

Why Cottonseed Supplementation for Sheep?

Cottonseed has been used extensively in Queensland as a feed supplement for sheep. It is a good source of energy (12-14 MJ ME/kg) and protein (19-24%), but should always be fed with adequate amounts of roughage (due to the scouring effects of the oil in cottonseed).

It is important to monitor the performance of the sheep, and adjust feeding rates accordingly.

It is best not to feed cottonseed daily so that sheep don't gorge themselves and shy feeders have an opportunity to obtain some feed.

Health Effects of Cottonseed on Sheep

Cottonseed should not be fed to weaner sheep under 5 months of age as their rumen is not developed enough to handle the ingredient gossypol (which is toxic to non-ruminant animals: horses, pigs and poultry).

Effects on Fertility

Research data has demonstrated that cottonseed has no effect on ram fertility. There is also no evidence that cottonseed shouldn't be fed to lambing ewes.

Ad Lib Feeding

If allowed, sheep will eat up to 1000g of cottonseed per head per day in drought conditions when roughage levels are low.

However, this is not recommended due to the scouring effects of the oil and the low levels of roughage in the diet.

Sheep will generally accept cottonseed as feed, but in some situations you may need to encourage them with more palatable feeds such as molasses or lucerne hay. It is usually only a matter of days before the whole flock accepts cottonseed.