



Leading Sheep Sheep Wet Season Alert



After the rains comes the pestilence and pains

Sheep producers are now in their second, third or even their fourth good summer season in a row, following the recent high rainfalls and floods. Some issues for sheep producers to keep an eye on are: ram fertility and impacts for joining, fly strike and worms risk, flood-affected fencing and grass seed. There is plenty of assistance available to flood affected producers, so read on to find out more.

1. Ram fertility – impacts for joining	2. Flood-affected fencing
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sand flies, mosquitoes and blowfly strike can all adversely impact on ram fertility, especially in association with high summer temperatures.2. This occurs through high testicular temperatures that damage the sperm and reduce the formation of normal sperm, that if sustained can lead to testicular degeneration.3. As the sperm development and maturation process takes 6 weeks, a period of raised testicular temperatures can impact on ram fertility for up to 6-7 weeks in summer.4. Even after the sand flies and mosquitoes have gone, the after-effects of their bites on the exposed scrotal area can linger and reduce ram fertility.5. If possible, remove rams from areas affected by biting insects.6. If biting insect activity occurs in the early part of joining, the rams can either be left in for a prolonged period (up to 8-10 weeks after the insects have gone), or removed and rejoined for a similar period.7. Blowfly strike in individual rams can cause fever and raise the normal body temperature, and even with the scrotal cooling, the testicular temperature can still be too high and affect sperm quality and normal maturation.8. Ensure rams are protected from flystrike by using a long-acting product applied according to label directions. (Remember to treat the heads of rams, as flystrike that starts in fighting wounds can be a problem, even in polled rams.)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. If your fence has been damaged by flooding – before you erect a new fence consider its location i.e. could it be moved to an area less prone to flooding?2. Fencing further away from the waterway, parallel to the anticipated direction of flow tends to result in less fence damage3. If fencing across the flow direction cannot be avoided, options include erecting a short section that automatically drops flat, can be manually dropped or “blows out” in times of flood.4. Ensure that fence resistance to flood waters is minimised. Keep the number of wires to a minimum so that there is less chance the fence will catch debris. The type of wire is also important: plain wire does not hold debris to the same extent as barbed wire or wire with verticals e.g. hinge joint and ring lock.5. Fencing above the flood level, creating a “river paddock” for periodic grazing or drought fodder reduces the maintenance costs of fences in flood areas.6. Use a suspended “hanging” fence across streams and gullies. Ensure this section is capable of “blowing out”, is separate from other sections of the fence and is strong enough to support additional weight (use high tensile wire). Corrugated iron, hinge joint and even light weight garden mesh can be suspended across the waterway.7. For more detailed information check out the Kondinin Group report on “Finding flood-proof fencing solutions”.

3. Flystrike risk

1. Regular inspection of all sheep mobs is vital.
2. Be on the look out for belly and pizzle strike in your rams and wethers due to the combination of long, wet grass and urine stain.
3. If you are able to quickly get to your sheep after flood waters subside and before flies become active, treatment with a long-acting product will reduce the chances of flystrike and provide protection for many weeks.
4. Keep preventative chemicals for 'at risk' mobs e.g. weaners or ewes about to lamb. Other options for these high risk mobs include:
 - Crutching or dagging
 - Emergency shearing and appropriate disposal of flyblown wool.
5. If sheep have already been struck, hand treatment of individual sheep or jetting with a flystrike treatment product may be necessary (see "[Treatment of struck sheep](#)" in FlyBoss).
6. If you applied a long-acting preventative treatment just prior to the floods, your sheep still need to be inspected – in case the chemical did not fully cover the sheep or rain dilution has reduced the protection period.
7. Choose the right chemical for flystrike prevention and avoid withholding problems by using www.flyboss.org.au
8. Consider culling sheep that have been struck this year as part of your strategy to produce a more flystrike-resistant flock.
9. For more information visit www.flyboss.org.au

4. Start checking for worms now

1. Start checking for worms now. The recent floods and warm weather have increased the chances of worms reducing wool growth and in heavy infestations causing deaths of sheep on your property.
2. Recent worm egg count figures from Western Queensland have been as high as 4000 eggs per gram. Even if your sheep are looking strong and healthy, they could still have high levels of worms. Do a Worm TEST to find out for sure.
3. Sheep congregating and living in small areas of the paddock (due to flood water and long grass restricting access) can result in an increased contamination of the pasture exposing sheep to higher worm infestations.
4. Sand flies, midges and mosquitoes will most likely have the sheep running in larger mobs. This can increase the worm burdens if they are all feeding and watering in the same area.
5. You need to monitor your sheep closely and do a Worm TEST, especially on weaners as they are the most susceptible. Worm levels can very quickly rise, so worm check immediately.
6. If you are drenching sheep, it is worth doing a Worm TEST 10 – 14 days after drenching to ensure the drench has worked and there is no resistance.
7. Talk to your local DEEDI sheep extension officer or visit [WormBoss](#) to find out about drenches and to ensure you are using the best drench for your situation.
8. Worm kits are available through the WormBuster laboratory or DEEDI sheep extension officers (phone 13 25 23). Kits cost \$33 (inc GST), which includes: testing, collection bottles and postage. This cost is very cheap compared to a late detection of a disastrous worm outbreak.
9. Visit [WormBoss](#) for more information on worm management.



5. Watch out for grass seed	6. Available flood assistance
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grass seed will be an ever increasing problem with the huge body of feed around and the continued rain. This issue often goes unnoticed, however with the current seasons it needs to be monitored closely. 2. Grass seed infestation can cost you money, through decreased fleece and meat value, reduced body weight and an increased chance of infections. 3. This leads to an increased prevalence of diseases, worm infestations and flystrike. Diseases (e.g. cheesy gland, tetanus, anthrax, pink eye, scabby mouth, lumpy wool and foot rot) and flystrike enter easily through skin that is damaged by seeds, particularly after wetting. Worms build up because of the higher self-enforced stocking rates, as sheep only graze limited areas of the paddock. 4. Rubbing due to grass seed may be mistaken for lice, so make sure you know what is causing the rubbing before you treat unnecessarily. 5. Some ways to help prevent the impacts of grass seed are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping sheep out of paddocks with high grass seed levels. • Stocking cattle in badly seeded paddocks to help knock off the seed before sheep graze it. • Stocking wiregrass country heavily during the growing phase to reduce seed set. • Wiggling sheep to keep grass seed out of their eyes. • Slashing wide tracks into watering points and around sheep camps. Conduct worm monitoring so that worm levels aren't exacerbated. 6. For more information on grass seed in sheep please visit www2.dpi.qld.gov.au/sheep/10729.html 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DEEDI "Managing cash flow in difficult times", free workshops at Charleville, Cunnamulla and St George, 20-23 March. For more information please call 07 4654 4265. 2. Recovery grants of up to \$25,000 are available to eligible primary producers in flood-affected council areas. These grants, administered by QRAA, are to assist with flood clean-up and recovery. 3. BlazeAid is a volunteer-based organisation which assists property owners to clear, repair or replace fences lost as a result of natural disasters. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Dunkeld area, please contact Jan or Cheryl on 0439 085 553 or email blazeaid.dunkeld@gmail.com • If you are in another area and would like fencing assistance please contact Kevin Butler on 0418 530 470 or email blazeaid@gmail.com. 4. Support and assistance is available for individuals and families experiencing personal hardship due to recent flooding. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Government Disaster Recovery payment \$1000/adult • Emergency assistance grant \$180/person • Essential household contents grant • Structural assistance grant • Accommodation assistance. 5. Concessional low interest loans through QRAA designed to help re-establish operations following flooding. 6. To find out about fencing and other types of assistance available in your area please contact your regional council office. 7. Be alert to animal health and welfare issues during and after flooding. You can contact your local Biosecurity Queensland officer on 13 25 23.

Leading the Way

Leading Sheep is an education framework for leading the adoption of new technologies and practices to increase the productivity of the Queensland sheep industry. Leading Sheep is an active, regionally-based project initiated by Australian Wool Innovation and operates in partnership with the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI) and AgForce. For more information, visit www.leadingssheep.com.au or call DEEDI on 13 25 23.

Sheep Extension Contacts

- Leading Sheep Project Manager – Tony Hamilton (Toowoomba) on 07 4688 1270 or tony.hamilton@deedi.qld.gov.au
- Sheep Extension Officer – Alex Stirton (Charleville) on 07 4654 4212 or alex.stirton@deedi.qld.gov.au
- Sheep Extension Officer – Nicole Sallur (Charleville) on 07 4654 4220 or nicole.sallur@deedi.qld.gov.au
- Sheep Extension Officer – Kate Nicholas (Longreach) on 07 4650 1225 or kate.nicholas@deedi.qld.gov.au

