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F. C. Wilkinson

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GLYCERINE for PREGNANCY TOXAEMIA...

By F. C. WILKINSON, B.V.Sc., Government Veterinary Surgeon

A DAILY dose of 4 to 6 oz. of glycerine mixed with an equal quantity of water and given as a drench will often cure pregnancy toxaemia ("twin lamb disease") especially if given as soon as the earliest symptoms are observed.

Recent research work has shown that pregnancy toxaemia is primarily a brain disorder, caused by a decrease in the quantity of blood sugar supplied to the brain.

The blood sugar level of ewes that are heavy in lamb falls rapidly if they are starved or underfed, even for short periods. If it falls to such an extent that the amount of sugar reaching the brain in the blood-stream is insufficient for the proper working of that organ, the brain is affected and may sustain permanent damage.

SYMPTOMS

The portions of the brain which are responsible for preserving "consciousness" have the greatest sugar needs and are the first to be affected.

Consequently, in the early stages of the disease, affected ewes appear "dopey"—dull and dazed, usually separating from the flock and moving slowly and aimlessly. In this condition they may be approached or even touched before making any attempt to move away.

If driven, they move with a stiff unsteady gait and may fall down and be unable to rise without assistance.

Complete or partial blindness, grinding of the teeth and a thick mucous discharge from the nostrils are other common symptoms.

At more advanced stages of the disorder, the ewes go down and remain in a comatose condition until death occurs.

TREATMENT

The treatment aims to raise the blood sugar level to normal or above normal and to maintain it at a high level for some time.

Four to six ounces of glycerine with an equal quantity of water should be given as a drench every day until the symptoms disappear.

If treatment is commenced while the sheep is still able to stand there may be about 90 per cent. recovery.

If the animal is down and unable to rise, it has usually been affected for five or six days and the brain may have suffered irreparable damage.

If the animal is down in the normal position—on the breast—it will have a better chance of recovery than if it is lying on its side with legs outstretched.

Gentle handling in treatment is essential especially when drenching sheep, as it is quite easy under these circumstances for the drench to reach the lungs and so cause pneumonia.

The treated animals should be provided with readily available shade and water and when back on to their feed, plenty of easily digestible carbohydrate such as cereal grains must be available to maintain the blood sugar at the normal level. Care must be taken, however, where cereal grains are continuously available, as some animals may consume excessive amounts, which can lead to digestive disorders.
Where the disease occurs on good feed and there appear to be no obvious predisposing causes, driving for half an hour a day may help to reduce the incidence. The exercise helps to raise the blood sugar level for a sufficient time to enable the sheep to come back on to their feed.

Consequently, once pregnancy toxaemia is known to occur in the flock, ewes in the last month of pregnancy should be constantly watched for early symptoms. If treatment with glycerine is undertaken immediately these symptoms are shown, losses from pregnancy toxaemia will either be eliminated or reduced to a minimum.

The symptoms, predisposing factors, preventive measures and other information concerning pregnancy toxaemia of ewes were contained in an article which appeared in "The Journal of Agriculture of Western Australia" of May-June, 1954. This article was reprinted and is available as Bulletin No. 2162 which may be obtained free of charge from the Department of Agriculture, Perth.

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Jarrah is the standard trade common name of the tree known botanically as Eucalyptus marginata. Jarrah was the aboriginal name for the tree and was adopted about 1840 in place of “mahogany,” the name applied by early colonists because of the timber’s slight resemblance to Honduras mahogany. The timber has established a high reputation in many parts of the world, and it finds diverse uses in numerous countries, particularly those around the Indian Ocean and the United Kingdom.

Distribution.

The tree occurs in a compact belt in the south-west of Western Australia, in probably the most valuable hardwood forest in Australia. The prime region extends over the summits of the Darling Range from east of Perth to the south, in beds and on isollated hills and the karri forest predominates, and outlying forests are found from the south coast in the vicinity of Albany northwards to Cockburn. This is roughly within the 25in. isohyet which forms a line of demarcation with the Savannah woodlands to the east. Its optimum development occurs on the laterite capped hills of the Darling Range above a rainfall of 40in. per annum.

Timber.

Jarrah timber is dense, hard, but fairly easily worked, of a red colour darkening with age to a rich brown with a beautiful grain, and takes a fine polish. It can be bleached satisfactorily and fumed to a chocolate brown tone. It will be easily polished and although careful selection of the logs is necessary, jarrah is peeled timber in this State. It has good gluing properties.

As a fire resistant timber it has been approved for use by the London County Council, and it has been included in Lloyd's list of timbers for use in shipbuilding since 1874.

The pale yellow grey sapwood of jarrah is rarely susceptible to attack by Lyctus borer.

Seasoning.

Western Australia was one of the first States to investigate modern air and kiln drying methods so that the seasoning of jarrah is successfully carried out. Warping is the principal cause of degrade in kiln drying and attempts to remove it by a final steaming treatment have not proved very successful. In sawn flooring boards, checking is not serious in either air or kiln drying, but in wider boards thick back sawn material, care must be exercised. Some difficulty is experienced with end checking in large sectional stock, particularly in the form of piles, strainers and decking it has found from the south coast in the vicinity of Albany northwards to Cockburn. This is roughly within the 25in. isohyet which forms a line of demarcation with the savannah woodlands to the east. Its optimum development occurs on the laterite capped hills of the Darling Range above a rainfall of 40in. per annum.

Uses.

In Western Australia Jarrah is a veritable solution to all timber problems. Despite its beauty as a furniture wood, it is, of course, in its own State used as a utility timber because of its strength and durability. In the form of piles, strainers and decking it has been employed to such an extent that there is scarcely a wharf, pier or jetty in Western Australia into the construction of which jarrah has not extensively entered. It is eminently satisfactory as a building timber, being used in the sawn state for stumps, joists, weatherboards, plates, studs, rafters, laths and shingles, while flooring, lining, frames, doors, windows, interior trim, mantelpieces, and other furnishings testify to the beauty and suitability of the dressed timber for high grade purposes. In large buildings jarrah makes excellent beams, columns and rafters, while as dadoes, paneling, partitioning, stair-railing, counters, and similar furnishings, it adds to the beauty of the interior. In a country subject to bush fires, its fire resisting property makes the jarrah fence post highly valued, apart from its durability in the ground. Nevertheless, paradoxical as it may seem, jarrah when once well alight and with a good draught is a satisfactory firewood. Waste timber is universally used in the South-West as firewood, and jarrah forms the chief firewood supply of Perth, thus providing a profitable by-product for sawmills near the metropolitan area. A further use for jarrah is found in shipbuilding. The durability of jarrah is remarkable. When used for posts or sleepers in contact with the ground it gives a long life of valuable service, and it is not surprising that jarrah sleepers and crossing timbers have a world-wide reputation. Lately it has also been used in the manufacture of plywood.

Availability.

Supplies can normally be readily obtained from State Saw Mills and their agents in other Australian States. Climatic conditions are favourable to air seasoning and in addition, modern seasoning kilns are operated to ensure that the timber is marketed in a properly seasoned condition. The quantity of jarrah produced annually exceeds that of any other single species in Australia and steps have been taken to regulate the supply to ensure continuity for all time.

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