

AWI breeder trials new mulesing spray

THE NEW anaesthetic and antiseptic spray for mulesing is being trialled on the property of Australian Wool Innovation board member and New South Wales stud breeder Wally Merriman.

He will mules 5000 lambs using the product, Tri-Sulfan, this spring and has endorsed it on anecdotal evidence so far.

"The lambs mulesed with the pain relief are doing a lot better than those done last week," he said.

"They have healed up really well and have shown very little, if any signs of stress."

Tri-Solfen was recently cleared by the Australian

Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority and will be officially launched next week.

It was developed by a company called Animal Ethics with financial assistance from Australian Wool Growers Association chairman Chick Olsson.

Peak wool industry body WoolProducers has accused Mr Olsson of self-interest in development of the product but Mr Olsson says any positive animal welfare development with mulesing was worthwhile.

Tri-Solfen has a viscosity similar to a light oil, Mr Merriman said. It is sprayed along the outline of the skin on the edge of

the mules and gives about eight hours' pain relief.

"Just after the operation, the lambs are feeding on their mothers and just a few days later you can see a big difference; they are healing up a lot faster than those mulesed without it," he said.

The sheep industry plans to stop mulesing by 2010, with AWI developing several alternatives.

AWGA has also developed the Australian Ethical Merino brand to promote wool from sheep mulesed with Tri-Solfen, which costs about 50 cents a head.

Mr Merriman said woolgrowers who bought the product would become registered to use

the brand, which could then be attached to wool from the property.

He agreed the demand for "Ethical Merino" had to come from the retail end of the industry rather than producers and brokers.

As principal of Merryville, one of the most influential studs in Australia, Mr Merriman said other large NSW studs such as Egelabra, Uardry and Haddon Rig had also endorsed the concept.

Some retailers in the United States have already signalled interest in using wool branded in such a way but as yet none has officially signed on.

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