

# Spray away shearing chill

FABRIC sheep coats designed to maintain superfine wool and protect cold sheep could become a thing of the past with the development of the lanolin-based ThermoSkin.

It's the 21st century alternative to shedding or coats – a weather shield that aims to protect sheep or any other shorn animals from the chilling elements of wind and wet in the immediate post-shearing period for up to six weeks.

Applied in a spray and invisible to the eye, ThermoSkin is also designed to reduce the loss of body weight in this critical period.

This innovative product – estimated to cost a dollar a sheep plus GST – was developed by Down Under Chemicals-Cosmetics creator, Henry King, Sydney, who has spent the past four years on research and development.

The idea was put to Mr King by Merino breeder, Bill Crawford, Victoria.

Mr King said trials were located in diverse weather

By CHELSEA GRACE

zones, from the Southern Highlands, to the Monaro, Victoria's East Gippsland and Alexandra in New Zealand.

The treatment, ideally applied immediately after shearing, had proven itself in some testing conditions in which the wind chill factor got down to minus 19.6 degrees.

Mr King said sheep usually lost weight after shearing.

"Shorn sheep usually go backwards; to maintain body weight was positive, but to increase body weight in the post shearing period is ideal," Mr King said.

Made from all-natural ingredients including lanolin, ThermoSkin is physiologically harmless, biodegradable, environmentally friendly and allows the sheep's skin to breathe.

"The product needed to be environmentally friendly as well as user friendly," Mr King said.

Exempted from registration by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), a dosage of 50 millimetres per animal is applied by a spray gun or portable jetting system set up within the holding race.

Mr King said once sheep had been coated, they could be exposed to rain 10 to 15 minutes after application.

"This will not affect the efficiency of the product.

"The product can be used with solvent-based backlines straight after or prior to application, but with water-based treatments the sheep must be totally dry prior to application," he said.

Mr King said the treatment was as easily removed from fleeces as it was to apply – normal procedures employed in commercial scouring plants will remove any residual product from fleeces.

He said along with its benefit as a weather shield, he hoped it would promote faster healing of injuries.

## Ahead of the mob at Cooma

FACED with the harsh tablelands climate of the Monaro, Merino breeders, Geoff and Helen Litchfield, "South Wondaltee", at Numerella, east of Cooma, welcome practical animal husbandry research.

The Litchfields, who shear pregnant ewes in August before a September lambing, said off-shears ewes were vulnerable to inclement weather.

"There is possibly no safe month to shear on the Monaro," Mr Litchfield said.

"It's been more than 20 years since traditional sheep coats were used post-shearing as we have sheep shelter sheds available."

Mr and Mrs Litchfield

participated in a trial of ThermoSkin with Down Under Chemicals-Cosmetics creator, Henry King, Sydney at the end of their ewe shearing last August.

At random, 200 rising three-, four- and five-year-old, twin and single bearing ewes were selected.

Half were sprayed with ThermoSkin using the portable spray system, the balance left as controls.

The ewes weighed about 56 kilograms at the beginning of the trial and were left together as a mob.

"The ewes were reweighed at the end of 15 days," Mr Litchfield said.

Results confirmed the product had helped

protect sheep from the elements, with the treated half gaining an average of 4.07kg, while the untreated gained 0.78kg.

Impressed with the 3.29kg difference outcome, Mr Litchfield (pictured) said the concept was a huge positive for animal husbandry in cold climates.

"At one dollar a head, ThermoSkin is a sound management tool," he said.

Mr and Mrs Litchfield said they intend to continue using the product as it avoided any stress on shorn sheep – particularly pregnant ewes.

"We are very fortunate to have a city chemist and inventor investing in the sheep industry," Mr Litchfield said.

### What is Lanolin?

■ Lanolin is a unique natural substance produced by sheep to form a natural protective coating on wool fibres

■ It is beneficial to the skin and is an important ingredient in skincare ointments

■ Lanolin can be used as a

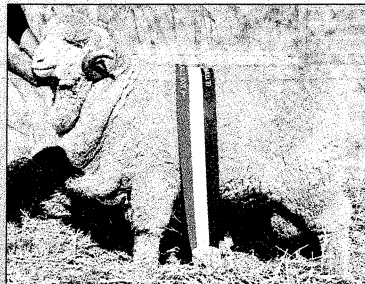
protective lubricant. It can protect metals from rust and rejuvenate wood, leather, rubber vinyl and plastic.

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George Merriman  
Ph: (02) 6385 3282  
Mob: 0428 853 282  
www.merryvillestud.com.au

Wal Merriman  
Ph: (02) 6385 3333  
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