

Tuesday, 30 August 2011

Bollon flystrike workshop to prepare sheep for wet season ahead

Queensland and northern NSW sheep graziers will receive timely advice on tackling flystrike ahead of the wet season at an upcoming workshop to be held in Bollon, Qld.

The summer rainfall period traditionally triggers the arrival of flies in their millions, which can pose a health risk for sheep.

The Flystrike Prevention Workshop will be conducted by the Sheep Cooperative Research Centre (Sheep CRC) and the SRS Group, with the support of the Queensland Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) and the Leading Sheep program.

The workshop will provide sheep producers with the tools to personalise a prevention program to suit the conditions on their properties, as well as discuss the use of breeding and genetic selection.

Host of the Bollon workshop, Stuart Mitchell, "Cashel Vale", said a combination of techniques had drastically reduced the risk of flystrike in his Merino flock.

"We stopped mulesing three years ago, and even in a very wet season we had last year when we received about 1250mm (50 inches) of rain, flystrike was not a problem," Mr Mitchell said.

"We have been selecting rams for some time to breed plain bodied sheep that are not as susceptible to flystrike.

"Combined with more diligent chemical applications and a shift from autumn to spring shearing, we really haven't had a problem in recent years.

"Instead of having sheep carrying six months of wool into the wet season, we now shear in spring four to six weeks before lambing.

"Selection of chemical is critically important and the computer-based Flyboss tools are proving to be very useful helping with these decisions.

"The right chemical treatment at shearing sees us through to lamb marking four months later. This treatment in turn protects the sheep through until autumn when fly numbers die back."

The workshop will cover practices including wrinkle scoring, benchmarking flocks for flystrike susceptibility; monitoring of the fly population; shearing, crutching and breach modification; marking, clips and mulesing; and chemical treatments.

Speakers will include David Counsell, "Dunblane", Barcaldine; Allan Casey, Sheep Breeding Specialist, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Orange; Errol Brumpton, "Well Gully Merinos", Mitchell; Nicole Sallur, Sheep Extension Officer, DEEDI, Charleville; Stuart Mitchell, "Cashel Vale", Bollon; and Sheep Cooperative Research Centre Chief Executive, Professor James Rowe.

Mr Mitchell will also have on display sheep from the Australian Merino Sire Evaluation Association (AMSEA) central test site, following their second shearing. Mr Mitchell and an AMSEA representative will be available to discuss the results.

Workshops are free to all sheep producers, and lunch and smoko will be provided.

- The Bollon workshop will be held on Monday September 19. To register, contact Nicole Sallur 07 4654 4220 or email nicole.sallur@deedi.qld.gov.au by Friday September 16.
- For more information on flystrike management, visit www.flyboss.org.au