

“DERMO” MYCOTIC DERMATITIS IN SHEEP

What is it?

Mycotic dermatitis is an infectious disease caused by an organism somewhat resembling both a bacteria and a fungus - *Dermatophilus congolensis*. This organism proliferates in warm moist conditions. It has a “motile” spore – an infectious stage that is able to swim about enabling rapid spread in moist conditions.

The organism is often present on the skin of normal sheep without causing disease. The normal wax layer on the skin of mature sheep is usually protective. This wax layer is incomplete in lambs and may otherwise be damaged by various management procedures e.g. shearing or dipping. Such a breach of the wax layer combined with warmth, moisture and close contact may lead to outbreak.

Infected sheep will show scabby lumps in the fleece starting at skin level and extending up with fleece growth. Up to 80% of infected sheep will self-cure. Otherwise the scabs may coalesce into complete plaques. The scabs may prevent shearing by simple physical obstruction. Severe cases may be debilitating to the sheep.

Important facts

- highly contagious infectious condition
- aided by warm moist conditions
- infection is at skin level, with wool growth carrying the scab out into the fleece
- the scab contains infectious spores that cannot be reached by antibiotics

Control Program

- treat with antibiotics six to eight weeks prior to shearing. This will allow time for wool growth to lift the scabs from the skin permitting shearing. See the following section for antibiotic type and dosage.
- isolate the affected sheep into a hospital mob if possible.
- at shearing, draft off affected sheep and shear them last. Disinfect the board after they have been shorn if you cannot leave them until last. The counting pens are the most likely point of spread
- if dipping, use a disinfectant and dip affected sheep last. Zinc Sulphate at 4kg per 1000 litres will control the spread of the organism. Dipping with disinfectants WILL NOT actually treat the condition.

Antibiotics – either

1. Penicillin as a single intramuscular dose

Lambs	6mls
Weaners	8mls
Adults	10 – 12mls

2. Oxytetracycline – medium or long acting forms – 1ml per 10kg bodyweight into the muscle as a single dose.

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