

Dr Melanie Latter | Head of Policy and Advocacy
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Dear Dr Latter

We are seeking guidance on how to supply our animal welfare product [Numnuts](#) and NumOcaine® through the veterinary profession, especially in light of the current climate of Covid-19.

Many hundreds of sheep farmers wish to access our local anaesthetic 'NumOcaine®' as a management medication, to provide pain relief for castration and tail docking. NumOcaine is an APVMA approved S4 drug and has a carefully considered packaging and dispensing system to increase safety and prevent misuse.

We regularly talk to sheep producers who do not have a current bona fide relationship with a veterinarian. We also talk to veterinarians who find it impractical and cost-prohibitive to make long trips to rural sheep farms to keep a 'physical' bona fide relationship active. We are concerned that if potential Numnuts users are unable to establish a 'physical' bona fide relationship with their veterinarian, they will be unable to access the pain relief offered by Numnuts and the welfare of their animals will suffer. Travel restrictions imposed by the current Covid 19 pandemic will exaggerate this state of affairs.

We propose **telemedicine** as a potential **solution** for a sheep farmer wishing to access NumOcaine for their flock. Assuming the farmer is in a rural location a long way from the nearest veterinary practice and s/he has not consulted with a veterinarian in the last 12 months (i.e. there is no grazier – veterinarian bona fide relationship) then we suggest the following solution:

1. The veterinarian and the farmer contact each other via the internet using an app such as '[Phone A Vet](#)'.
2. Using the video call function on the app, the veterinarian can see the farmer, establish that they have a flock of sheep and over a 15 min telemedicine consultation they can build a relationship.
3. The app captures the meeting data (e.g. time/date, no. and type of sheep, their general health history and performance) and the veterinarian receives payment for their advice via the app.
4. With a bona fide relationship now established via telemedicine, the veterinarian purchases the required amount of NumOcaine for the client's sheep from the Numnuts online store using our veterinarian portal (only registered veterinarians can access this area).
5. Veterinarian sets the delivery address for the NumOcaine as the sheep farm.
6. We send NumOcaine from our S4 registered warehouse to the farm, via traced courier.



This proposed telemedicine solution eliminates the need for repeated veterinarian – farmer meetings, helping to keep both parties safe from Covid-19. It also provides a practical and cost-effective first step for veterinarians to build farmer relationships, which are desperately lacking in many parts of rural Australia.

We seek guidance as to whether this would be an acceptable way of improving sheep welfare in rural Australia, while maintaining the veterinarians' role as guardians of S4 medications, more especially during the climate of a global pandemic.

Best Regards

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