

Flystrike

Flystrike is a terrible affliction, most commonly seen in sheep. It occurs when flies lay eggs on the wool or skin of sheep which then hatch and eat any available food. Some Australian fly species, now seen commonly in New Zealand, will lay eggs on perfectly healthy skin or clean wool, so the sheep doesn't have to be daggy or injured for the maggots to attack.

Over the warm months look out for sheep with dark or wet patches of wool, usually around their back end or shoulder. They will make sudden jerking movements, run along with their head down and look around at their sides. These are sure signs of flystrike.

To treat, cut the affected wool back, swear loudly at the maggots, and apply an insecticide designed for the purpose. (Disinfectants aren't great at killing maggots and at the strength most people use them, further burn the skin.)

Prevention is best. There are some great, safe products available that give reliable control of flystrike for weeks. Unfortunately most manufacturers think we all have a few hundred sheep or more, with products only being available in large quantities. At the clinic one of our vets can dispense the quantity you need to treat your animals. The only drawback is some of these products have a relatively long meat withholding period, so check this out before administering.