



# Non Mulesing Network

Newsletter of the Department of Agriculture and Food

## Contents

DAFWA 2009 Results – page 1

Crutching non mulesed sheep –  
page 2

Are you mulesing correctly? – page  
3

Changes to the National Wool  
Declaration – page 4

## Contacts for this issue:

Julia Smith, DAFWA Albany,  
[julia.smith@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:julia.smith@agric.wa.gov.au)

Dr Rob Woodgate, DAFWA Albany,  
[rob.woodgate@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:rob.woodgate@agric.wa.gov.au)

Mandy Curnow  
[Mandy.curnow@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:Mandy.curnow@agric.wa.gov.au)

Darren Michael  
[Darren.michael@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:Darren.michael@agric.wa.gov.au)

For further information contact:

[www.agric.wa.gov.au/mulesing](http://www.agric.wa.gov.au/mulesing)

Julia Smith  
Industry and Rural Services  
Animal Industries Development

Phone: (08) 9892 8454

E: [Julia.smith@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:Julia.smith@agric.wa.gov.au)

## WELCOME

Welcome to the seventh edition of the Department of Agriculture and Food's newsletter on the transition from mulesing and managing breech strike.

Please pass this newsletter on to anyone who is interested and encourage them to register for future editions by emailing Julia Smith (Department of Agriculture and Food, Albany)

[julia.smith@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:julia.smith@agric.wa.gov.au)

## Have you recently stopped mulesing or are you thinking about it?

If you would like to share your experiences with other sheep producers who are in the same position and learn from other experiences, please email Julia Smith [julia.smith@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:julia.smith@agric.wa.gov.au) or phone 08 9892 8450.

## In brief!

A recent study by AWI indicated that there has been a significant increase in the amount of unmulesed Merino lambs. The AWI study indicated that 24% of Merino lambs born in 2009 would not be mulesed, compared to 2% from a similar study in 2005 by the Sheep CRC, showing the rate of change that is occurring in the industry.

It is important that every wool producer, regardless of mulesing status, fills out a National Wool Declaration (see below article) to ensure that producers are eligible for premiums.

### Important disclaimer

The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Agriculture and Food and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from the use or release of this information or any part of it.

## Transition from Mulesing on DAFWA Research Stations

### 2009 Results

Research on the 2009 drop Merino sheep on the department's Research Stations (RSUs) has further highlighted the importance of reviewing management techniques such as shearing, crutching and sheep monitoring.

From our the results we have found that it is vital that producers

- Know the pest – understand the blowfly lifecycle and predisposing factors needed for strikes
- Cull flystruck sheep
- Know the chemical options and the lengths of effectiveness
- Have sound worm management practices to avoid dags
- Think about selection against traits that predisposed to breech strike, including breech wrinkle, body wrinkle, dags and possibly bare breech.

In 2009 sheep were monitored at GSARI (Katanning), Mount Barker and Esperance Downs Research Stations. Prior knowledge and experience from 2008 greatly helped in managing the unmulesed flocks. Better management of scouring, appropriate chemical and crutching timing did help as well as more favourable weather conditions.

The 2009 drop lambs on all stations were treated at marking with Vetrazin or Clik which gave good protection until after weaning. Chemical treatment at marking is recommended if strikes are an issue prior to weaning.

Strikes in the 2009 drop lambs were only recorded after the marking treatment had lost its efficacy and before lamb shearing took place, further highlighting the importance of timing of shearing and crutching in preventing strikes.

Overall time taken for monitoring the unmulesed sheep was low compared to 2008 when no chemical applications were carried out.

The 2008 drop non-mulesed hoggets recorded strikes of <1% with all of the strikes recorded at Mt Barker where controlling worms and scouring was still a slight issue, once again highlighting the importance of controlling dags.

During 2010 we will continue to monitor the non-mulesed sheep, especially the effects of pregnancy and lambing in non-mulesed ewes.

RSU	year drop	# in flock	# strikes	% strike
GSARI	2008	380	0	0
	2009	364	6	1.6
MBRS	2008	1000	8	0.8
	2009	225	6	2.7
EDRS	2009	145	2	1.4

The sheep CRC is currently developing an important new tool, FlyBoss, to assist with the management of flystrike. It is expected that FlyBoss will be launched with in the next few months. For information is available from [www.sheepcrc.org.au](http://www.sheepcrc.org.au)

## Crutching non-mulesed sheep

### Introduction

A recent study by DAFWA at Mt Barker Research Station (MBRS) used 393 and 377 non-mulesed ewes and wethers respectively to investigate the relationship between breech wrinkle score, dag score and the time required to crutch non-mulesed Merino sheep.

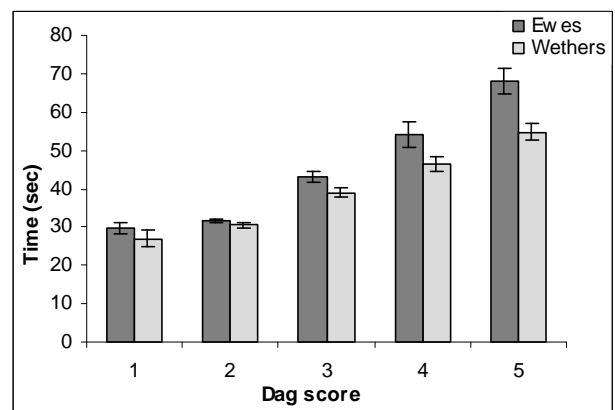
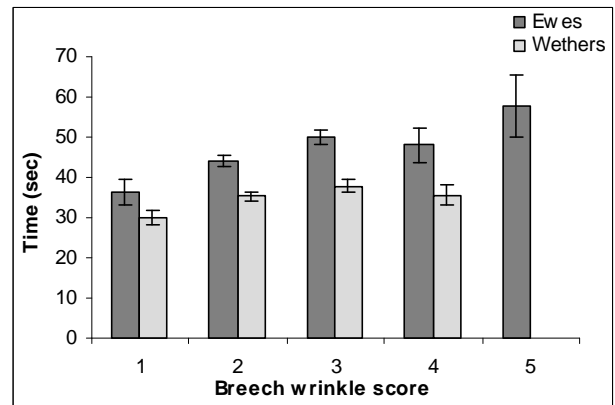
Crutching will be a key management tool in the management of non-mulesed sheep. Previous studies have compared the time taken to crutch mulesed and non-mulesed sheep and the relationship between sheep dag score and crutching time. But to date there is little research on the effect breech wrinkle could have on crutching time, or the interaction between dag score and breech wrinkle.

### Results

Individual breech wrinkle scores were taken after the animals first shearing in 2008. There was no difference between the mean breech wrinkle score of the ewes (2.4) and the wethers (2.5), with 89% of the ewes and 90% of the wethers having a breech wrinkle score of 2 or 3.

Dag scores using the National Visual Sheep Scoring System were measured in October 2009 in both mobs. The mean dag score of the ewe mob was 3.2 which was significantly greater than that of the wether mob (2.6), however, it should be noted that the ewes and wethers had different worm management plans and the ewes had a higher worm burden than the wethers at the time of scoring.

Breech wrinkle score had no significant effect on dag score. However, breech wrinkle score did have a significant effect on crutching time with 10% more time needed to crutch a breech wrinkle score 3 compared to a breech wrinkle score 2. It should be noted that there were limited numbers of animals with breech wrinkle scores of 1, 4 or 5. The below graphs show the relationship between the time taken to crutch and dag score and breech wrinkle score.



Time required to crutch was significantly affected by dag score. For each unit increase above dag score 2, the time taken to crutch the individual sheep increased by between 21% in the wethers and 28% in the ewes. A mob of 500 at dag score 3 will take approximately one hour longer to crutch than a mob of the same amount of animals with a dag score of 1.

### What this means for me

Crutchers & shearers have reported no difference between mulesed and non mulesed sheep as long as they are clean and plain. Dirty & wrinkly animals, regardless of their mulesing status will take longer and be harder to crutch.

Reducing the formation of dags and selecting animals for plain breeches will play an important role in improving the animal welfare and productivity of sheep, therefore it is important to review your worm management programme and control worms and dags.

### Do you have to mules? If yes - mules correctly!

Mulesing may not be necessary on properties that are in low risk areas and where producers actively select and breed for fly and worm resistance. Selecting for less breech wrinkles and less dags will decrease your need to mules. Staying on top of dags and having a sound worm management plan will also reduce the risk of flystrike in your sheep. These strategies, along with strategic crutching and possible use of preventative chemical applications, can effectively prevent breech flystrike in unmulesed sheep.

DAFWA recommends that for producers who are continuing to mules this year, a registered pain relief treatment (e.g Tri-Solfen) is applied at mulesing and that the mulesing is done by an accredited operator. This will ensure the minimal amount of wool bearing skin adjacent to bare skin is removed. The National Mulesing Training and Accreditation Programme, run by the Kondinin Group, provides up-to-date mulesing techniques to achieve highest possible animal health and welfare standards. [For more information on the training course please click here.](#)

The following recommendations should also be followed.

- If mulesing in spring or when conditions are ideal for flies, a preventative chemical application should be considered.
- Mules lambs two weeks after the end of lambing and if lambing extends for more than six weeks, consider having two mulesing/markings sessions.
- Maintain a high standard of hygiene, i.e. use sharp, clean equipment.

Where fly prevention is needed at the time of mulesing, there are a limited number of chemical products available (table below) that are registered for application to the mulesing wound.

#### Marking chemical treatment options

PRODUCT NAME	Chemical group	Active ingredient	Mules wound	Strike wound	Volume per treatment band	Meat WHP	Wool WHP *	Resistance reported
Clik	IGR	Dicyclanil 50 g/L	✓	✗	4 ml	28 days	3 mths	No
Extinosad & Extinosad Aerosol	SPN	Spinosad 25 g/L	✓	✓	Spray on – until area is blue & wet	Nil	Nil	No
Mules 'N Mark II Blowfly Dressing	OP	OP - Propetamphos 500 mg/L (no dilution)	✓	✓	30 ml	14 days	2 mths	Yes
Defiance S* & Defiance S Aerosol*	OP	Chlorfenvinphos 2.5 g/L & cresylic asc 25g/L + oils + naphthalene	✓	✓	5-8mL/kg but no less than 55ml per head	3 days	14 days	Yes

When using pain relief treatment and a fly treatment on a mulesing wound, DAFWA recommends low volume fly treatments be used to prevent excess run off and dilution of the pain relief product. It should be noted that most blowflies are at least partially resistant to the organophosphates (OPs). It is important to ensure lambs are not disturbed, handled or mustered for at least four weeks after mulesing to allow the wound to heal. Paddock inspections with out disturbance should be done at least every 3 days during the healing process.

## Changes to the National Wool Declaration

Recently, a new version of the National Wool Declaration (NWD), Version 3.0, was released. The new version is similar to that of the previous version, except one key definition has changed.

On the older version, the definition of “Ceased Mulesing” was

*All sheep born on or transferred onto this property in the last 12 months must not be mulesed at the time of this shearing and there must be no intention to mules in the future. Evidence of Ceased Mulesing status must be available for audit purposes.*

On the new version, “Ceased Mulesing” is defined as

*Any sheep born on onto this property in the last 12 months must not be mulesed at the time of this shearing and there must be no intention to mules in the future.*

This change means that as long as any sheep born on your property in the last 12 months remains unmulesed, and you have no intention to mules them in the future, you can buy in mulesed sheep whilst still obtaining the ceased mulesing status.

[To download the new version of the NWD please click here.](#)