

## Hypocalcaemia

### What you will see

	Behaviour	Muscles	Death
Any sheep	Struggle when approached, sit on brisket with head to flank	Staggering walk, tremors	Within a day of collapse

### Strategic prevention

- Test pasture and supplements for Ca:P ratio and ensure a balance of 2:1
- Avoid sudden feed changes.
- Limit time off feed.
- Use low-stress stock handling techniques.
- Use calcium supplements (licks, ground limestone or quality hay) with ewes and weaners to buffer against a disease trigger if diet is low in calcium.
- Have combined calcium and magnesium injecting solution on hand at lambing time.

### Tactical response

Quickly seek a professional diagnosis to rule out pregnancy toxaemia.

Get professional help if sheep haven't recovered 30 minutes after treatment.

- Act immediately.
- Treat with a combined calcium and magnesium injecting solution under the skin.

### Likelihood

This condition develops when there is increased demand for calcium, or limited feed volume or quality.

Likely triggers for hypocalcaemia:

- Sheep are under high physical stress, have no opportunity to feed (yarding, droving, trucking, shearing, crutching, cold snap) or have concurrent diseases that reduce feed intake (infection, lameness), or during high demand from late pregnancy or lactation.
- Feed (paddock or supplements) high in phosphorus compared to calcium (Ca:P ratio), a young pasture flush, or rapidly growing cereal crops, high grain diets, sudden changes in feed, a cold snap or growth of edible oxalate weeds (e.g. goosefoot/mintweed, fat hen, pigweed, soursob, sorrel, dock or doublegee).

### Impact

- Sudden onset of symptoms.
- Many sheep can be affected at once (at any age).
- Most affected are ewes in the last month of pregnancy or with lambs up to six weeks old and weaners.
- If treated quickly, impact can be minimised.

#### TIPS AND INFORMATION

**For strategic prevention manage stress, feed and supplements and have calcium injections on hand.**

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### Resources

#### Australian Wool Industry: Drought resources

[www.wool.com](http://www.wool.com)

#### Making More From Sheep: Common sheep diseases and predisposing factors

[www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au](http://www.makingmorefromsheep.com.au)

#### New South Wales

##### Vitamin and mineral additives for sheep and cattle in drought

[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au)

#### South Australia

##### Sheep diseases – the farmers' guide

[www.sheepconnectsa.com.au](http://www.sheepconnectsa.com.au)

#### Tasmania

##### Hypocalcaemia in sheep (milk fever)

[www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au](http://www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au)

#### Western Australia

##### Pregnancy toxaemia and hypocalcaemia of ewes

[www.agric.wa.gov.au](http://www.agric.wa.gov.au)