



DOHNE

Solutions

BARE BREECH

The surgical Mulesing of sheep is an issue that will not go away.

With the rise in the use of social media, a continually widening rift between city and country connections, and the ease with which “keyboard warriors“ can gain airspace without responsibility or accountability, “righteous indignation” is expressed more and more frequently.

Fashion labels are threatened by organizations with agendas of their own. The wool production sector has been targeted in various ways by groups that claim to represent animal rights. These targeted attacks have not always been based on fact, nor have they been balanced, but they are having an impact in the market place.

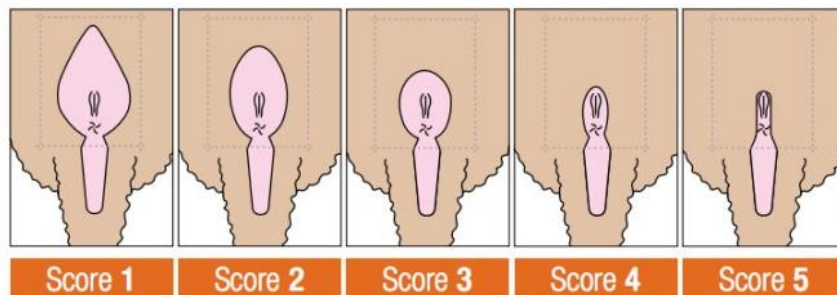
None-the-less, we can assume with confidence that they will continue. Ideally our whole industry can show an increasing ability to avoid the most contentious issue of all; that of mulesing. Certainly the use of pain relief has “taken the sting” out of the lobbying, but it is not the ultimate solution.

It is now widely recognised that sheep with naturally occurring bare breech hold the key to avoiding a city-oriented consumer backlash against wool production.

“Genetic selection for Bare Breech is the only way forward” has been widely quoted in the Industry.

Sheep CRC, MLA and AWI have jointly prepared a visual guide for scoring the two relevant traits for recording at marking time. These are Breech Cover and Breech Wrinkle.

Breech cover – Lambs (BCOV)



Breech cover scores. Source: Sheep Genetics.

We have been recording Breech Cover at marking time since April 2010.

Sheep with significant bare breech are easier to care for and require less time to crutch, with less stained wool the beneficial result. An increase in the interval between shearing and crutching is also of benefit.



A freshly crutched ewe, with a bare breech (low breech cover score).

In more recent times, we have used the Sheep CRC standard of recording Dag Score and Urine stain when crutching our mature ewes, seven and a half months after shearing. Our results showed that 37% had a dag score of 1, and a further 53% were score 2. This meant a pleasing 91% of all our mature ewes were either score 1 or 2.

Ultimately, the information gained from these data sets should help us and our clients select for a more easy care and low dag score flock.