

Issue

Sheep producers currently do not have a legal requirement to use anaesthetic spray for mulesing. This is despite recent speculation in the media.

Background

- At present there are no legal requirements for the use of anaesthetic sprays during mulesing.
- No date has been proposed or set for the introduction of the compulsory use of anaesthetic sprays.
- The process of mulesing has a current exemption under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (POCTA).
- The NSW Assistant Police Commissioner has stated 'police will not be visiting farms, as mulesing is legal'.
- At present there is a prescription anaesthetic spray available under a 'limited use permit'. If you would like to find out more about anaesthetic sprays please contact your local vet.
- The NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has advised that in the event of legal action being taken against a farmer, legal sympathies will lie with the current exemptions for mulesing under the POCTA.
- To find out more about your responsibilities with mulesing please refer to the Sheep Code of Practice which can be found at <http://www.publish.csiro.au/nid/22/pid/365.htm>

What the Association has done so far

- The Association has been working with WoolProducers, the wool industry's peak body and AWI to continue to find ways to improve the best practice methods used for the mulesing of sheep in Australia.
- The Association, AWI and WoolProducers are undertaking on-going work to increase public awareness about the issues surrounding mulesing. This work will help nullify the mis-information that is being spread by activists and help to combat these latest claims and threats.
- The Association has released the following advice for growers. This advice is aimed at reducing the risk of any un-wanted trouble from animal rights activists.
 - Don't widely advertise when you will be mulesing, as radical anti-farmer groups have been known to hound producers.
 - For the same reason as above, do not set up temporary yards for mulesing in view of public roads.
 - Ensure your best efforts at following best practice (as outlined in the Sheep Model Code of Practice).
 - Don't let anyone onto your property who requests to see stock or facilities unless they show identification (RSPCA, NSW DPI, RLPB or Police).
 - Obtain legal advice on any advantages of having signage up that trespassers' will be prosecuted and that no photographs are to be taken without permission.

Member Trials Spray

Recently an Association member trialled the new anaesthetic spray on a selection of his mobs during this seasons lamb marking/mulesing. This spray had to be prescribed and ordered through the local RLPB veterinary officer. The spray is applied after mulesing and was seen to have an immediate effect on the lamb; bleeding was reduced and the lamb was noticeably less stressed from the mulesing process. The farmer is now waiting to see if there will be a difference, between mobs, in the time it takes the wound to heal up and if there is a noticeable difference in the condition of the lambs that were sprayed / not sprayed. A 6 ml dose was applied to each lamb, at a cost of \$0.60 a head. The producer felt that "a \$0.60/head outlay was not too bad if it leads to a reduction in the post mulesing fatality rate and a faster recovering lamb, only time will tell though". A performance report was required to be returned with the vet on how the spray had worked and if there were any adverse reactions to the spray solution.