



LHPA farm chat – November 2011

Rabbit control over the summer period is essential

Hot summer conditions provide the ideal opportunity for baiting rabbits effectively, but a number of steps must be followed to ensure good bait up-take and limited risk to non-target species.

Firstly, locate and determine the size of the rabbit population by spotlighting at night. Rabbits have the ability to roam looking for food or mates but will tend to stick to a radius of approximately one km from burrows or a warren. Once a home range is established for the presence of rabbits, a closer inspection will reveal whether they are surface dwelling rabbits or have a warren structure they inhabit. Often man-made structures like piles of timber or rubbish dumps provide excellent protection for rabbits to hide under.

Warrens can be easily controlled by fumigation. Use dogs to run loose rabbits into the burrows then place fumigation tablets down each burrow and close all entrances to the warren structure. Moistening the fumigation tablets in the warren activates the tablets faster and releases the gases to asphyxiate the rabbits underground. This method is quick, cheap and very effective if follow-up visits continue for a few weeks to retreat any opened burrows.

Baiting programs should be conducted when rabbits are not breeding as a potential second population can be under the ground and not baited as they wait to emerge at three weeks of age. Carrot bait is used during the summer period as it is moist and very attractive when little other feed is available. It is preferable if paddocks are grazed heavily prior to baiting to reduce the competition feed and ensure the carrot bait is readily eaten. A program can usually be tailored over a 5-7 day period for 1080 baiting and over two weeks for a Pindone (anticoagulant bait) program. Rabbits should be left to settle and not be shot, dogged or trapped during a baiting program.

Baiting rabbits takes a bit of pre-planning with sound advice from Livestock Health and Pest Authority (LHPA) rangers as to the best method for each individual scenario. Please contact the professional staff at your local Central West LHPA for assistance in tailoring a plan for your enterprise.

The warm wet summer is also looking like another terrific year for worms in sheep, and the Central West LHPA district veterinarians are warning producers to be vigilant in monitoring Faecal Egg Counts (FECs) and drenching strategically.

A mob of weaners was identified in the Central West district with significant worm burdens despite being drenched six weeks prior. A drench resistance test was conducted on the farm to check for possible drench resistance. Drench resistance refers to sheep worms that have developed a genetic resistance to specific drench classes. As a result, certain drenches are no longer effective against these 'super' worms.

Drench resistance testing on this farm involved testing 60 young sheep with five different drench classes. Faeces were collected from each sheep 14 days post-drenching, and a FEC performed on each animal. The outcome of the results was surprising with all drenches shown to be effective. On this particular farm, it was concluded that seasonal conditions contributed to the rapid build up of worms on pasture despite effective drenches.

A Drench Resistance Test really is the only way to know which drenches are working on your farm, and very few of these have been performed over the past few years in the Central West. Drench resistance testing should ideally be carried out every 2-3 years. The Central West LHPA is currently assisting producers to set up and conduct these tests, so please contact your local office for more information.