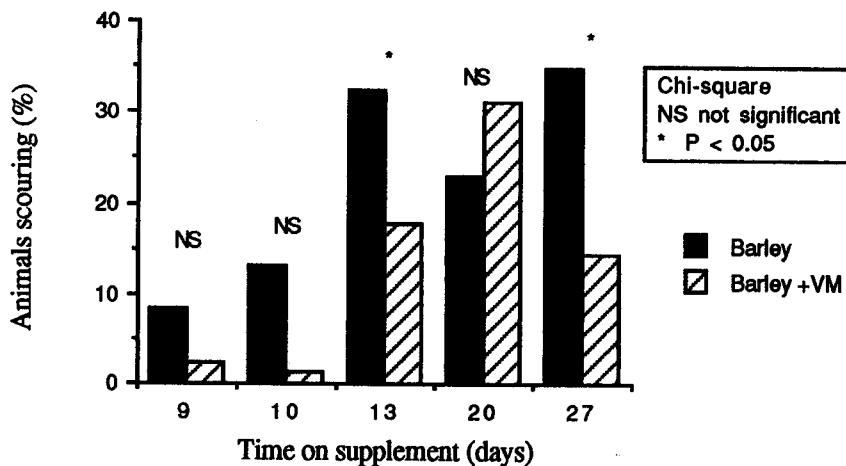


EASIER FEEDING AND REDUCED SCOURING IN SHEEP BY USING VIRGINIAMYCIN

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Feeding cereal grain as a supplement to grazing sheep is normally performed by daily feeding over a period of 10 to 14 with increasing amounts of the grain before starting a routine of twice weekly feeding. In a study using penned sheep Godfrey et al. (1990) demonstrated that, with the inclusion of virginiamycin, it was safe to feed barley grain once per week without adverse effects. These results were confirmed by Robaina et al. (1992). The purpose of the experiment reported here was to investigate the practice of weekly feeding of barley with virginiamycin under paddock conditions.

Two hundred and forty nine ewes (52 kg liveweight) were allocated at random to one of three treatment groups to be fed lupins, barley or barley with virginiamycin (40 g/t) (SmithKline Beecham Australia). Barley was fed twice weekly and the lupin grain and barley with virginiamycin were fed weekly. All grains were fed at a level equivalent to 300 g/d. Over the first seven days of feeding all animals were fed daily at the following levels: 50, 50, 100, 100, 200, 200, 300. On day eight, all groups were fed 1.05 kg/head. From day 12, the barley group was fed 1.05 kg/head twice per week and the other groups received 2.1 kg weekly. Faecal consistency was evaluated on days 9, 10, 13, 20 and 27 and categorised as pellets, soft or scouring. Animals were weighed on days one and twenty-nine.



There was no effect of dietary treatment on liveweight change. Only two animals fed lupins showed signs of scouring compared to up to 35% of animals fed barley. The data for the groups fed barley with or without virginiamycin are summarised in the Figure. Despite being fed twice as much grain the inclusion of virginiamycin significantly reduced the number of animals scouring on two out of the five days on which observations were made. The results of this trial confirm that, under field conditions, virginiamycin may be used with barley to increase the interval between feeding and to reduce the incidence of scouring.

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