



Getting the jump on lice!

Lice still manage to be a topical point of discussion despite producers' best eradication efforts.

Meat and Livestock Australia's Johann Schroder provided an insight into integrated lice management at the recent Livestock Health & Biosecurity Victoria breakfast in Beaufort. Mr Schroder emphasised the importance of having a biosecurity plan that's specific to factors affecting your individual farm.

Some suggestions to prevent the introduction of lice include:

- Maintain boundary fences at a sheep-proof standard, paying particular attention to tree plantations where sheep can remain undetected.
- Consider introducing buffer zones along boundary fences so you can deal with stray sheep before they are introduced to your flock.

- Work with neighbours to improve fences and manage lice problems in your area. For example, if a neighbour finds one of your sheep on their property, ask them to call you for collection rather than putting it back over the fence so you can quarantine before re-introduction.
- Inspect sheep before purchasing, isolate new sheep on arrival and request a National Sheep Health Statement.
- Request shearers' microwave their moccasins to minimise the risk of lice transfer.

If infestation occurs, the best time to treat sheep is soon after shearing using a plunge dip. This gives the best chance of eradicating lice and minimises residue in wool. Mr Schroder said it might be unfashionable and hard work, but plunge dipping is the most effective chemical application for lice.

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Use of long wool backliners should only be considered as a control tool to limit further wool damage before shearing, but be aware of the wool harvest intervals.

With lambing ewes there are many different scenarios relating to lambing time, shearing time for ewes and lambs and weaning time. In some instances it will be possible to shear and treat, in other circumstances a long wool treatment may be required. This is where the Ewe-Lamb Treatment Tool guides you through a series of questions to help you decide the best course of action to suite your situation.

If you decide to treat breeding ewes, the 'Lice Treatment for Breeding Ewes and their Lambs' tool at www.LiceBoss.com.au guides you through a series of questions to help you decide the best course of action to suit your situation. It suggests the type of treatment for the ewes and considers whether their lambs may also require treatment.

Treatment considerations include the ability to penetrate the fleece to the skin with the relevant product, wool length and the cost to treat as well as the opportunity cost of not treating, see table 1.



MLA's Johan Schroder presenting on lice to producers at Beaufort

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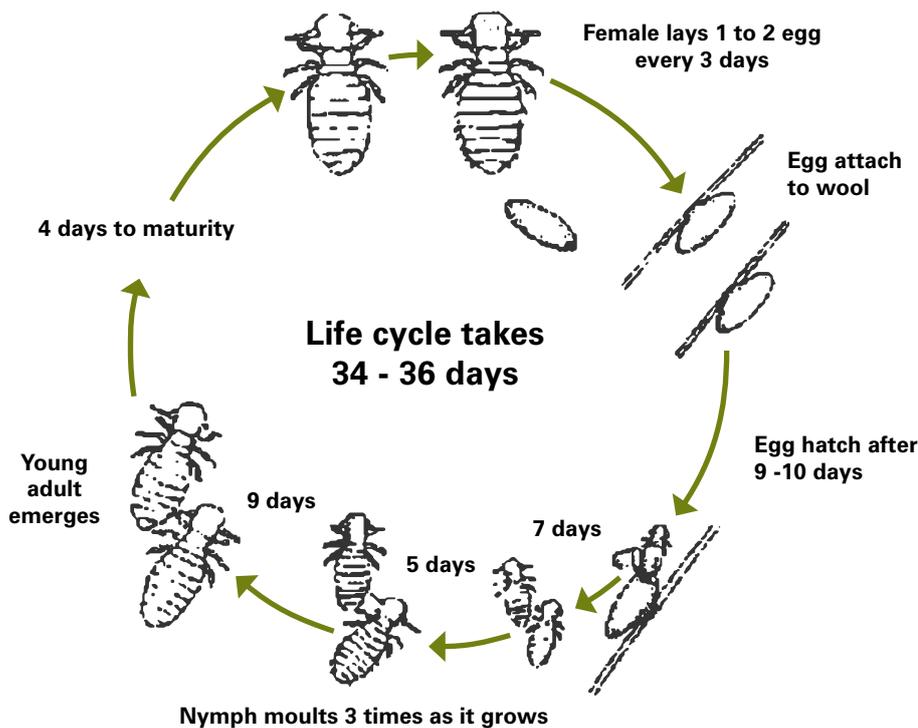


Image 1. Life cycle of a sheep louse. Source: Peter James

Table 1. Results from the LiceBoss Long Wool Tool showing scenarios with a mob of 1000 ewes, with an average (lice-free) fleece value of \$60. Source: Beyond the Bale, Issue 67, June 2016.

Months until next shearing when 1% of the mob are seen rubbing	Cost of wool loss if no long wool treatment is applied
10	\$14,300
8	\$8,600
6	\$3,500
4	\$1000
2	\$220

More animal health resources are available on the VFFs website. Visit bit.ly/vffanimalhealth for topical fact sheets on body lice in sheep, national sheep health statement, general sheep vaccines and more.

Tip: LiceBoss® has a range of tools and information about preventing, monitoring and treating lice. Make sure the information it tailored to suit your situation.

For more information, contact Livestock Health & Biosecurity Victoria's Catherine James on 0418 360 470, cjames@vff.org.au or on Twitter @vff_LHBV.

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