

FLEXOLT®

World's first oral lice treatment for sheep eliminates lice in course-wool farmer trial

A Southland sheep farmer who's well known for the quality Romneys he breeds says the world's first oral treatment for lice, FLEXOLT, provided promising results towards his goal of eradicating lice in his sheep flock and supported his record lamb growth rates.

Adrian Lawson and partner Kirsty farm their 163ha property at Waituna, east of Invercargill, that has been in the family for 126 years. Romney sheep have been the backbone of their operation in which they run 1550 ewes, 370 hoggets, and a small herd of cattle.

Adrian a former New Zealand Romney Farmer of the Year says he has used various methods for controlling lice. As a new form of treatment, he thought FLEXOLT was helpful in that it could be used in sheep of any wool length and because it is unaffected by rain.

MSD Animal Health's FLEXOLT is the world's first oral lice treatment for sheep. Now available in New Zealand, it is set to revolutionise lice management for farmers.

Administered orally with a drench gun, it works from the inside out so farmers can treat lice in their flocks at any time of the year, with any length of wool and in any weather.

"Every treatment has the word 'control' on the label, and I am keen on eradication. Lice can be a real problem. If you get a serious infestation, it can affect lamb growth," says Adrian.

Adrian's business model relies on breeding as many fast-growing lambs as possible to heavy weights, so he aims to have lambs gaining 250g-300g a day.

"Lambs don't do as well if they're scratching at themselves. It's great to have a new treatment option as unfortunately lice treatments are becoming like worm treatments, there are less of them that are effective."

Adrian's goal is now to use FLEXOLT across his entire flock and only treat them for lice every 24 months.



Adrian's property hosted an independent trial of FLEXOLT in June 2021 prior to its commercial release. With lice counts undertaken at 1, 2, 3, 6, 14 & 21 weeks post treatment, Adrian was surprised to observe that sheep stopped rubbing within a day of treatment and that lice counts carried out after one week revealed a near-total eradication of lice, with only a single louse found, barely clinging to life. FLEXOLT's rapid absorption means it starts working within one day of sheep being treated and while it is eliminated from the bloodstream very quickly it is retained in the wool fibre. This means the chemical remains long enough in the wool to allow the eggs to hatch and eliminate the emerging nymphs.

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"We are surrounded by dairy farms so there is no way lice can be introduced to the flock if they have been treated and if we quarantine and treat any new animals arriving on the property. We should eradicate lice using FLEXOLT," says Adrian.

Adrian says while coarse-wool sheep farmers may dismiss products like FLEXOLT as a hard to justify expense with the low price of wool, its potential to offer savings through reduced shearing to control lice or a reduction in the number of treatments makes it a more viable option for all farming businesses.

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He believes FLEXOLT will also be a real boon for fine wool sheep farmers, particularly Merinos, as farmers look to produce high quality fleece.

"I think it's a real vote of confidence for the industry to see new products and innovation being introduced. When animal health companies have been walking away from New Zealand, it's great to see companies like MSD bringing in new products."



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