

Cobalt deficiency

What you will see

| | Wool | Body weight | Behaviour | Head | Death |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| All ages | Decreased wool growth | Decreased growth rate | | Weepy eyes, scaly ears if severe | Slow, if deficiency is severe |
| Lambs | | | Newborns are slow to stand and suckle; poor appetite, lethargic | Weepy eyes and scaly ears | Slow |

Impact

- All sheep and any number can be affected, but it is worse in young sheep.
- Early treatment is successful.

Likelihood

The likelihood of cobalt deficiency affecting sheep is higher with some soil and pasture types. It occurs according to:

- soil type: areas with coastal lime and sands, ferrosol (red Krasnozem) and granite soils.
- pasture type: when pasture growing on those soils is lush, limed or fertilised in a high rainfall zone, and usually in spring.

Strategic prevention

Seek advice on the benefit versus cost of testing sheep or pasture, or simply supplementing. Testing weaners in early spring and using supplementation, if at risk, can prevent disease. Supplementation options include:

- intra-ruminal pellets (check product label for age of sheep suitable to be pelleted).

- vitamin B12 injections for lambs at marking and again two months later.
- cobalt-enhanced worm drenches for a short-term boost.
- lick blocks (for marginal deficiency).

Tactical response

Act quickly to get a professional diagnosis.

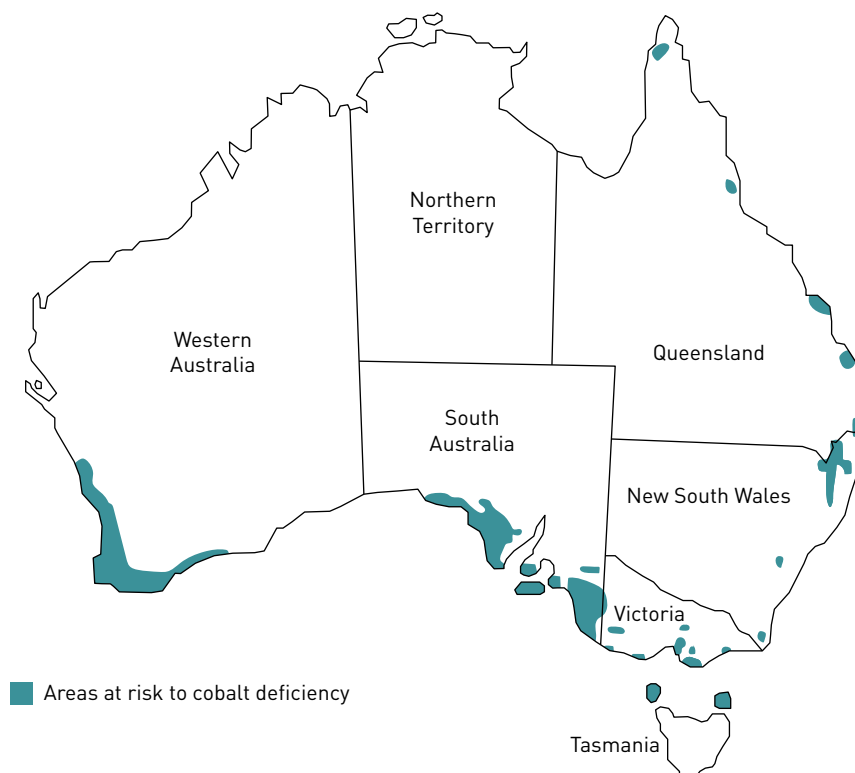
- Vitamin B12 injections for pre-ruminating lambs gives a short-term boost.



TIPS AND INFORMATION

- **Seek professional advice on whether your property is cobalt deficient, as variations occur.**
- **Test and supplement if deficient.**

The distribution of cobalt (Co) deficiency in Australia



Reprinted from: K.I. Peverill and G.J. Judson (1999), 'Cobalt' in Soil Analysis: An interpretation manual. Editors K.I. Peverill, L.A. Sparrow and D.J. Reuter. CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood; pp. 319–323. Adapted by AWI and MLA.

Resource links

MMFS Tool 11.7 Management of trace element deficiencies

South Australia

Sheep diseases – the farmers' guide

Western Australia

Cobalt deficiency in sheep and cattle

New South Wales

Assessing stock feed additives and mineral supplements

Victoria

Trace mineral deficiencies

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