

Merino Matters



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Sheep Health – Diseases

As summer approaches, be on the watch for the following sheep health issues raised in the current DAFWA *WA Livestock Disease Outlook* newsletter (found at www.agric.wa.gov.au search 'WA Livestock Disease Outlook').

Scour Worms in Sheep

Heavy scour worm burdens continue to cause ill-thrift, scouring and deaths in sheep, particularly in the wheatbelt.

For current information refer to the Sheep CRC website at www.wormboss.com.au

Other useful Sheep CRC websites include: www.liceboss.com.au and www.flyboss.com.au

In late Spring watch for:

Cobalt deficiency / Vitamin B12 deficiency

Typically occurs in areas receiving >450mm rainfall and more commonly with certain soil types (e.g. karri loams and banksia and tuart sands).

Cobalt deficiency in sheep (white liver disease) has occurred in WA in sheep grazing rapidly growing lush spring pasture.

Typically causes ill-thrift and wasting in growing sheep.

Annual ryegrass toxicity (ARGT) in stock

Cases in grazing stock can occur as soon as there is widespread seedset in ryegrass pastures (typically from early October).

- First cases typically occur in southern Greenough area then occur further south.
- Signs include sudden deaths or affected stock may develop an uncoordinated gait and fall and have convulsions when stressed. Pregnant animals may abort.

As summer approaches and after good winter pastures in many areas, be mindful of the causes of grain poisoning.

Wheat and barley are the most common causes of grain overload but it occasionally occurs with oats and lupins. Crushing or cracking grain increases the likelihood of grain overload. Cases are often seen when:

- stock are suddenly grain-fed without being gradually introduced to grain or pellets
- there is a sudden change in feeding regime or the grains being fed
- stock graze newly harvested paddocks (where there may be spilled grain or unharvested areas)
- stock graze hail-damaged or drought-affected unharvested paddocks
- stock get unplanned access to grains or pellets, such as around silos.

If you have any concerns contact your private or DAFWA veterinarian.



Ph: 08 9384 6466

Fax: 08 9384 2606

Email: office@merinowa.com.au

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