

Hello everyone.

Unlike the three doctors who have spoken before me I'm not a good public speaker – in fact I have never spoken at a function like this before and after the last week I'm pretty sure I won't be doing it again.

Before I start to speak on what I have been asked to I would like anyone who believes sheep shouldn't be mulesed to put their hand up. It's really only you that I'm here to speak to. I would also like to add that if you did have your hand in the air we have one thing in common – We *both* love animals.

As Angelo said my name is Paul Walton and I am from Wurrook which is a grazing property based at Rokewood, Victoria. Our farm runs 21,000 Fine and Superfine Wool Sheep which average about 18 micron. This includes 6000 stud ewes. My wife Kylie and I run the farm with my parents.

This year we have increased our ewe numbers and are now lambing down 10,000 merino ewes. We have a pure merino flock which is our only enterprise. A lot of people might question having a single enterprise but we love growing wool, we love growing the best wool we can and we get a lot of satisfaction from caring for an animal that's purpose is greater than just for slaughter. Our life is centred around our sheep and having them as well bred and healthy as possible. We take enormous pride in the well being and appearance of our flock and use every resource we have to care for and improve them.

Like most people in the wool industry we have found it hard to get excited about much that is happening in our industry at present.

After reading an article in the Stock and Land in late autumn about a product to apply to freshly mulesed sheep, I was more than interested. I decided to speak to David Hucker about purchasing some of this new product and as luck would have it, Tri-Solfen became available a week before we were due to start mulesing. Thankfully, the product arrived the day before we began.

The reason I was so keen to use Tri-Solfen was because I thought it might help the lambs get over this necessary operation. I'm the person who cares for our sheep and I wasn't interested in using Tri-Solfen just to please other people. Our sheep are very important to us and we only mules them because it improves their well being by reducing the chance of fly strike for their entire life – unlike Europe we don't get subsidised to pay shepherd to sit on his ass.

I believe that it is important to mules lambs while they are young and to only make the operation as small as practical. I don't believe that the number of people that can perform this necessary operation should be overly restricted. That is, the more people that can competently perform this necessary task, the sooner the lambs will be handled and recover.

Now, with the use of Tri-Solfen I don't believe it is in our sheep's interest for the industry to phase our mulesing before there is an alternative that will protect the sheep from fly strike as well as mulesing does. Of course that is not to say we should not be looking for practical alternatives.

After the last three weeks of using Tri-Solfen I have noticed that the lambs mothered up much quicker than usual which to me is the main worry about the whole mulesing operation. This year when we checked the lambs the day after they were mulesed and sprayed with Tri-Solfen we found them walking very freely and where they should be – right beside mum.

I also believe the lambs have definitely healed quicker and put more weight on than normal. In any spring lambing flock this is extremely important every year it is a race against the season to get the lambs heavy enough to wean so both lambs and ewes can be looked after properly. So while many people are arguing over the various issues in this industry I will be at home on the property looking after our sheep as normal and thanks to Animal Ethics I know the management of our lambs will be much easier.