

Overview

- Occurs between January - May (late Summer - Autumn) when it is warm, moist and there is plenty of dead leaf matter on pasture for facial eczema fungus to grow on.
- When animals eat pasture, they also eat the fungus that releases toxins, causing mild to severe liver damage.
- The damaged liver is unable to remove waste products from the blood. These waste products remain in the bloodstream and react with sunlight in the un-pigmented white skin and the areas not covered by fleece in sheep, causing severe sunburn.
- Dark coloured animals are less likely to show signs of peeling skin, but they can still suffer serious liver damage.

Symptoms

- Skin damage from sunburn - swelling, crusting, and oozing (often around nose, eye, and ear margins)
- Irritation and restlessness
- Decreased production/growth rates
- Abortion
- Death



The signs can present as any of the above, but the most common clinical sign seen is severe sunburn.



A SHEEP GUIDE TO Facial Eczema

Management/ Prevention/ Treatment

THE BEST CURE IS PREVENTION:

Use of zinc preventively: for best protection, individual dosing of sheep with a zinc bolus such as Face-Guard.



- Keep an eye on regional spore counts
- Do spore counts across your own property. Follow this link <https://www.franklinvets.co.nz/blog/commercial-farms/taking-a-sample-for-spore-monitoring>
- Avoid using paddocks with a history of high spore counts
- Using supplementary feeds such as hay, silage and crops

Treatment

- Facial eczema causes permanent liver damage. For any animal with severe clinical signs, a veterinary consultation is highly recommended to create an appropriate treatment plan.

Nursing for Sheep with mild symptoms:

- Remove the animal(s) from the affected pasture
- Low protein diet with no chorophyll in it (hay or silage)
- Provide shade (complete darkness is best)
- Apply Filta-bac ointment on affected areas



When to call us

- For bolusing prevention
- When clinical signs are showing

*Updated Nov 25