



## Sheep CRC Practical Wisdom Notes

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<b>Author:</b>	Lu Hogan
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## FLYBOSS: RESOURCES FOR INTEGRATED FLYSTRIKE CONTROL IN AUSTRALIAN SHEEP

### Key points

- Integrated breeding and management strategies for flystrike control are the most effective.
- FlyBoss provides information and tools to determine the most effective program for your region and your flock.

### Introduction

Body and breech strike are major health issues for sheep across all rainfall zones of Australia. Dag and wrinkle are the most important predisposing risk factors for breech strike, whereas the presence of fleece rot is the major cause of body strike. Sheep displaying these traits are highly likely to be struck when temperature, humidity and rainfall events provide optimal conditions for blowflies.

### What is an integrated control program and why is it more effective?

Integrated programs have a higher success rate because they do not depend on one thing to achieve the goal. Instead, by combining a number of different control approaches, the overall risk of a program failure is greatly reduced, as the chance of a number of methods failing simultaneously is far less likely.

An integrated program for control of flystrike combines both breeding and management approaches. The optimal combination will depend on the climatic conditions and length of the flystrike risk period in your region and the characteristics of your flock.

### What is included in an integrated flystrike control program?

The first thing that should be considered is the susceptibility of your flock: how the sheep score for key traits that determine flystrike risk. With this knowledge, a balanced breeding objective can be developed that selects animals with reduced risk, but continued productivity in terms of fleece weight and fibre diameter.

Knowledge of the key periods for flystrike risk in your region is essential. Blowfly pupae spend winter buried in the soil and emerge when the soil temperature is above 15°C. Humidity and warm air temperature are ideal conditions for female flies to lay eggs; typically when daytime temperatures are over 17°C and humidity is high, often following rainfall events.

With the flock susceptibility and key risk periods in mind, consider how you can best protect your sheep cost-effectively, safely, and with regard to animal welfare and residue issues, while also minimising the risk of developing chemical resistance in blowfly populations.

To achieve this:

- Assess whether long-term protection from mulesing is still warranted; cease mulesing when flystrike risk can be appropriately managed by other means.
- Choose the optimal times for shearing, crutching and chemical applications to provide additional protection from flystrike.
- Apply chemicals according to the label.

### What are the FlyBoss Tools?

There are a range of tools on the FlyBoss website that can assist you to develop an integrated flystrike control plan. The tools allow you to compare the flystrike risk in different management systems, optimise treatments, select appropriate chemicals and manage chemical residues in the wool clip. The tools provide information based on climatic conditions in your local region and the characteristics of your flock, which is important in developing your own strategic approach to flystrike control.

### Take-home messages

- Use the FlyBoss website and strategic planning tools to develop an integrated approach to controlling flystrike.
- Assess your flock for wrinkle, dag and fleece rot: the key risk factors for breech and body strike.
- Develop a balanced breeding objective that selects rams and ewes with reduced risk, but continued productivity for the income earning traits.
- Develop a plan for ewes culled from the flock, e.g. sell, or join to terminal sires.
- Use management techniques such as shearing, crutching and strategic chemical applications to provide additional protection from flystrike.
- Use chemical applications according to the label and pay attention to the risk of developing chemical resistance in blowfly populations.

### Further information:

[www.flyboss.com.au](http://www.flyboss.com.au)

[www.paraboss.com.au](http://www.paraboss.com.au)

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