Eczema a problem on your farm?

You have four options......
Option 1......

- Keep doing the same
- But expect the same results
Option 2

• Sell up and move to Southland
Option 3

• Zinc drenching and or aerial spraying – affordable and convenient?

• Only if you’re a dairy farmer
Option 4

• Buy Eczema tolerant rams
• Do your homework, SIL and ACE. Check for facial eczema certificates by Ramguard – there are innuendoes from some breeders suggesting they have more to offer than they do.

  Be VERY wary of the pretenders – breeders who have big advertising budgets often have little else to offer.
What is Eczema

- Painful, often fatal disease.
- The spores of fungus (*Pithomyces Charterum*) produce a toxin (*Sporidesmin*) which when ingested by stock damages the liver and bile ducts.
- The damaged liver cannot rid the body of wastes and it is one of these toxins which causes the photosensitivity.
Eczema Facts

• Eczema tolerance is highly heritable.
• Eczema is becoming increasingly prevalent throughout the North Island.
• **ALL** eczema breeders are eczema tolerant **NOT** resistant.
• There is no 100% eczema free, cost free, labour free prevention yet.
• Eczema and grass staggers have a high correlation of tolerance.
• Zeralanone, an infertility toxin in pastures occurring at the same time as eczema, has a favourable correlation with eczema tolerance.
Is facial eczema affecting your sheep?

If you have sheep in the North Island you should consider using F.E. tolerant sires but if you have a breeding flock in the high risk areas a facial eczema tolerant ram breeder should be your first choice.

48% of NZ sheep are in the North Island

FE higher risk area

FE lower risk area
How it effects you and your stock

• For every 3 in 100 animals showing signs of FE, about 70% of the flock may have subclinical FE.

• Huge losses are incurred from subclinical FE:
  - Lower lamb growth rates including death
  - Reproduction rates – lower lambing %
  - Liver failure
  - Death
  - Financially and emotionally draining
The ARDG are first in sporidesmin testing (since 1985) – originally testing at .1 mg/kg, now testing at .65 mg/kg, the highest commercial rate in New Zealand.

Only sires that have been FE tested, have been used by the ARDG since 1985.

DNA sequencing for eczema has been completed on ARDG sheep in 2012. This will enable Romney breeders only, access to DNA information relative for eczema selection.
Who are the ARDG

• Formed in 1968.

• In February 1969 participating breeders contributed 1% of their breeding flocks to the (then) central flock run by Rex Alexander of Waiuku.

• In 1969 the original mixed age flock lambed 154%, the following year 52% of that flock was lost with facial eczema.

• In 1979 the first field trials for F.E. testing were set up in South Auckland.

• In 1984 the first sporidesmin testing of rams for F.E. was set-up.

• In 1993 the central flock was disbanded and sire referencing across flocks was recommended by Ag Research and begun.

• In 2000 parasite testing was begun in conjunction with the Wairarapa Romney Improvement Group and Ag Research.

• In 2010 Molecular Breeding Values (DNA) are being added to historical breeding values to give greater accuracy to selection.
The group has five members from Dargaville in the North to Tirau in the South:

Bob Steed – Dargaville
Stuart Williams – Kaukapakapa
John Marchant – Maramarua
Craig Alexander – Matamata
RJ Alexander – Tirau and Mt Damper

Total recorded ewes – 2000

Sire referencing and a cross-flock analysis with input from AgResearch

Use of flock recording since 1968 now using SIL

Now using 50K snp chip on all single sires in conjunction with Pfizer and Ovita
SIL Genetic Trends Graph - FE

This is the progress ARDG is making. We have the top ranking FE rams in New Zealand.
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