

FLEXOLT®

Otago farmers use new oral lice treatment FLEXOLT® to deal with insidious lice in their flock.

Strath Taieri farmers Andrew and Lynnore Templeton have built their business on quality and attention to detail, but insidious lice infestations in their flock had challenged their patience and seen them exhaust every method of treatment.

The couple who farm The Rocks Station, a 5200-ha sheep and beef property near the Taieri River, are former winners of the Otago Ballance Farm Environment Awards. They run 17,000 stock units made up of 11,000 ewes, 3,000 of which are Merinos and 8,000 half-breds, mated respectively to a Texel or an Australian White Suffolk. They also have 375 cows and winter 3,500 hoggets.

For the past two years they have struggled with lice in their flock and this season they even considered taking a hit to their bottom line by shearing early, before mating, to control the infestation.

After speaking with their trusted veterinarian, Dave Robertson from The Veterinary Centre Oamaru, they decided to try FLEXOLT the world's first oral treatment for lice in sheep, introduced to New Zealand by MSD Animal Health.

“We had heard about FLEXOLT’s effectiveness and its successful trials in Australia that showed 99% efficiency. As soon as we heard about it, I knew we needed this stuff,” says Lynnore.



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Administered orally, FLEXOLT 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.

Lynnore says before FLEXOLT they had tried everything to treat lice. Shearing, pour-on and commercial shower dips. They even bought a new pump to drive an extra high-powered jetter and ran the sheep through twice, but they all provided the same results. Temporary relief from lice, followed by a resurgence.

“We had tried everything before FLEXOLT, but the lice population just kept rebuilding,” says Lynnore.

The Templetons produce about 350 bales of wool and estimate each shearing two or three bales were badly infected by lice, leading to substantial discounts and holding up the wool handlers in the shed.

Depending on the level of infestation, lice are estimated to cost New Zealand’s fine wool sheep farmers between \$7,000 and \$8,000 per year per 1,000 ewes in the lost wool clip, because of a reduction in fleece weight, cotted fleece and discoloration.

Within two weeks of treating their flocks with FLEXOLT, the Templetons are cautiously optimistic their flock is free of lice.

“The signs are promising. Sheep showing telltale signs of infestation, including itching and pulled wool were visibly healthier,” says Lynnore. Closer inspection and lice counts on specific Merinos also showed no parasites and visibly dead lice.

Lynnore says they started using FLEXOLT by treating their Merinos first and then bringing in different mobs for treatment alongside other health treatments they were doing.

“We have 15,000 sheep so it’s likely we may have missed one or two in the treatment, but we are hoping we have got the majority and lowered the lice population enough to get us through several years of not having to treat lice,” says Lynnore.

Andrew believes the impact of FLEXOLT at The Rocks has the potential to be far greater than the immediate relief of lice.

“If we can keep the lice at bay for several of years before needing retreatment, it’s a game-changer for our business,” says Andrew. While they don’t operate a closed system, bringing in up to 600 replacement Merinos and approximately 1000 half-bred lambs every season, they have added FLEXOLT to their quarantine protocols for sheep coming onto the property treating them on arrival to keep lice out.

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Lynnore says some farmers may look at the cost of FLEXOLT and question whether it’s an expense they can afford.

“If you look at what we’re spending with double jetting, using pour-on, and getting a commercial shower dip, that’s expensive both in time and money. If FLEXOLT delivers and it means that we don’t have to treat our flock for several years, then it’s well worth it,” says Lynnore.



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