

Merino Matters



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Treatment for lice – What is best?

When to use short or long wool treatments for success

It is important to apply the correct treatment for wool length.

Check the label carefully for information on when to apply.

Don't just presume the chemical fits your purpose.

Short wool treatments are eradication treatments

Short wool treatments take place after shearing and is an opportunity for lice eradication. Lice eradication is possible when sheep are in short wool (24 hours to 42 days after shearing) because shearing removes a large percentage of sheep lice with the fleece. Applying a registered chemical in short wool naturally assists in achieving complete chemical coverage to skin level.

Long wool treatments are control treatments

When lice is found in long wool (more than 42 days wool growth), then the choice is between premature shearing and application of short wool treatment (for eradication) or treating in long wool to control the severity of the lice infestation until the normal shearing time. Long wool treatments do not eradicate lice. Depending on the time left until shearing, lice control may require more than one treatment to prevent wool damage. Check wool withholding and handling period to avoid residues in wool at shearing time.

Correct use of chemicals

For any lice treatment to achieve the label claims, directions must be followed. Long wool treatments will not effectively eradicate sheep lice when applied to short wool. Automatic Jetting Races (even the newer ones) are not suitable for lice eradication because they do not wet to the skin completely nor apply the correct amount of chemical in the correct way.

Establish biosecurity

Farm biosecurity is important to keep lice off the farm. Farm fencing must be adequate to keep out straying sheep. Ask neighbours NOT to return stray sheep 'over the fence'. When buying sheep to bring onto the property, discuss the lice situation with the vendor, then examine the mob for lice prior to the purchase decision. Use this information to decide whether to shear and treat before any introduction. Quarantine purchased sheep for a 2-3 month period with regular checks for rubbing and biting.

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