

Pain Relief

Importance of Pain Relief

Pain relief is considered a necessary measure for the health and welfare of an animal while some animal husbandry practices are performed. While the purpose of pain relief is to relieve the animal of pain, it also allows animals to recover quicker and have less of a negative impact on both welfare and production.

Though there is currently no legislation requiring the use of pain relief in cattle husbandry procedures, it is strongly encouraged that they be used, to improve welfare.

As of 1 July 2020, producers in Victoria are required to administer a registered pain relief product when mulesing sheep. Failure to do so is regarded as an offence under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2019.

While this factsheet provides information to assist producers with pain relief and products, a veterinarian or professional should always be consulted, and use of this factsheet should be as an informative guide only.

Husbandry Activities That Require Pain Relief

There are several husbandry procedures that may require administration of pain relief products. These may include:

Cattle	Sheep
Branding Castration Dehorning/Disbudding Spaying/Neutering	Castration Dehorning/Disbudding Tail docking Mulesing

Understanding the type of pain that may be associated with each husbandry practice is key to choosing the appropriate pain relief. For instance, castration may produce both immediate pain (nerve damage) and long-lasting pain (inflammatory or neuropathic). Therefore, using only one type of pain relief product may not be adequate.

Using a combination of pain relief options when marking is preferable eg. Buccalgesic® and NumOcaine when using rubber rings, or Meloxicam and Tri-solfen® when mulesing.

Factsheet

Types of Pain Relief Products

There are two different types of pain relief:

- local anaesthetic, or
- non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)

Anaesthetics and analgesics (NSAIDs) provide pain relief in different ways. Anaesthetics act almost immediately after application or administration, and will numb the affected area by blocking its sensory function. Analgesics on the other hand, act by reducing the physiological inflammatory pathways response to an activity, and aid in longer lasting pain relief by reducing triggers to pain at a cellular level.

A veterinarian will be able to best determine which type of pain relief is best suited to the animal and the procedure being carried out. While topical anaesthetics can be purchased over the counter under the direction of a veterinarian, other anaesthetics and analgesics will need to be prescribed by a veterinarian.

Pain Relief Products

There are several products available for pain relief:

Used For	Product	Type of Pain Relief	Description and Use	Veterinary Prescription Required	Meat Withholding Period (MWP)	Export Slaughter Interval (ESI)
Cattle or Sheep	Tri-solfen®	Local anaesthetic (topical)	Gel spray on post operative wounds. Anaesthetic and antiseptic.	No	90 days	90 days
Cattle or Sheep	Buccalgescic® and Butec®	NSAID (oral)	Gel which is applied to inside the mouth, next to the cheek. Fast acting and short term pain relief and anti-inflammatory for use if using rings or knife for marking. Administer pre operatively.	No	10 days	10 days
Sheep	Numnuts®/NumOcaine	Local anaesthetic (injectable)	Injected at site of tail docking or castration when using rings only. Used in conjunction with NumNuts ring applicator system.	No	0 days	An ESI has not been established for this product.
Sheep	Meloxicam/Metacam®	NSAID (injectable)	Subcutaneous injection administered pre operatively to reduce pain and inflammation. Lambs must be older than 14 days.	Yes	11 days	11 days

More information on Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development website - [Best Practice Marking of Lambs](#)

Available Pain Relief Products for Goats

Unfortunately, pain relief options are limited and lacking for goats. In most Australian states, pain relief isn't available over the counter and will have to be prescribed by a veterinarian.

Best Pain Relief Option Combinations

Procedure	Pain Relief Option (with additional beneficial pain relief)
Ring on Scrotum and Ring on Tail	Numnuts®
Ring on Scrotum and Hot Iron on Tail	Numnuts® (+ systemic anti-inflammatory - either Metacam® or Buccalgesic®)
Surgical Castration and Hot Iron on Tail	Systemic anti-inflammatory - Metacam® or Buccalgesic® (+Tri-solfen®)
Mulesing	Tri-solfen® or systemic anti-inflammatory - Metacam® or Buccalgesic® (+Tri-solfen® and systemic anti-inflammatory - Metacam® or Buccalgesic® combined)

Source: [Pain Relief Webinar with Dr Andrew Whale](#)

Choosing A Product

Several aspects that you may need to consider are:

- Husbandry procedure
- Size and age of animal
- Number of animals
- Multiple treatments required?
- Skill of technician
- Withholding period of product
- Shelf life of product
- Storage requirements

If you are unsure about which product would work best for you and for the activity you are undertaking, consult your veterinarian.

Before Conducting Animal Husbandry Activities

Before you perform any activities that require the use of pain relief, you should also consider implementing some of the following to minimise stress to the animals, handlers and technicians:

- Try to conduct husbandry procedures associated with pain on animals as young as possible.
- Have a technician that is adequately trained and skilled.
- Have good hygiene practices.
- Monitor animals in the coming days and weeks to identify any complications early.

What Can You Do As A Producer

As a producer, it is important to consider the animal health and welfare aspects of providing pain relief when carrying out animal husbandry activities. This includes, but is not limited to, the activities listed above. Ear notching/tagging also show benefits, when performed with pain relief.

It is worth considering the adoption of alternative practices for some husbandry practices that minimise pain, and in some cases, remove the need for these husbandry practices altogether. For instance, breeding for barer breeches in sheep can reduce instances of flystrike and reduce the need for mulesing. Also, implementing more frequent and well-timed crutching and shearing could assist this adoption. Or breeding for polled cattle can eliminate the need for dehorning practices.

Further Resources



STOCK
PAIN
RELIEF
SENSE

Victorian Farmers Federation

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