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Sheep lice should be reported

The NSW Farmers' Association is calling for sheep lice to be classified as a notifiable disease.

NSW Farmers' Association Exotic Disease and Animal Health Committee Chair, Dr Peter Carter supports the move, on the condition sheep producers aren't penalised for notifying authorities.

"We don't want a situation where producers are prosecuted when they alert the Livestock Health and Pest Authority to an infestation," Dr Carter said.

"Producers should be given time to eradicate an infestation, and prosecution should only be an option when a producer refuses to take action," Dr Carter said.

"That would protect producers from others who may be complacent about treating the problem," Dr Carter said.

Sheep lice haven't been notifiable since the 1980's, and the Association is seeking to have that changed.

"Infestations are rife across the State, with lice found on up to 70 percent of properties," Dr Carter said.

"A member survey shows almost 60 percent of producers believe lice regulation should be strengthened," Dr Carter said.

The Association believes additional resources should follow any change in regulation.

"We believe an eradication program would go hand-in-hand with any decision to make sheep lice notifiable, to curb the prevalence of lice in NSW," Dr Carter said.

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