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FLYSTRIKE CONTROL METHODS

By H. E. FELS, Adviser, Sheep and Wool Branch.

An article in next month's Journal of Agriculture will—

• show the relationship between flystrike control methods and the biology of sheep and of blowflies;
• summarise the evidence on various control methods;
• combine recommended control methods into control programmes to suit various situations.

Recommended flystrike control methods are summarised here.

Tail length

• Unmulesed lambs—Cut tail level with the tip of the vulva or slightly longer.
• Conventionally-mulesed and tailstripped lambs—Cut tail level with the tip of the vulva or slightly longer.
• Radically-mulesed lambs—Tail length does not normally affect flystrike. For faster curing, cut tails shorter.

Bare skin under the tail

• Conserve this, using the knife blade to push it towards the lamb before cutting the tail off.

Crutching

• Crutch as late as practicable before the expected flywave (late March and/or August-September, depending on shearing date).

Mulesing

• Mules lambs at marking time (except lambs for slaughter).
• Mules bought sheep and other unmulesed sheep after shearing or after crutching.
• Radical mulesing is even more effective than conventional mulesing (see article in February Journal, Bulletin 3784).
• Judge the quality of mulesing by the size of the bare area after curing, and by seeing what scope there is for further stretching of the bare area.

Fleecerot resistance

• In fleecerot areas, buy rams from studs in bad fleecerot areas.

Mycotic dermatitis


• Be sure lambs and young sheep are completely dry when shorn.
• Dip within a fortnight of shearing, in fine weather, to avoid dip scald which can favour lumpy wool.

Wounds

• Wounds that will be curing during a flywave should be dusted with an effective insecticide powder (this often applies to marking and mulesing wounds and sometimes to shearing wounds).

Treating struck sheep

• Clip or shear the wool from affected areas and all surrounding stained areas, to dry the skin and avoid re-strike. Treat with an effective insecticide.
• When extremely effective insecticides are available, jetting the affected area can be an effective treatment and can prevent re-strike. 
• Prompt treatment of struck sheep might restrict the development of flywaves.

Jetting

• As soon as there are “too many” struck sheep in a flock to cope with by individual treatment, jet the flock.
• Jetting depends on getting an effective insecticide onto every moist, attractive patch of skin, to kill maggots before they eat through the skin.
• Blowflies are developing resistance to present insecticides and other control systems are needed.

Setstocking

• Setstocking gives less scouring than other grazing methods and generally results in cleaner sheep.