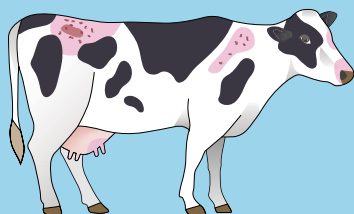
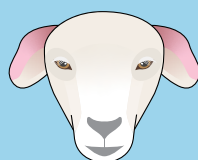


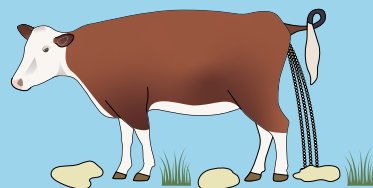
Seeking shade,
restless & irritable



Sunburn or scabbing



Swollen
droopy ears



Frequent urination

FACTSHEET

Facial eczema – why clinical cases are just the tip of the iceberg

If you get 5 clinicals, then at least 50 of the flock may have sub-clinical facial eczema (FE). With 20 clinicals, that can be up to 200 of the flock with sub-clinical FE. Often you cannot see the hidden damage of FE.

Key messages

- Talk to your vet to put a plan in place to mitigate risk to livestock as regional spore counts rise.
- Early signs matter – acting fast can save animals.
- For every sick animal, **up to 10 others may be affected** without showing signs.
- Even animals that look fine can have liver damage impacting production.
- There is **no cure**, but you can support affected animals.

How to identify subclinical FE – where you can't see the signs

Most animals with FE related liver damage **show no visible signs**, but the damage can still affect growth, fertility and fecundity, milk production and resilience to stress and other diseases. Indicators you can look for are:

- Reduced production (such as poor scanning results and abortions) not explained by nutrition or other infections (such as the tail-end of the mob unresponsive to drench).
- Location. Occurring in NZ regions where toxic FE spores are present or FE is known to occur.

- Liver damage
- Blood tests often show serum GGT above 100 IU/L. Ask your vet about this test and they will interpret your results.
- Liver damage on postmortem – check your dog tuckers:
 - **Normal liver:** olive brown to burgundy-brown, smooth, shiny, jelly like.
 - **Early FE damage:** scarring starts at the front, lower edge where it sits against the diaphragm, scarred area will be pale and firm and may be shrunken up.
 - **Moderate damage:** enlarged or misshapen areas; rounded edges and lumpy appearance.
 - **Severe damage:** classic “boxing glove” shape – pale, firm, and smaller (more common in sheep).
- Liver damage can also be noted on your kill sheets. Look for terms such as:
 - Liver facial eczema
 - Liver cirrhosis
 - Liver fluke or parasites.

If liver problems show up, talk to your vet about a plan to mitigate your FE risk for next season.

How to identify clinical FE – where you can see the signs

These signs are not only seen with FE and could be caused by something else. It is important to interpret these signs alongside time of year, FE spore counts and other diagnostic tests like blood tests (such as GGT).

An animal is considered to have clinical FE if you see one or more of the signs below, and other causes have been ruled out.

Visual signs:

- Swelling of the ears, face, jaw, or underside
- Droopy, thickened, or swollen ears
- Red, sunburnt, scabby, or peeling skin, especially on light coloured areas
- Runny eyes or nose, sneezing, or breathing difficulty
- Yellow gums or eyes
- Urine scald or skin irritation
- Weight loss, poor rumen fill, or poor condition.

Behaviour changes:

- Lethargy or depression
- Seeking shade or avoiding sunlight
- Rubbing or scratching on posts or fences
- Restlessness, aggression, or signs of pain or discomfort.

Liver damage:

Blood tests often show serum GGT above 200 IU/L. Ask your vet about this test and they will interpret your results. Refer above for liver damage on post-mortem and on kill sheets.

These signs most often appear between December and May in areas where FE spores are present, but they can also occur outside this period if animals are stressed such as in ewes or cows during lambing or calving.

Supporting affected animals

There is no cure, but you can reduce animal stress.

- **Provide shade**
- **Offer supplements** such as hay, baleage, or grains
- **Keep animals off lush grass**
- Use topical **zinc “sunblock”** products

Find more information in the B+LNZ Factsheet [Managing facial eczema on-farm](#).

Resources

This resource is part of the [Farmer Facial Eczema Toolkit](#) on the B+LNZ Knowledge Hub. Head there to find out more.

Factsheets are made possible by sheep and beef farmer investment in the industry. Beef + Lamb New Zealand is not liable for any damage suffered as a result of reliance on the information contained in this document. Any reproduction is welcome provided you acknowledge Beef + Lamb New Zealand as the source.

