Flystrike control programmes

H E. Fels
FLYSTRIKE CONTROL PROGRAMMES

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

THE various flystrike control methods all avoid susceptible patches of skin on the sheep. To avoid work—

• choose methods that give the most control for the least effort, and
• combine these methods into a system that works well.

The 12 programmes described in Figures 1 and 2 are effective programmes, as used by farmers who run 6,000 to 12,000 sheep per man.

Figure 1 shows six programmes with shearing in early spring, before the flywave. Programme 1 is for dry sheep and programmes 2 to 6 are for ewes lambing in the five months between April and August.

Figure 2 shows six programmes with shearing at times other than early spring. Programme 7 is for dry sheep and programmes 8 to 12 are for ewes lambing in the five months between April and August.

The particular programme a farmer chooses will depend on—

• the expected blowfly season(s),
• times of lambing and lamb-marking,
• time of shearing,
• the work involved in treating struck sheep.

Blowfly seasons

Abundant, highly digestible green pastures produce large quantities of urine and watery faeces so the sheep become daggy. Warm, moist weather favours the flies and helps keep patches of skin wet.

In the W.A. farming areas the main flywave is in spring each year and a minor flywave often follows good rains in April and May. The spring flywave is more severe in districts and in years with more spring rainfall.

Severity of flywaves varies from year to year, depending on the weather.

Time of lambing

It is awkward to crutch or shear ewes with young lambs at foot. The suggested control programmes avoid mustering or yarding lambs after marking and mulesing, until the wounds have healed.

Time of shearing

In areas with a serious risk of bodystrike it is desirable to shear in early spring before the flywave.

Choice of shearing time also depends on availability of shearers, wet weather risk and space to hold sheep under cover, severity of grass seed and dust problems in wool, incidence of tender wool and price penalties for these wool faults.

Effort in treating struck sheep

The great majority of farmers with more than 3,000 sheep per man mules all sheep. Perhaps this is because they could not cope with the work of finding and treating the large number of struck sheep in unmulesed flocks.

Farmers with fewer sheep per man may have enough time to treat the number of sheep that are struck in unmulesed flocks. However, a lot of this time would be saved by mulesing.

How to read Figures 1 and 2

The diagrams are drawn so that each programme is summarised on a 2 in. x 2 in. space. This space is divided into 12 columns, one for each month.

The shaded months are the months when flystrike should be expected. September, October and early November are the worst flystrike months, but April, May and August are
Figure 1.—Flystrike control programmes with early spring shearing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>DRY SHEEP (1)</th>
<th>LAMB APRIL (2)</th>
<th>LAMB MAY (3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J F M A M J J A S O N D</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Shear</strong> before the flywave</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dip</strong> within a fortnight</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lambing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Crutch</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Re-paddock sheep for growing season</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Plan paddocking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>■ Put sheep in paddocks</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>● Fine adjustment of stock numbers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mules</strong> any unmulesed sheep</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mules</strong> lambs at marking</td>
<td>△ Main marking</td>
<td>△ Straggler marking</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Inspect for flystrike</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Treat struck sheep</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Jet</strong> when &quot;too many&quot; struck sheep</td>
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</table>

**Legend:**
- Heavy risk of flystrike
- Moderate risk of flystrike (only high rainfall areas in Nov - Dec)
Flystrike control programmes with shearing times other than early spring.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>DRY SHEEP ⑦</th>
<th>LAMB APRIL ⑧</th>
<th>LAMB MAY ⑨</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JFMAMJASOND</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONTH</th>
<th>LAMB JUNE ⑩</th>
<th>LAMB JULY ⑪</th>
<th>LAMB AUGUST ⑫</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JFMAMJASOND</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>D</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Shear: DIP within a fortnight
Lambing: Re-paddock sheep for growing season
- Plan paddocking
- Put sheep in paddocks
- Fine adjustment of stock number
Mules any unmulesed sheep
Mules lambs at marking
- Main marking
- Straggler marking
Crutch just before flywave
Inspect for flystrike
Treat struck sheep
Jet when "too many" struck sheep

Heavy risk of flystrike
Moderate risk of flystrike (only high rainfall areas in Nov - Dec)
also fly risk months, and in wetter areas, December and the rest of November.

Meanings of the various symbols are shown on the left-hand side of Figures 1 and 2.

The symbols “S” and “s” in different months show when shearing is most likely (S) or less likely (s). The sheep are then dipped (D) as soon as feasible after shearing.

Expected concentrations of lambing are shown as solid block graphs, assuming 69 days mating for April, May and June lambing, and 51 days for July and August lambing.

To arrange setstocking for the growing season, paddocking is planned before the break of season and sheep are put on their paddocks for the growing season either straight away (as shown) or after using the sheep to eat out pasture and weeds in cropping paddocks.

Later, when mistakes are easy to see, fine adjustments are made to stock numbers in some paddocks.

Unmulesed sheep can be mulesed (m) after crutching or shearing.

All lambs should be mulesed. The diagrams show likely dates for main and straggler markings. Some farmers will settle for a single marking date.

With early spring shearing (Figure 1), wool has grown long enough that crutching (C) is usual to protect sheep from the mild flywave expected in autumn. With other shearing times (Figure 2), wool is usually short enough that mulesed sheep are not struck in autumn. These sheep are crutched as late as feasible before the spring flywave to protect them for as long as possible. Marking may need to be timed so that lambs with unhealed mulesing wounds won’t be driven and yarded when the ewes are crutched.

During the spring flywave, flocks with susceptible sheep should be inspected and struck sheep treated promptly. This may be necessary through to December in wetter areas. When there are “too many” struck sheep in a mob the mob can be jetted.

MORE STOCK PER MAN

The Department of Agriculture is investigating management on farms with very large numbers of sheep and/or cattle per man, with the objectives—

- to find out whether farmers are successfully running large numbers of stock per man;
- to find out how they do it;
- to identify questions for research, that may become more important in the future if the tendency to run more and more stock per man continues or if some smaller farmers become part-time farmers running 1,000 or 2,000 sheep.

The blowfly control programmes published in this issue are similar to those used successfully by farmers who operate 6,000 to 12,000 sheep per man.

The work so far suggests that flystrike control limits the number of sheep a man can run. The risk that a flywave may go out of control makes it hard to run very large numbers of sheep per man with acceptable levels of risk.