

# BUYING DRENCH FOR SHEEP/GOATS?

## ADVICE FOR HOBBY FARMERS

***It is important that you rotate the type of drench you use. If you do not rotate drenches, you risk creating the problem of drench resistance on your property – and drench resistance is a major problem you can well do without.***

Department of  
Primary Industries,  
Parks Water and  
Environment



### **What are the types of drench ?**

There are three classes of drench that have been on the market for a long time – white drench, clear drench and mectins – and a new class of drench has just come onto the market, known as amino-actonitrile derivatives. Each class is sold under a variety of brand names. Essentially, white drenches are opaque white, clear drenches are a translucent yellow or blue and mectins' brand names usually end in "mec" or "mectin".

Each class of drenches works differently. So, worms that might be resistant to one class are not necessarily resistant to another class. If you use the same class of drench year-in-year-out, more worms will survive the drenching each time. And you'll end up, sooner rather than later, with a drench resistance problem on your property and some very unhealthy livestock. If you rotate the drench classes, those that survive a drench should be killed by the next drench – and that helps prevent the development of a drench resistance problem.

### **How do you rotate drenches?**

It's simply a case of using , for example, white drench one year, clear drench the next, mectin the year after etc. The order doesn't matter, the rotation does.

### **If you are buying drench for routine animal health management ....**

The aim should be to drench as least often as possible while still preventing worm disease. There is no golden rule about how often to drench – it all depends on the species of livestock and the conditions on your property. A general rule of thumb for a hobby farm situation is that if you are drenching twice a year and still having the occasional worm problem in any of your animals, you should seek professional advice because you probably have a problem that cannot be fixed by drenching alone.

### **If you are buying drench to treat wormy livestock.....**

Are you sure it's a worm problem ? Ill-thrift (ie losing weight on good feed) and scours are typical signs of a worm problem, but may be caused by other things. Further, not all wormy animals scour. The only sure way of knowing whether it's

a worm problem is a worm test. Testing for worms is cheap and easy. Kits are available, free of charge, from rural merchandisers, most vets and from DPIPWE. Lab tests cost only \$22 and you get the results back very quickly. ***If the problem is not worms, then a drench will not fix it and the animal will continue to suffer.***

## Drench resistance

If a drench doesn't work, it means one of four things

- you have a drench resistance problem
- the animal wasn't wormy in the first place
- you didn't drench the animal properly (eg the animal spat the drench out, you under-dosed or you simply missed one of your animals) or
- the drench gun isn't working properly (eg it is sucking air when refilling, the piston is "sticky" and is not returning to your pre-set position after each drench). Always check that the drench gun is delivering the correct dose before you start drenching.

You can check for drench resistance by testing for worms before drenching and then testing again 10 to 14 days later. ***It is pointless buying a class of drench to which there is a resistance problem on your property.***

If you have resistance to a particular class of drench on your property, that means greater reliance on the other classes of drench and that in turn increases the risk of those other drenches not working on your property either. That's why you should do all you can to minimise the risk of drench resistance developing on your property.

If you develop resistance to two or more classes of drench on your property, you are in serious trouble in terms of your options for dealing with worm disease.

## Livestock welfare

Worm disease and poor feed are the two most common health and welfare problems for sheep and goats on hobby farms. It is the responsibility of everyone who owns an animal, or even who has someone else's animal on their property, to have at least a basic understanding of how to look after that particular species of animal – and that includes not leaving animals to suffer from worm disease.

## Drenching is only part of the solution in worm management.

- Keeping your animals in good condition makes them much less susceptible to worm disease.
- Animals under stress (ie lactating, in late pregnancy, in drought, or at the weaner stage) are much more susceptible to worm disease. Ensuring they maintain good condition during these phases will reduce the risk of worm disease.
- Some breeds of sheep are naturally more resistant to worm disease than others. This is especially so in the higher rainfall areas of the State, so choosing the right breed for your situation will help reduce the risk.
- Goats are generally more susceptible to worm disease than sheep, especially in higher rainfall areas.
- If you keep your animal(s) in the same paddock for long periods, the worm population is more likely to build up and affect the livestock. Ideally, you should rotate your livestock around several paddocks so they are regularly put onto fresh pasture.

## More information for hobby farmers

There is detailed advice about the management of internal parasites on the DPIPWE website – follow the links through "biosecurity", "animal health" and then "sheep health".

DPIPWE has also produced a range of fact sheets especially for hobby farmers and smallholders. They include fact sheets on

Worms  
Body condition scoring  
Basic guide to nutrition  
Basic biosecurity tips

for most of the species commonly found on smallholdings. Please visit the DPIPWE website, follow the link at the bottom of the Biosecurity webpage and download whatever will help you look after your livestock better. Or phone us on 6165 3263 for a hard copy of any of those fact sheets.

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