



ASHEEP – Lamb Marking

May 2021

Whist on my travels back and forth along the Ravensthorpe highway, I've enjoyed the watching the seasons turn over by way of what is in the paddocks. The month of May alludes to a productive year in tiny green sprouts and freshly minted lambs. That can only mean lamb marking is also upon us and this well timed Vet Spot gives us at Swans the opportunity to ensure it goes as painlessly as possible – for both lambs and those who raise them. Lamb marking entails castration of the males, ear tagging, tail docking, vaccination and mulesing (if applicable.) Lamb marking is carried out for the optimum health and longevity of the flock. With a series of procedures taking place on a variety of anatomical locations, one should ensure pain relief is part of the process. Several pain relief options are available and depending on which procedures your enterprise undertakes, the gold standard for your lambs should be considered.

Table 1. Pain Relief Options for Lambs at Marking

	Numnuts [®]	Buccalgesic [®] or Meloxicam	TriSolfen [®]
Castration	Immediate pain relief	Extended pain relief	
Tail Docking	Immediate pain relief	Extended pain relief	
Ear tagging		Extended pain relief	
Mulesing		Extended pain relief	Immediate pain relief, antiseptic and reduction in bleeding

Choosing to use pain relief in your livestock is choosing better animal welfare. Feedback from producers who use of one or more pain relief methods has shown a more rapid recovery and a reduction in stress for stock after marking. Simple and effective, the above products are made for easy application or administration and can be used together for the best effect. The newest product on the market Numnuts[®], delivers local anaesthetic directly to the banding site which works immediately to offer relief, and at 60c per dose, producers can breathe a sigh of relief too.

Vaccination is an essential tool to keeping a healthy flock, and ties in well with lamb marking. We encourage producers to use at least a "3in1" vaccine that covers pulpy kidney, tetanus and caseous lymphadenitis (cheesy gland). These diseases rapidly spread amongst sheep, causing infection

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and/or death and serious costs to the producer. We also recommend producers utilize the “Eryvac” vaccination which protects against Erysipelas polyarthritus. This bacteria can cause polyarthritus, meaning inflammation of multiple joints in both lambs and adults. It lives in the soil and can enter into the bloodstream during lamb marking procedures, shearing or other wounds. Joints may be painful and the animal may run a fever but usually there is no obvious heat or swelling. Animals may recover with treatment but may go on to develop chronic arthritis at around 6 months of age. Likewise, “joint ill” can also cause polyarthritus from bacterial contamination, most commonly from the navel or lamb marking procedures. It is different to Erysipelas in that these joints are swollen, hot and full of pus. Abscesses may spread throughout the body once they have entered the bloodstream. There is no vaccination for joint ill. Good hygiene during procedures is therefore strongly encouraged.

To assist the lamb’s immune system through the marking procedures we recommend responsible prophylactic antibiotic use. This is to reduce potential bacterial contamination and sepsis particularly against Staphylococcus and Streptococcus strains. Historically this has been with the penicillin based antibiotic “Benacillin” (long acting antibiotic.) As this drug is currently in short supply, we are advocating the use of “Alamycin 300 LA” at 1ml per 10kg (1mL per head) intramuscularly. Alamycin is also a long acting antibiotic with broad spectrum coverage which is appropriate for use at lamb marking.

Should producers have concerns regarding disease status of their flock, we recommend consulting one of our livestock veterinarians. In many cases conducting a post mortem and collecting tissue samples can help identify the cause of morbidity or mortality and a plan for treatment or future prevention can be put in place. If producers have any queries regarding providing pain relief or vaccination for their livestock we are always happy to assist.

Dr. Katie Kreutz

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