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Worm control needs a holistic approach

Worms cost Australian sheep producers more in lost productivity than any other animal health problem, a situation made worse with drench resistance now widespread and increasing in severity in all sheep regions.

Sheep producers need reliable information on a holistic approach to management, and according to Novartis Animal Health Veterinarian Ben Brown, WormBoss is the best online resource to do so.

First developed in 2005 by the Cooperative Research Centre for Sheep Industry Innovation (Sheep CRC) and subsequently hosted by Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) until 2012, the WormBoss website is designed to help producers develop management plans specifically for their local environment, and access advice and worm control tools, including a database to assist with drench selection.

While most sheep producers realise the need to reduce the impact of worms in their flocks, Mr Brown says not everyone has the right information to effectively manage worms across their operation.

“The starting point needs to be an accurate understanding of what drenches work on the worms present on an individual farm, because the situation will be different for every farm,” Mr Brown said.

“It is also important to adopt a holistic approach like that advocated by WormBoss, which goes beyond just rotating drenches to also consider factors such as grazing management, genetics and nutrition for example.”

Novartis use WormBoss to provide their staff with information and materials about best practice worm control; the aim is that this information then flows onto farmers at the point of sale for drenches. This year, Novartis will have distributed approximately 500 WormBoss worm control programs nationwide.

A common mistake seen by Mr Brown is sheep producers rotating brands rather than active ingredients when trying to manage worm resistance, assuming the chemical groups change between brand names and manufacturers.

“It is important to rotate active ingredients, not brands. There is currently an over-reliance on Macrocytic Lactone or ML drenches because it isn't always realised that many different brands contain this same active,” Mr Brown said.

“Using new actives such as monepantel now, as part of a drench rotation program, will help to prolong the life of older actives by removing worms from treated sheep already resistant to these older chemicals.”

Drench Decision Guides are available through WormBoss and help producers assess their worm control strategy through a series of questions, before making specific drench recommendations.

The WormBoss website, www.wormboss.com.au, was re-launched in late 2012 and now offers producers more tools for making drenching decisions and developing worm control programs.



An Australian Government Initiative



It provides links to leading advisers in each state as well as advice on grazing management to reduce infection, advice on breeding to increase resistance and information on the importance of nutrition to provide further protection.

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- For more information on worm control visit WormBoss at www.wormboss.com.au

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