

Factsheet

Sheep worms – quarantine drench to combat resistance

By Rob Woodgate, Veterinary Officer, Albany

Background

Resistance by sheep worms to drenches in Western Australia is rapidly reaching a crisis point. There are sheep worms on virtually all farms that are resistant to white (benzimidazole or BZ – e.g. *Valbazen*, *Panacur*, *Alben*, *Fenbendazole*, *Nemadet*, *Oxfen*, *Fencare* etc.) and clear (levamisole or LV – e.g. *Nilverm*, *Levamisole*, *Ripercol* etc.) drenches. BZ/LV combination drenches (containing a white and clear drench, e.g. *Combi*, *Salvo*, *Scanda*, *Nucombo* etc.) only remain fully effective¹ on about 20 per cent of properties and resistance testing between 2002 and March 2004 showed resistance on about 60 per cent of properties to the macrocyclic lactone group of drenches (the MLs – active ingredients include ivermectin, abamectin and moxidectin) in the brown stomach worm (*Ostertagia*).

Unless current drenching practices change, drench resistance will continue to worsen and spread. One strategy that farmers can use to help reduce the risk of introducing new strains of resistant worms on their property is effective quarantine drenching of introduced sheep.

If new sheep are being introduced to a property or sheep are returning after agistment, it is critical to follow a quarantine procedure to avoid the introduction of resistant worms. Sheep coming onto a property may carry worms that are more resistant than those already on the property.

What should I do?

All introduced sheep should be treated immediately before or after they enter the property.

Treatment with products from at least three different drench groups is recommended. If the drench resistance status of the source of the sheep is unknown the current minimum recommendation is:

Moxidectin (e.g. *Cydectin oral liquid for sheep*) + a BZ/LV combination (white and clear) drench (e.g. *Combi*, *Salvo*, *Scanda*, etc.).

Moxidectin is the ML product of choice due to its superior potency. Ivermectin or abamectin (the other MLs) should not be used because the incoming sheep could be carrying worms against which these products are no longer fully effective.

Sheep should be released into a wormy paddock to help dilute any surviving ‘super-resistant’ worms amongst the resident population of worms already on the property. If a wormy paddock is not available then other options should be discussed with your local vet or sheep adviser.

For more information talk to your local vet or sheep adviser or contact your local WormWise contact at the WA Department of Agriculture.

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¹A fully effective drench is one that has been shown to be more than 95 per cent effective (and preferably 100 per cent) in a drench resistance test within the last couple of years.

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For more information visit our web site www.agric.wa.gov.au

Other recommended reading

Farmnotes

Sheep worm control in Western Australia

Sheep worms – breeding worm resistant sheep

Sheep worms – faecal worm egg counts

Sheep worms – testing drench resistance and effectiveness

Sheep worms: barber's pole worm

Worm drenches for sheep in Western Australia

Factsheets

Sheep worms – summer-autumn worm control

Further information

More information about sheep worms and sheep worm control is available on the internet at www.wormboss.com.au