

Mulesing alternative

NEW SOUTH WALES – Sheep treated with the experimental flystrike prevention treatment Skintraction went on public display for the first time recently in Australia alongside their unmulesed and mulesed siblings.

The presentation will have come as a welcome respite to industry chiefs in Australia who are still under pressure following the announcement that the AWI will miss the 2010 mulesing deadline, preferring instead to continue with its new flystrike prevention policy.

The AWI has been funding research by Cobbett Technology into Skintraction which it says is just one of a raft of possible flystrike prevention alternatives. Still in the trial stage, with more than 1,000 fine and medium wool Merino lambs already treated, the intradermal technology uses sodium lauryl sulphate (SLS) to reduce wrinkle and increase the bare area around the breech and tail of sheep.

The application is said to involve very little stress for the animal and also contains the powerful local antiseptic, benzol alcohol. Together with SLS, it is placed into the skin of treated animals by air pressure using a 'Pulse Needlefree applicator'. The same technology is used to vaccinate US troops in war zones and is commonly used to vaccinate livestock in the USA. The field trials so far have covered the optimal settings for the Pulse applicator, with various pressure, volume, tube diameter and spacing variations. This year, field trials are exploring the best patterns of application around the breech and tail of animals.

The registration of Skintraction will ultimately rely on approval by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA). While the release of results cannot take place until after the formal APVMA registration process, industry was able to observe the progress to date at the Dubbo show.