Livestock – summer sheep nutrition

Summer lick: filling the gap in dry feed.

Paddocks can look full after harvest, but dry pasture and stubbles rarely give sheep everything they need. A well-matched summer lick keeps condition on through to the break.

By Amanda Walker, FarmCo Moora

Plenty of feed. Not always enough nutrition.

Once pastures hay off and the header has been through, most Wheatbelt flocks move onto dry feed and stubbles. The bulk is there. The quality often isn't.

Dry pasture can be high in fibre and low in energy and protein. A nitrogen source helps appetite and rumen digestion, and sulphur is needed for that process too. When protein is the limiting factor, sheep eat less and get less out of what they do eat, so weight and condition can slide through summer and autumn even with feed still standing in the paddock.

What a summer lick supplies

Protein or nitrogen

Keeps the rumen working on fibrous feed.

Sulphur

Works alongside nitrogen so rumen microbes can build protein.

Trace elements and vitamins

Dry feed is often short on these.

Calcium

Grain and stubble are low in calcium, which young growing sheep particularly need, and a shortfall can lead to broken bones. A low calcium to phosphorus balance in cereal grain can also cause urinary calculi in wethers and rams, and ewes short of calcium in pregnancy go into autumn lambing without the reserves they need.

Matching the lick to the mob

Not every mob needs the same thing. DPIRD has long advised that most farms only need one or two supplementary minerals, and licks loaded with extras often waste most of them. FarmCo stocks the Superior Livestock Services range, formulated for WA conditions and matched to stock class and feed base.

Product	Best suited to
Superior Dry Feed Supplement (Sheep)	Hoggets and mature sheep on dry feed or crop residues where protein is limiting. 31.5% crude protein, 16% calcium, 2% sulphur.
Superior Cereal Stubble Buster	Lambs and hoggets on cereal stubbles, standing crops or cereal grain.
Superior Young Lamb Stubble Buster	Weaner lambs. Urea-free, using true protein instead.
Superior Prime Lamb Concentrate range	Lambs on lupin or pea stubbles, or in the feedlot on grain rations.

Feeding lambs this summer? Our weaner season guide has feeding rates and safety notes for the Stubble Buster and Prime Lamb Concentrate range.

Feeding it right

- Use free-draining containers, with one lick station per 50–100 head. Keep access continuous once feeding starts, with fresh water available at all times.
- Never introduce a urea-based lick to hungry sheep, and keep urea products away from horses and other non-ruminant animals.
- Cover or remove licks if rain is forecast.

Talk to FarmCo

The team at FarmCo Moora and Yerecoin stocks the full Superior range in 25 kg bags and 1 tonne bulka bags, and can help match the right supplement to each mob and feed situation before the season gets away. For technical questions on rations and formulation, FarmCo works with Henry Strating from Superior Livestock Services.

Call 1300 327 626, visit 69 Roberts Street, Moora, or drop into Yerecoin to place an order or talk it through.

Shop our stock licks and supplements online, call us on **1300 327 626**, or drop into FarmCo Moora or Yerecoin.

Sources: Superior Livestock Services product sheets; Sheep Connect SA, Vitamin and mineral supplementation in the dry; Agriculture Victoria, Sheep nutritional requirements when grazing stubble; DPIRD WA. Always read and follow the product label.