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# Non Mulesing Network

Newsletter of the Department of Agriculture and Food

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## WELCOME

Welcome to the sixth 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.

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## In brief!

Due to recent label changes, Klik® now can now be applied as a breech only application where farmers aim for breech protection only, rather than body and breech.

Preliminary results from a small trial at Mt Barker RSU indicate that applying a chemical treatment at marking may be beneficial in reducing breech strike incidences.

No lambs that had Klik applied on the breech were struck, yet 6 lambs from the untreated group were struck.

### 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.

## Mulesing Declaration

AWEX has recently released version two of the National Wool Declaration (NWD) which includes mulesing status. Whilst the NWD is not compulsory, producers should be encouraged to use the NWD as it maintains market confidence in Australia wool. This will allow buyers, processors and retailers to source wool that meets their requirements.

Some wool brokers have already incorporated the mulesing declarations into the Classers Specification, but the majority have yet to do so. Producers that have not seen their Classers Specification with the NWD incorporated into it should ask their wool broker, or alternatively can download a separate NWD form [here](#).

It is recommended that the form is filled out at the commencement of shearing and be handed to the woolclasser, as this will enable the NWD and Woolclasser's Speciation to be consigned together.

The mulesing status of each sale lot will be recorded in print and electronic sale catalogues. If the NWD is not filled out or signed, then 'Not Declared' (ND) will appear as the mulesing status in the sale catalogue.

A 'Ceased Mulesing' (CM) status is designed for a grower to demonstrate their commitment to the phasing out of mulesing on their property. This means that all sheep born or transferred onto it in the last 12 months must not have been mulesed and there is no intention in the future to mules.

A 'Mob Mulesed' is defined as any of the sheep in the mob are mulesed. If pain relief has been used, the product must be registered by or supplied under permit from the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority and evidence (such as receipts) must be kept for audit purposes.

The NWD defines mulesing as 'the removal of skin from tail and/or breech region of a sheep using shears.' Therefore, under the NWD, clips and other breech modification techniques are classified as Not Mulesed (NM). However, it should be noted that as major retailers see the use of clips as a form of mulesing, marketing wool which have come from clipped lambs will be difficult.

### The Merino Company launches non-mulesed Merino brand

The Merino Company (TMC) has launched the world's first certified and traceable non-mulesed Merino (n.m.m.) wool brand platform. The Australian based company said that n.m.n was launched in response to customer demand. "Our n.m.m. wool brand customers are committing to an animal welfare standard, indicating to consumers that they will be receiving a product that is animal-friendly."

The n.m.n label is a guarantee that the Merino wool is sourced from growers that have never used the practice of mulesing, or have changed their practices and ceased mulesing. This brand will not accept any forms including tail stripping, surgical mulesing and the use of the clips, which are seen by many retailers as a form of bloodless mulesing.

All wool eligible for the n.m.m brand must have legal declarations from the relevant body or wool grower and supporting verifications from a third party.

[For more information please click here](#)

A recent exercise at the Mount Barker Research Station investigated the relationship between dag score and wrinkle score on crutching time in unmulesed Merino hoggets. Whilst analysis of the results is continuing, there is a significant relationship between dag score and breech wrinkle score on crutching time.

Full results will be published soon!

## When BOTH lice and flies present as a management dilemma

Dr Jenny Cotter, veterinary officer, DAFWA Albany

For some sheep producers flies and lice can be concurrent issues requiring management at the same time. This is occurring where there are un-mulesed sheep flocks, and reflects the current high prevalence of lice infestations.

Producers must decide which is the most important issue for their flock - lice or flies, and investigate the chemical treatments that can be used. No chemicals currently available for treatment of lice and flies have recommendations for the mixing or application of one chemical on top of another. Chemicals mixed together or applied one over the other may interact and interfere with efficacy. As no chemical compatibility studies have been done these types of applications should not be used.

### Where lice eradication has priority

Off shears treatments provide the one window of opportunity in the year for lice eradication, while shearing itself should remove the fly attractiveness of sheep for a period of time. For those who have the opportunity to carry out a short wool treatment for lice, this is strongly recommended. Treat for lice off shears as a dip at 14 to 42 days with Assassin®, Wham® or Extinosad®, or with a pour on within 24 hours off shears, either Eureka Gold® or Extinosad® Pour-on or Avenge® are options.

By about 4 weeks following a lice chemical application off shears, lice will have been killed, and the applied chemical will have begun to degrade and break down. This delay of at least a month before application of a fly preventative chemical will limit the potential for interaction with the previously applied lice treatment chemical. Options for fly prevention in short wool could include Clik®, or Vetrazin® or Cyro-fly® or others.

### Where fly prevention has priority

In instances where fly protections is considered more important as a first treatment than lice, the fly chemicals mentioned above are treatment options to use.

Where low levels of lice are present but flies are considered the greater risk, then a fly treatment should be applied at this time and a long wool lice treatment at some time in the future could be used to limit lice damage until the following shearing.

Control treatment options for lice in long wool include hand jet applications of Coopers Blowfly and Lice®, Zinjet® or Estinosad®, or Extinosad® Pour-on.

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## New breech wrinkle breeding values

Recently, Sheep Genetics Australia released new breech wrinkle breeding values, which have been developed due to the large impact of the trait on breech strike. This breeding value is the result of five years of research using breech and body wrinkle score data collected from MERINOSELECT subscriber flocks, Sire Evaluation sites, the Sheep CRC Information Nucleus and AWI breech strike research flocks.

This means that more accurate genetic parameters can be estimated, as well as the impact of non-genetic effects on its expression. Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs) for breech wrinkle allow farmers to identify, select and breed from sheep that have improved natural resistance to flystrike. The development of these breech wrinkle ASBVs is seen as a significant step towards breeding sheep that are better able

to withstand breech flystrike and can be managed safely without mulesing.

Producers can help fast track their selection for this important trait by submitting breech scores of their lambs to Sheep Genetics. Producers will then receive breech wrinkle ASBVs for animals that have been scored. Breech wrinkle ASBVs are expressed as a deviation, with a more negative breeding value indicating less breech wrinkle.

As ASBVs can monitor genetic progress over time, the change in breech wrinkle can be observed alongside progress in other major production traits through genetic trends.

[For more information on the new breech wrinkle breeding values please click here](#)

## A producers experience in ceasing mulesing

Clayton South of Wagin has been in the process of ceasing mulesing for the past 2 years. He made the decision in 2008 to move towards ceasing mulesing and aims to have a 100 per cent unmulesed lamb drop next year.

“We have too much country we can’t crop so going out of sheep completely wasn’t an option for us. Stopping mulesing isn’t for everyone but we’ve been trying to breed plainer bodied sheep for a while and thought we’d have a go at not mulesing some last year. Then when we noticed the weaning weight difference we thought we’d keep going.”

“Before lambing we class our ewes on wrinkle score and put all the wrinkly ones in one mob. The lambs out of that mob were the ones we mulesed this year and they’ve all since been culled. We’ve also been trying to cull the ewe hoggets very hard for dag score the last few years to try and breed our flock a bit more worm tolerant. We’ve noticed since moving towards a plainer mob, we are able to run them a bit harder and our lambing percentages have increased. We crop everything we are able to and the sheep get squeezed on what’s left. Every year we learn how to manage our unmulesed sheep better.”

The main benefit Clayton has noticed since ceasing mulesing is the difference in body weight at weaning between their unmulesed and

mulesed lambs. He feels the mulesing sets them back quite a bit and is a disadvantage when weaning.

Clayton used a conventional docking iron in 2008 on 1500 unmulesed lambs. He found as the tails healed, wool would heal back over the tip of the tail leaving them more prone to flystrike and making them more difficult and timely to crutch.

This year Clayton used a Te Pari knife when marking 2500 unmulesed lambs in order to reduce the amount of wool on the tip of the tail. The Te Pari is a relatively new type of tail docking iron that works in a similar fashion to normal docking irons but has a rotating anvil. When used correctly stretches the woolly skin producing a bare area on the top of the tail where wool would normally grow and be at risk of urine stain and dags. He has been pleased with the amount of bare skin the knife left and will continue using the Te Pari knife in future years.

Producers have experienced mixed results using the docking iron. [To view a video of one of our readers using the knife, please click here](#) (12MB).

It is important that when using this docking iron that is used correctly, following the manufactures directions, to ensure effective results.

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## Skintraction™ on show

Recently sheep treated with Skintraction™ were available to view for the first time at the National Merino Show and Sale held in Dubbo, NSW.

Skintraction™ has been developed by Corbett Technologies from funding from AWI, as an alternative to surgical mulesing.

The intradermal technology uses sodium lauryl sulphate (SLS) to reduce wrinkle and increase the bare area around the breech and tail of sheep. The solution is applied by a Pulse Needlefree applicator, which uses air pressure to deliver the chemical.



Trials are continuing to determine optimal pressure and volume settings.

A study by [Hemsworth et al \(2009\)](#) described the intradermal process as substantially reducing the adverse effects on lamb welfare when compared to surgical mulesing. The study also described clips in the same manner, but as animal welfare groups see clips as a form of mulesing, it is unknown how they will view this technology.

Registration and commercial use of this product relies on approval by the Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicine Authority.