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Case Report-Cowpea Aphid Photosensitization

In early May this year we had a call from a concerned producer who was noticing ewes and lambs with swollen, droopy ears and general lethargy. The ewes were grazing lucerne and were currently lambing when the outbreak started.

On arrival to the property we were able to examine two affected lambs which had obvious signs of photosensitisation. A pasture walk was performed and a large burden of Cowpea aphids were identified on the lucerne.

What is photosensitisation? Photosensitisation is inflammation of the skin and ocular structures caused by the ingestion of material containing photosensitising substances or secondary to liver damage. In this case the photosensitisation was caused by the presence of Cowpea aphids which contain a photodynamic agent. The sheep inadvertently consume the aphids whilst grazing the lucerne resulting in the outbreak described.

Signs of photosensitization include:

- Irritation, restlessness. Shaking/rubbing face and ears.
- Shade seeking
- Swelling of ears, eyelids, lips and nose.
- Crusty/shedding skin on tips of ears, face and bare skin areas.
- Lameness

Treatment:

Stock showing signs of photosensitisation should be removed from the paddock they are grazing and ideally be provided with shade. Depending on the type and cause of photosensitisation recovery may take anywhere from 4 days-6 weeks.

If you are concerned that your stock are showing signs of photosensitisation please get in touch with the clinic. One of our production animals vets can help in determining the cause of photosensitisation and provide management and grazing advice to help manage outbreaks and prevent ongoing issues from occurring.

On the Lookout: What to look out for.

Mineral Management: Sheep and cattle are prone to both calcium and magnesium deficiency which can lead to recumbency and death. In ewes, calcium deficiency/milk fever often occurs 4-6 weeks pre-lambing up until lambing whereas in cattle hypocalcaemia is more common following calving due to high calcium requirements associated with milk production. Calcium deficiency causes animals to become weak and unable to rise but may also present as sudden death.

Grass Tetany/Hypomagnesaemia often affects animals in peak lactation (6-8 weeks post calving/lambing). In the early stages of disease animals may appear agitated or aggressive. As disease progresses or in the more acute form animals are found recumbent, seizing or dead.

Our production animal vets can help in the diagnosis of mineral deficiencies through examining clinically affected animals, taking blood tests from live animals or ocular fluid (eye fluid) from animals that have died.

Mineral deficiencies can be prevented through supplementing with mineral products (containing Ca, Mg, salt) as well as through the provision of hay. Our vets can help you to perform a property/mob risk assessment to determine your risk of mineral deficiency as well as advise on supplementation options. We can also advise on longer term grazing strategies/pasture management to reduce your likelihood of mineral deficiency.

Worms, Worms and more Worms: As conditions become cold and wet our scour worm species start to ramp up. Due to summer rainfall events and an early break to the season worm burdens are likely to be high coming into winter this year. At this time of the year we should be WEC ewes prior to marking and weaning and drenching ewes if WEC exceeds 200epg. When collecting faeces ensure that ewe pellets are collected separately from lambs (ewe pellets are much larger) as collecting lamb pellets may exaggerate worm counts. Lambs should not be routinely drenched at lamb marking as it is unlikely that burdens would have had time to accumulate. Unnecessary drenching will not only cost time and money but will also increase the likelihood of drench resistance developing. The weaning drench is a routine drench and should always be administered. Lambs should be drenched with a multi active, short acting drench prior to movement into a clean, low risk worm pasture.

Footrot: With the forecast for warmer than average winter conditions footrot expression is likely to be earlier than usual. Get on the front foot by discussing your footrot management program with one of our production animal vets.

Pain Relief for lamb marking:

Product	Formulation	Time to effect	Duration of action
Buccalgescic	Oral gel. Given into mouth	15 minutes	Approx 3 days
Metacam	Injectable (Under skin)	15minutes	Approx 3 days
Tri-Solfen	Spray on product	<1 minute	Approx 24 hours
NumOcaine	Injectable local anaesthetic injected into castration site.	<1 minute	2 hours

Pain relief at lamb marking helps to reduce pain and inflammation and supports return to normal behaviours. This results in continued weight gain and a stronger immune system. Lambs that receive pain relief at marking show less pain associated behaviours (vocalisation, laying down) and have improved weight gains compared to those that do not receive pain relief.

There are numerous pain relief options which are summarised in the table above.

Buccalgescic is an oral anti-inflammatory product that contains the active ingredient meloxicam. It is administered into the cheek pocket of the lamb. Buccalgescic takes about 15 minutes to take effect and lasts for approximately 3 days. It is a systemic product so will provide pain relief for all marking activities (tail docking, castration, muelsing etc).

Metacam 20 is an injectable anti-inflammatory product that also contains meloxicam. It is given under the skin, similar to a vaccination. Metacam 20 takes about 15 minutes to take effect and lasts for approximately 3 days. It is a systemic product so will provide pain relief for all marking activities (tail docking, castration, muelsing etc).

Tri-Solfen can be applied to open wound sites (tail docking, mulesing and surgical castration). It contains a mixture of local anaesthetic, disinfectant and adrenaline (to help reduce blood loss). It is commonly used as part of the mulesing process and is effective for up to 24hours after application.

Numocaine/Numnuts is the newest product available and is a ring applicator that applies a standard rubber ring at the same time as injecting local anaesthetic into the area. It can be used for castration and tail docking of lambs (if a ring is used). Being a local anaesthetic, it provides immediate pain relief, however its effects will wear off after about 2 hours, so it is best combined with another form of pain relief (e.g meloxicam product).

If you would like any more information on these products or would like assistance to develop a pain management plan for your operation please feel free to call the clinic and ask to talk to one of our production animal vets.



Upcoming Events

Client Night: Our next Production Animal client night will be on weaner nutrition and grazing lucerne as well as Biosecurity and the importance of having a Biosecurity plan for your property. We will be running this session in the coming few months so keep a look out for more information.

Consultancy Packages: We are now offering a variety of sheep consultancy packages through the clinic so if this is something you may be interested in please contact the clinic for more information. These packages include: 'the basics' annual consultancy package, whole farm annual consultancy package as well as more targeted services including: trace mineral profiling, pneumonia investigation and management and footrot management.