

Monday, 21 June 2010

### The FlyBoss takes off

A major resource for the entire Australian sheep industry has been launched.

FlyBoss, a specific internet based resource, was launched via an industry webinar today. It allows sheep producers to easily and quickly obtain proven information about breeding and managing sheep to reduce the risk of flystrike, just by going to: [flyboss.org.au](http://flyboss.org.au)

The Sheep CRC, along with its Partners - AWI, MLA and the state departments of primary industry - and Sheep Genetics, have developed FlyBoss.

Senior veterinary parasitologist, Dr Brown Besier, says FlyBoss draws on the latest research information and the successful experiences of researchers and producers. "Sheep can be affected by breech strike and/or body strike; reducing the risk of fly strike requires an integrated, planned approach.

"This involves combining a management program of shearing, crutching, chemical application and perhaps breech modification with the breeding and selection of less susceptible sheep. The chosen mix of strategies will vary between producers, depending on type of sheep, location and enterprise."

Dr Besier says it is widely appreciated that breeding sheep with less susceptibility to flystrike takes time. "An integrated approach provides ongoing protection whilst the breeding program delivers the necessary changes to the flock. With a plainer-bodied but still productive flock, the reliance on mulesing as a management practice can be reduced.

"Flystrike prevention is a complex issue. However, there are many people who have successfully changed their approach or are planning to; the FlyBoss website provides the background and the techniques, and the stories from producers who have made the change."

Flystrike has been a major concern for sheep producers for many decades, ever since the *Lucilia cuprina* blowfly arrived in Australia in the early 1900's. Recent estimates are that each year treatment costs and lost production associated with flystrike cost the industry \$280 million and producers are now balancing the competing needs of protecting their animals against calls to phase out the mulesing procedure.

Sheep CRC Industry Training Leader Lu Hogan expects the website will become a key tool as farmers plan for the fly season and implement breeding strategies. "Importantly, FlyBoss can help develop a plan and schedule for any sheep enterprise in any location.

"It is timely for all sheep producers to review their flystrike management and make a decision that accounts for animal welfare, the wool market and supply-chain signals, enterprise productivity and management constraints."

The information in FlyBoss is supported with training workshops that will be delivered throughout Australia. Information on training is available in the 'More information-Industry Training' section of FlyBoss, at [flyboss.org.au](http://flyboss.org.au)

The Sheep CRC acknowledges the contribution of its partner organisations in the development of FlyBoss. It follows on from the successful LiceBoss and WormBoss websites – which have thousands of site visits every month as farmers consult the sites seeking information on managing these pests.

The Sheep CRC Partner organisations who contributed to the initiative are: Australian Wool Innovation; Meat and Livestock Australia; Rural Solutions SA; Industry and Investment NSW; Department of Agriculture and Food WA; Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research; Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation Queensland; and the Department of Primary Industries Victoria.

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