

Prepare dogs for the holiday season

For immediate release

With photo

348 words

As South Island holiday makers head for the great outdoors this season, they may well be taking a costly and insidious pest with them that they don't even know they have in the family.

But it's easy to make sure this doesn't happen. All you have to do is treat your dog with a broad-spectrum worm tablet before you go.

"The annual migration of summer visitors is a great Christmas holiday tradition in places like the Mackenzie Basin, Queenstown Lakes and Central Otago. But when the dog goes on holiday too, there is a real risk that sheep measles will come along for the ride," says Tom Rowley, Chairman of Merino NZ Inc.

High country Merino farmers are among the most vulnerable to such accidental infection, with an added complication that means they themselves may not even realise they have a problem.

"Traditional high country practice is to kill stock early in the season, when viable ovis cysts are hard to find in the carcass. Where Merino lambs are sold for finishing down country, any infected lambs are far removed from the original source of the infection by the time they're killed. The farmer who bred them may never know they've been downgraded so he or she assumes all is well when in fact it's not."

Sheep measles is a parasitic infection of sheep meat that damages carcasses.

It is not harmful to humans but is regarded as a serious quality issue by the meat industry. The damage comes from the tapeworm *Taenia ovis*, which lives in the intestines of dogs.

Hence the importance of dosing all dogs which might come into contact with livestock, from working dogs to those brought into the area by holiday makers.

"Farmers need to make sure their own dogs – including pets – are on a proper dosing regime. But they also need to make sure any visiting dogs have been dosed as well."

Treatment is simple, and cheap. Broad spectrum canine worm tablets are easily obtained from vets and rural merchants. Dogs visiting farms should have been treated within the previous 30 days.

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