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ABSTRACT ONLY

Dags — cost thereof

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The following farmer observations are based on limited numbers and are really a plea for more accurate work to be done.

Loss from dags is difficult to cost but nationally it probably runs into millions in devalued wool and extra labour. On my own farm the direct loss is estimated to be about 63 cents/stock unit/annum.

To reduce this loss I have looked at the following practices:

1. Breeding, limited observations — nil results.
2. Drenching. In two-tooths a drench pre-tupping reduced dags 44% in a 3 month period.
3. Docking tails longer was inconclusive, possibly due to a limited difference between ‘long’ and ‘short’ tails.
4. Mules operation. Result a 50% reduction between January and May. Mulesed sheep are easier to crutch by hand or machine. Sheep were apparently not knocked about by the operation. Although gory, mulesing is preferable to fly strike in terms of suffering. Uninformed and emotional public opinion is a problem.

The greatest benefit of dag control or elimination may come from reduced fly strike.