



Media release

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Beware of iodine deficiency in lambing season

With lambing season approaching farmers should consider supplementing stock with iodine to reduce the risk of losing newborn stock.

Ballance Agri-Nutrients Head of Agro-Sciences Warwick Catto says farmers need to ensure their newborns are protected from iodine deficiency which can result in lamb fatalities. Several instances of large scale lamb losses in the past couple of seasons due to iodine deficiency have been reported, with the likelihood of more cases going unreported.

Iodine is a key driver of the animal's metabolic rate and a lack of it means newborns are unable to maintain their body temperature to survive. Iodine deficiency in the adult ruminant can result in a longer gestation and also mean the foetus may fail to develop vital organs properly.

Pregnant animals grazing kale are at particular risk because of goitrogens which reduce the animal's iodine status.

"Research conducted by Ballance and AgResearch shows that by applying a solution containing potassium iodide/iodate directly onto pasture, the risk of iodine deficiency is greatly reduced," says Warwick.

"Farmers should apply the solution directly onto pasture twice - the first time eight weeks before lambing and again four weeks before the season starts. This is a key time for foetal development and will ensure that an adequate iodine level passes across the placenta to the developing foetus.

"We have found that direct spraying of a solution containing potassium iodide/iodate to be a cost-effective way to apply the nutrient, and also avoids bringing all the stock into yards for drenching. Spraying will result in higher levels of iodine in the ewes through the final stages of pregnancy and in the vital stage of the newborn's development.

"Typically the technique is for each application to recommend applying 500gm potassium iodate per 1000 ewes to a small area of pasture and graze that area over a 24 hour period before returning to their normal rotation."

Inland and Westland areas of the country are deemed most at risk, however this does not mean that other regions can discount the effects of iodine deficiency.

Ballance Agri-Nutrients recommends that farmers check for iodine deficiencies. Farmers should consult with their animal health expert or Ballance Technical Sales representatives in their area for further advice.

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