pasture targets that increase productivity and profitability of the Merino sheep enterprise for regions across southern Australia.

www.lifetimewool.com.au
Ewe condition at lambing and lamb survival

Graph showing the relationship between ewe condition score at lambing and lamb survival rate. The graph compares single lambs and twins lambs, with higher ewe condition scores associated with higher lamb survival rates.
Predation by foxes and feral dogs

• Ranked highly as a welfare issue by producers
• Estimated to cost >$30m annually
• AWI will continue to work with the Invasive Animals CRC for a more humane toxicant to replace 1080
Summary

• AWI’s Animal Health & Welfare Strategic Plan aims to reduce economic cost of disease and to address priority welfare issues
• Some conditions are both of high economic cost and a welfare issue
• Generally speaking, producers and welfare groups are in agreement as to the high priority welfare issues
• AWI is making progress in several areas, including alternatives to mulesing, improved parasite control, tail docking, ewe nutrition and predation