Andrew Whale

Vet and consultant with a strong focus on animal survival on well being

vet clinic, 10 vets, livestock consultants, feed lab and worm egg count laboratory

A veterinarian has urged research to be fast tracked to help producers make an effective comparison of the various pain relief products currently available for livestock.

Andrew Whale, a vet and consultant with Livestock Logic based in Hamilton, Victoria, was a panellist on the producer consultation and adoption forum on day one of MLA’s Red Meat 2019 event in Tamworth.

He said producers in the sheep industry can now choose from five alternative products for pain relief - Numnuts, Buccalgesic, Metacam, Tri-Solfen, and now liquid nitrogen as a replacement for mulesing.

“What we don't have is really good research that compares them all to each other, so that we can actually tell industry what should be the gold standard,” Dr Whale said.

“It is our best bet at the moment.

“We know some of these products appear to be fantastic and there is some research that shows the benefits.

“But as an industry we really need to hurry up and get some really good data so we can give good advice, because at the moment we get phone calls from clients and they want to use something, but they ask which one is the best, where is the data, and we say, well there isn't any.”

Prevailing thinking at the moment was that Numnuts was the best bet where elastrator rings are being used. Tri-Solfen was fantastic but short lived, so producers were being advised to follow with an anti-inflammatory as well, such as Buccalgesic or Metaacam.

Dr Whale said he understood that a project to undertake this research was included in the annual research call this year which was fantastic, but it needed to be fast tracked.

“I hope it doesn't take two years to get that data out there to be relevant, because next lambing season or lamb marking it would be great to be able to say ‘this is what we know works in this situation.”

*He said there were some good videos being shared via social media demonstrating how pain relief is working, but said formal research data was needed.*

“With adoption the Twittersphere is helping that dramatically, but we do need evidence, not just a video, because you can doctor up a video pretty quickly by waiting four hours after you lamb mark to make those sheep look good.”

Profitable grazing sytems project - I think it is a wonderful tool

What is good about PGS is it is group based learning it is also transitionoing from an MLA running a lot of the extension to the IP being able to be developed by indiivual businesses and I think tha is a really important part of gettign businesses to run good workshops or good trainign practices

while it is govered by MLA and paid by MLA there is actually not vigour in ensuring that it is done in a manner that is actually getting results

we probide obviosuly consultacny services and training to people and if there paying us the money they demand uality

if they're coming to something that is paid for by someone else theny're not inclinded to say well I am not going to that free event, not going to ..

I feel like as an indstry we actually need to step back a little bit and get some private providors to develop bigger businesses around that space at the monet there are lots of 1-2 people organisaitons very reliant on packages made by someone else and they just stand up and deliver

I tdon't think they care enough about the outcomes that come out of thse projects

we have utilised someof the R&D and adoption models MLA have come out with recently, PDS, Profitable Grazing Systems, how to get better reproductive performance out of maiden ewes, and contract work through MLA open call, we find it a great wayt co ombine the research and adoption we re doign field work looking at importnat diseases or mangement practices affecteing farmers and what is grea t is we're upskilling vets, at the same time we reable to do that reserch on farm rather than it being in a university or area - most of ofour unidvieirties arent located in agricutural regions so we're not able to get that adoption happenign as quickly

so we're able to do post mortements on farm as part of reearch and development andwe're able to get that adoption happening immediatley because it is actually at theface of the farmer nad we're doing the right thing with them