

# **SHEEP VET ONLINE**

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## **Mycotic dermatitis (Dermatophilosis) of sheep**

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or visit our website: <http://www.sheepvet.com.au>

Ovine dermatophilosis ('lumpy wool', 'dermo') is well known to Merino sheep producers in higher rainfall areas of Australia. It is mainly recognised by scabs and matted wool, usually over the back, which makes shearing difficult and predisposes animals to blowfly strike.

There are many misconceptions about this disease, and some of the following points may help with understanding it.

- Dermatophilosis is seldom recognised in its milder form which includes small scabs on the non-wool areas of the ears, face and legs. However, these chronic lesions are important as the reservoir of infection in a flock.
- New infections occur via spores which are released when infected scabs become wet. These then infect wet wool or skin on new hosts. Thus, moving or yarding wet sheep together, favours transmission.
- Older sheep may be immune in infected flocks, and young sheep tend to be more susceptible.
- Many mild to moderate cases of true 'lumpy wool' self cure, and there is no need for treatment.
- Our experience is that lambs may become infected from their mothers, but these lesions often heal without treatment.
- Some wool types might be more prone to infection- especially the broader more open types. However, such animals are generally not suited to higher rainfall regions.
- Susceptibility to 'lumpy wool' is NOT inherited, and therefore, culling affected ewes or rams will not reduce the occurrence in the flock.
- The only effective means of reducing prevalence of infection is for the whole flock to be dipped after shearing with cetrimide-zinc sulphate. This can be used alone or mixed with organophosphate or synthetic pyrethroid chemicals. Alternatively, use a magnesium fluorosilicate-sulphur-rotenone dip which is available commercially in Australia. [Contact us](#) or your local vet for further advice on these products.
- Treatment with zinc sulphate will NOT cure cases of 'lumpy wool'.
- Treatment with antibiotics is ONLY of value in enabling infected sheep to be shorn. In most situations, there is NO other reason to administer antibiotics to 'dermo' sheep or lambs.

- Treating affected individual sheep does not reduce prevalence
- Treating with antibiotics has included the use of penicillin-streptomycin at high dose rate. Not only is this unnecessary in many cases, it also presents the risk of prolonged tissue residues of streptomycin. Authorities in many countries (including Australia) have now banned the use of streptomycin alone or in combination. [Contact us](#) or your local vet for advice on alternative treatments for individuals to enable shearing.
- Mycotic dermatitis needs to be approached as a management problem-with emphasis on effective risk management. [We can provide advice on this.](#)

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