

# NUMNUTS NUMBS NUTS (AND TAILS)!

**Numnuts® is a new device that enables sheep producers to castrate and tail-dock their lambs with rubber rings while also injecting a local anaesthetic at the same application – quickly, safely and effectively. The pilot launch of Numnuts® is expected for the 2019 lambing season.**



**Numnuts** is a new product for sheep producers to provide pain relief when lamb marking with rings.

**N**umnuts is a handheld device that includes an easy-to-use banding tool providing fast ring application, plus an operator-safe two-stage injection mechanism that ensures the correct dose of pain relief is dispensed to the right location. A trained operator can apply Numnuts in 2-3 seconds.

Pain relief is the core reason to use Numnuts. The patented technology is scientifically proven to reduce tail docking and castration pain by up to 68%.

“Numnuts aims to improve animal husbandry procedures and animal welfare outcomes,” said Numnuts director Robin Smith.

“The system has been designed to utilise the traditional rubber ring, which is a bloodless and highly effective, farmer-friendly method for castration and tail docking lambs. Numnuts is very suitable for use on lambs held in the type of marking cradle commonly used in Australia.

“Speed, ease of application and productivity all at a reasonably low cost have been the key factors when developing the product. It can be used by a producer or contractor in Australia without the need for a veterinarian to be present, although the local anaesthetic

NumOcaine™ will require a vet’s prescription so farmers will require a relationship with their vet to access Numnuts next year.”

Numnuts was born in 2009, when Scottish design engineering firm 4c Design and Moredun Research Institute in Scotland partnered together to investigate the feasibility of a device that would provide pain relief to livestock during tail docking and castration. Recognising the need for an on-farm solution for sheep, AWI and MLA provided initial funding for research and development (R&D) work. MLA has since invested additional funds to support commercialisation of the device.

The R&D team was enhanced by the involvement of CSIRO at Armidale, which brought an Australian experience and perspective to the project.

Lead researcher from CSIRO, Dr Alison Small said the results of their field trials at Armidale and on five commercial sheep properties – using more than 15,000 Merino and crossbred lambs during last year’s marking season – showed positive animal behaviour in response to using Numnuts.

“Numnuts lambs’ were noticeably more relaxed than ‘Ring lambs’ when released from the cradle. For the next 20 to 30 minutes, when pain is most intense, the number of pain behaviours was reduced by up to 68% in Numnuts lambs in comparison to Ring lambs. Similar benefits were seen in male and female lambs.

“At subsequent time points, the number of pain-related behaviours were low in all lambs, and differences between Numnuts and Ring lambs were less noticeable.”

Numnuts will be available commercially in Australia for the 2019 marking season. However, in its first-year stocks will be limited to approximately 500. Producers, contractors and veterinarians interested in obtaining the Numnuts technology should register their interest at [www.numnuts.co.uk](http://www.numnuts.co.uk)

Robin Smith said the Numnuts device would cost approximately \$200 with each dose anticipated to cost about 65-70c in the early years, but the company is working hard to try to reduce the cost in subsequent years.

## WOOLGROWERS’ PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF NUMNUTS

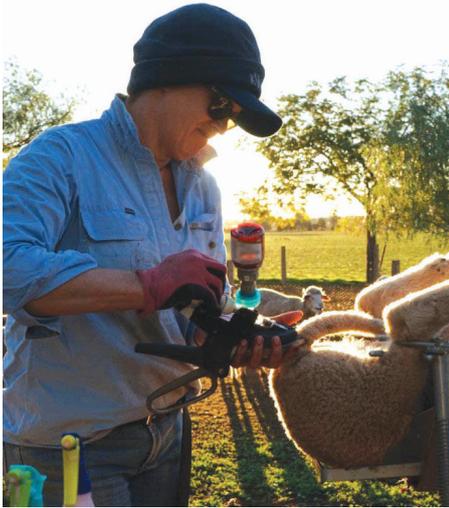


**Jodie and Andrew Green** of ‘Aloeburn’ at Boree Creek, NSW, have been involved in trialling Numnuts and regard it as a practical and successful method of marking with pain relief.

One of the farms at which Numnuts commercial trials have been undertaken is 'Aloeburn' at Boree Creek in the Riverina of NSW. The property is owned by fourth-generation woolgrower Andrew Green, with his wife Jodie, who usually run 5,000 Merino ewes, including 500 Poll Merino stud ewes.

Andrew said they certainly noticed the pain relief effects on the lambs after using Numnuts.

"On the whole the lambs were not lying around in the yards, they were concentrating



Jodie Green using Numnuts for marking at 'Aloeburn'.

on getting back to their mothers to get a drink again as quickly as possible," he said.

"The walk back to the paddock was easy as the lambs were completely mobile and walking with their mothers, they were not lying on the ground agitated from discomfort."

Jodie said the device was easy to use and its development had benefited from practical on-farm trials.

"The improvements made to the device from the first trial work in July to the next version which we used in the September trial were very good. The plunger device which administers the NumOcaine was softer and ergonomically a much better design," she said.

Jodie said administering to the testicles is particularly easy while a good technique to work with the variation of tails can be quickly worked out by each user.

"Like undertaking any new procedure, it was necessary to do a few lambs before the correct necessary technique for the tail was worked out, but that came quickly from familiarity.

"Some tails are thin with little muscle around the bone and some are much thicker with a great deal of muscle around the bone. A good technique is quickly determined to ensure that the NumOcaine is injected to the muscle

rather than hitting the bone."

Andrew said implementing pain relief to lambs when applying rings for castrating and tail docking is not only better for the lambs, but it could open up opportunities for both wool and meat in markets where animal husbandry practices are keenly monitored.

"As well as those sheep producers who have ceased mulesing, likely producers to use the product are those who have a high concern for optimum animal welfare and who wish to be able to demonstrate this level of diligence to consumers of their products, both meat and wool," he said.

"It will also be useful to growers who are seeking to obtain and maintain accreditation under the various standards now available to wool producers for new marketing opportunities for their wool."

Robin Smith of Numnuts thanked Andrew and Jodie Green for their support in hosting the test engineers, and also the owners of the other test sites TA Field Estates Pty Ltd ('Wyvern' and 'Congi', NSW), Michael Craig ('Tuloona', Vic) and Tim Leeming ('Paradoo', Vic), along with other early pioneer users in Australia including John Chappell ('Arkhaven', NSW).

#### MORE INFORMATION

For more information and to register your interest, visit [www.numnuts.co.uk](http://www.numnuts.co.uk)

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