



Methodical progress with flystrike control

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Research and development continues to explore ways to best protect the Australian sheep flock from breech strike.

At the latest AWI Breech Strike Research and Development Technical Update, overviews of recent field trials were presented across various projects.

While still in a research and development phase, SkinTraction™ being developed by Cobbett Technologies and AWI is showing some encouraging results for both breech modification and welfare. Trials over the last four years have determined the preferred application volumes and pressures and animal husbandry procedures. The technology involves a needle-less intradermal treatment of sodium lauryl sulphate, an additive currently widely used in toothpaste, shampoo and lotions.

A series of six trials using these preferred procedures is taking place and results from the first three trials were presented at the recent Technical Update. The remaining three trials will be assessed in the next four months.

Results from the first three trials show that “When sheep are treated according to the recently determined treatment protocol then a significant reduction in wrinkle and an increase in breech bare area can be achieved with minimal stress on the animal,” Cobbett’s Peter St Vincent Welsh added. (Refer to table below). The wrinkle reduction can be equivalent to mulesing however the increase in bare area is part way between mulesed and unmulesed.

Treatment	Breech bare area (cm ²)	Breech width (cm)	Wrinkle count
SKT (50psi)	37.8	70.4	2.0
Mulesed	52.6	90.0	1.5
Untreated	23.4	54.2	9.7

Table showing results from Trial A, one of 3 trials reported at the Technical Update

Formal registration of the technology continues through the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority. Meanwhile Cobbett Technologies will continue to move towards the commercialisation of the technology.

Research into breeding for breech strike resistance has confirmed how breech strike is highly heritable. AWI has an ongoing commitment to the development of Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBV) through the exploration of genetics associated with breech wrinkle, dag and wool cover. Woolgrowers can now select genetics based on existing ASBVs for these traits.

Quarterly audits of research milestones pertaining to flystrike prevention alternatives are conducted by the Australian Veterinary Association.

View the presentations from the latest R&D Update here

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