



29 July 2022

Unlocking the key to ewe survival during lambing

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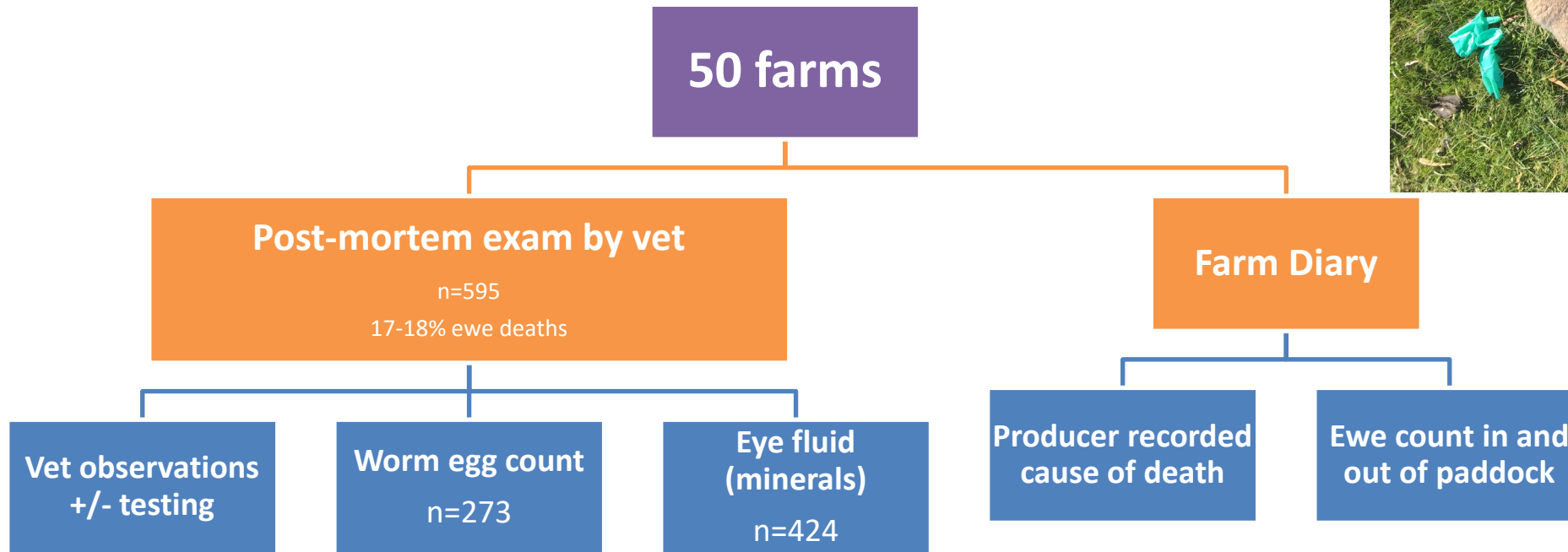
Why?

- Variable ewe mortality in client flocks
- How do we do better?
- What are the major issues? What are achievable mortality rates?

Aims

- Determine mortality over lambing period
- Identify causes of ewe mortality
- Identify factors contributing to ewe mortality

Methods



Prolapse- what's the difference?

- Vaginal prolapse

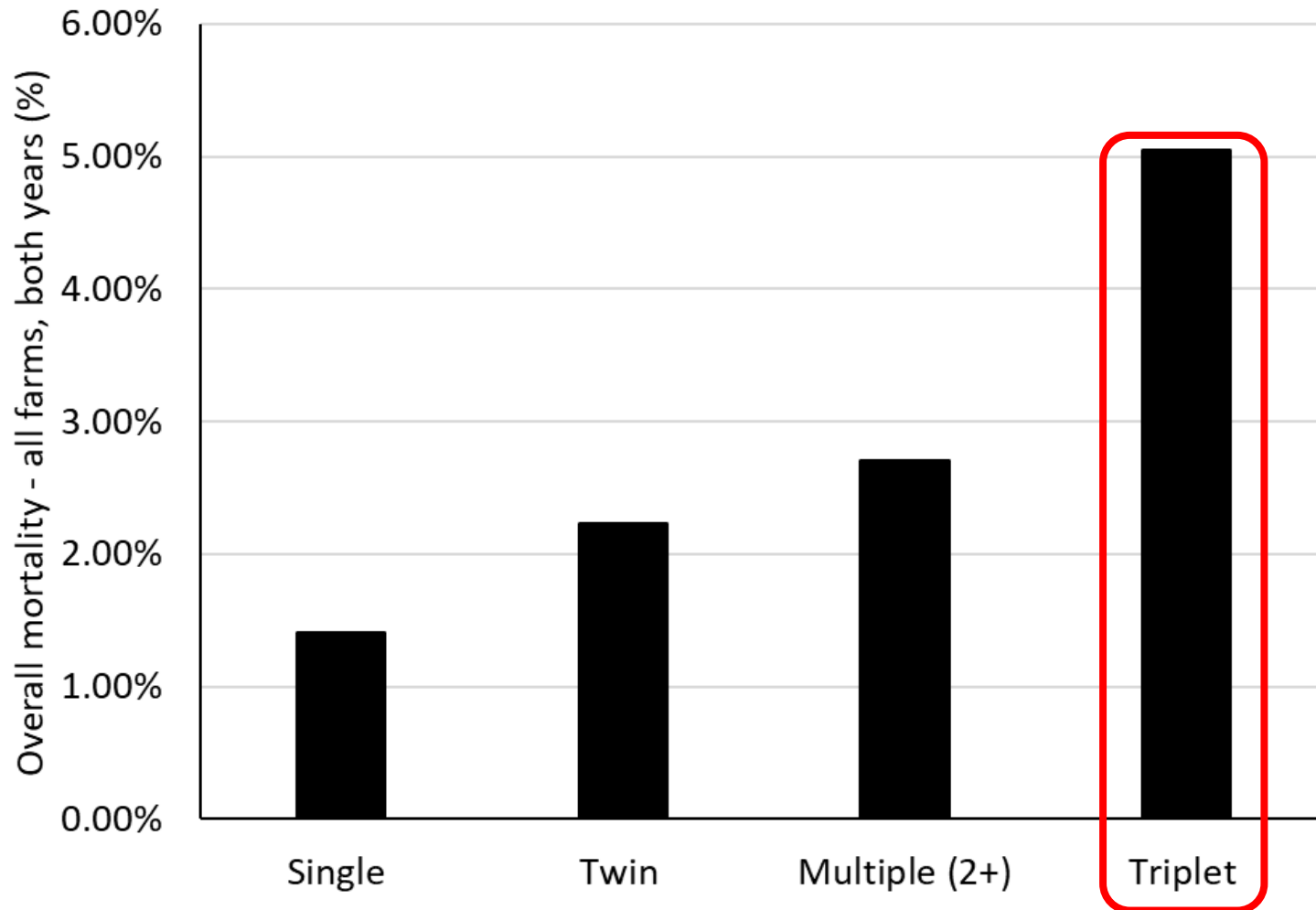


<https://www.nadis.org.uk/disease-a-z/sheep/lambing/lambing-part-3-vaginal-and-uterine-prolapse/>

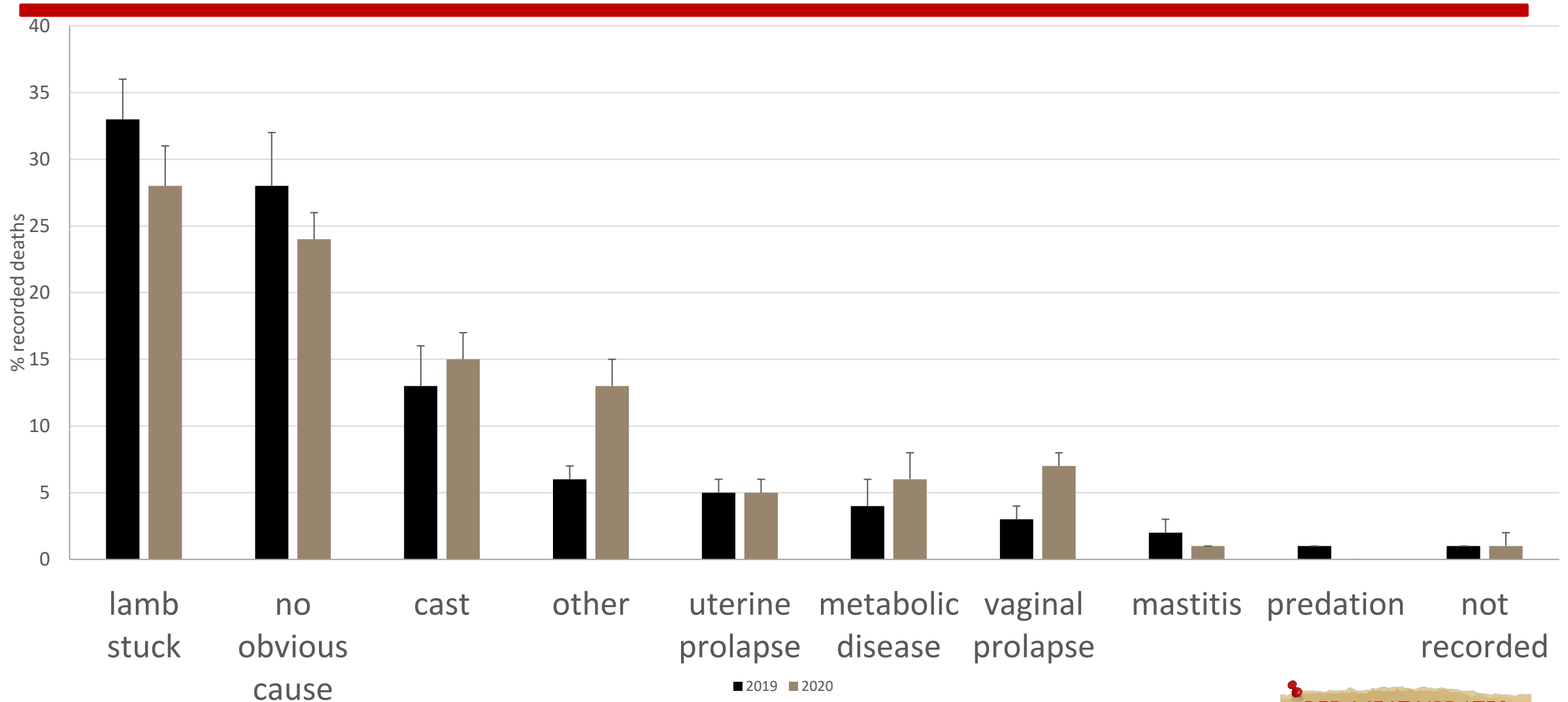
Non-Merino ewe mortality over lambing

Quartile	2019	2020
Average	2.5%	2.0%
Top 25%	$\leq 1.4\%$	$\leq 1.3\%$
Bottom 25%	3.4-5.9%	2.3-4.7%

Risk factors for mortality

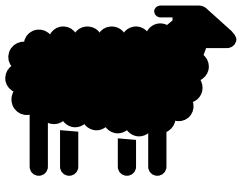


Producer recorded cause of death

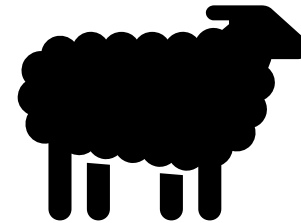


Risk factors for cause of death

First lamb @ 1-year-old

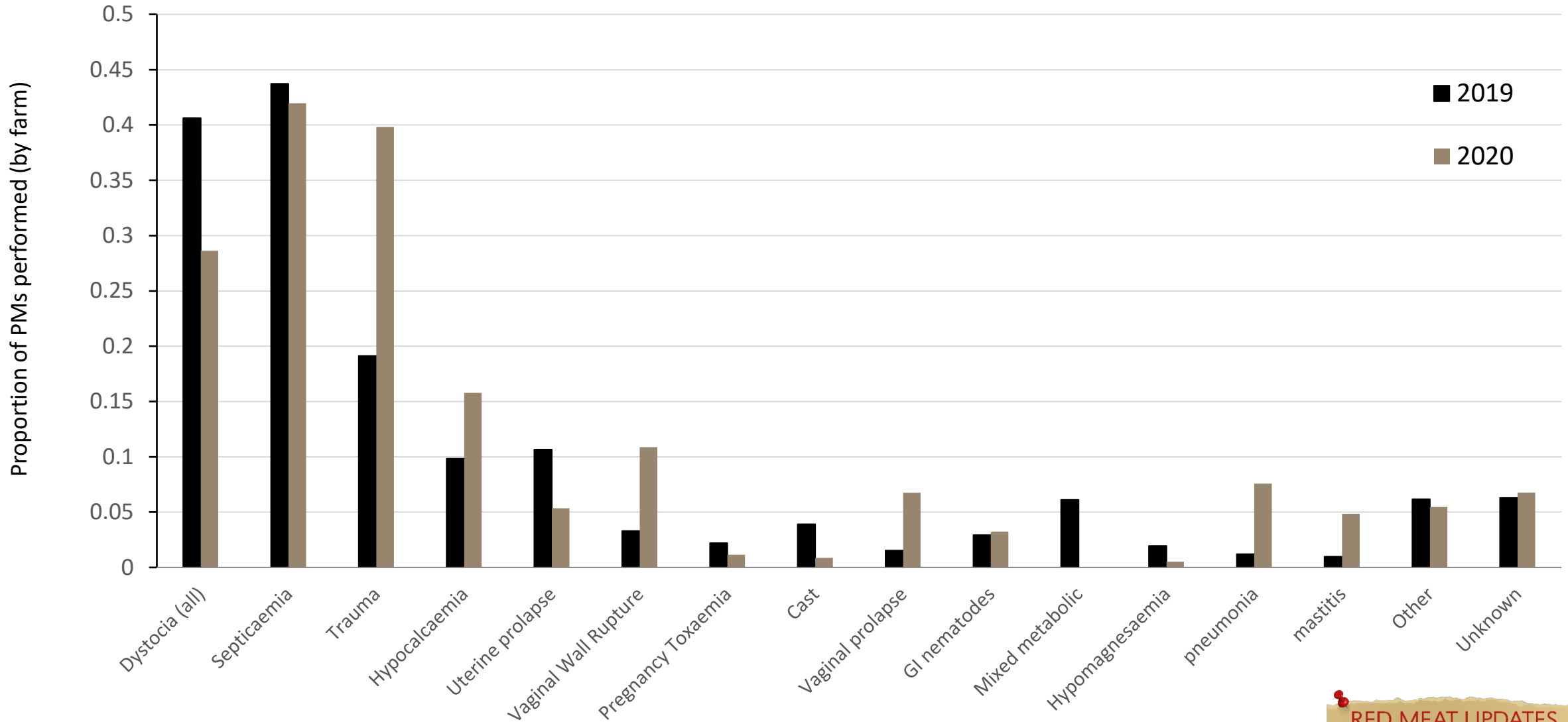


First lamb @ 2-years-old

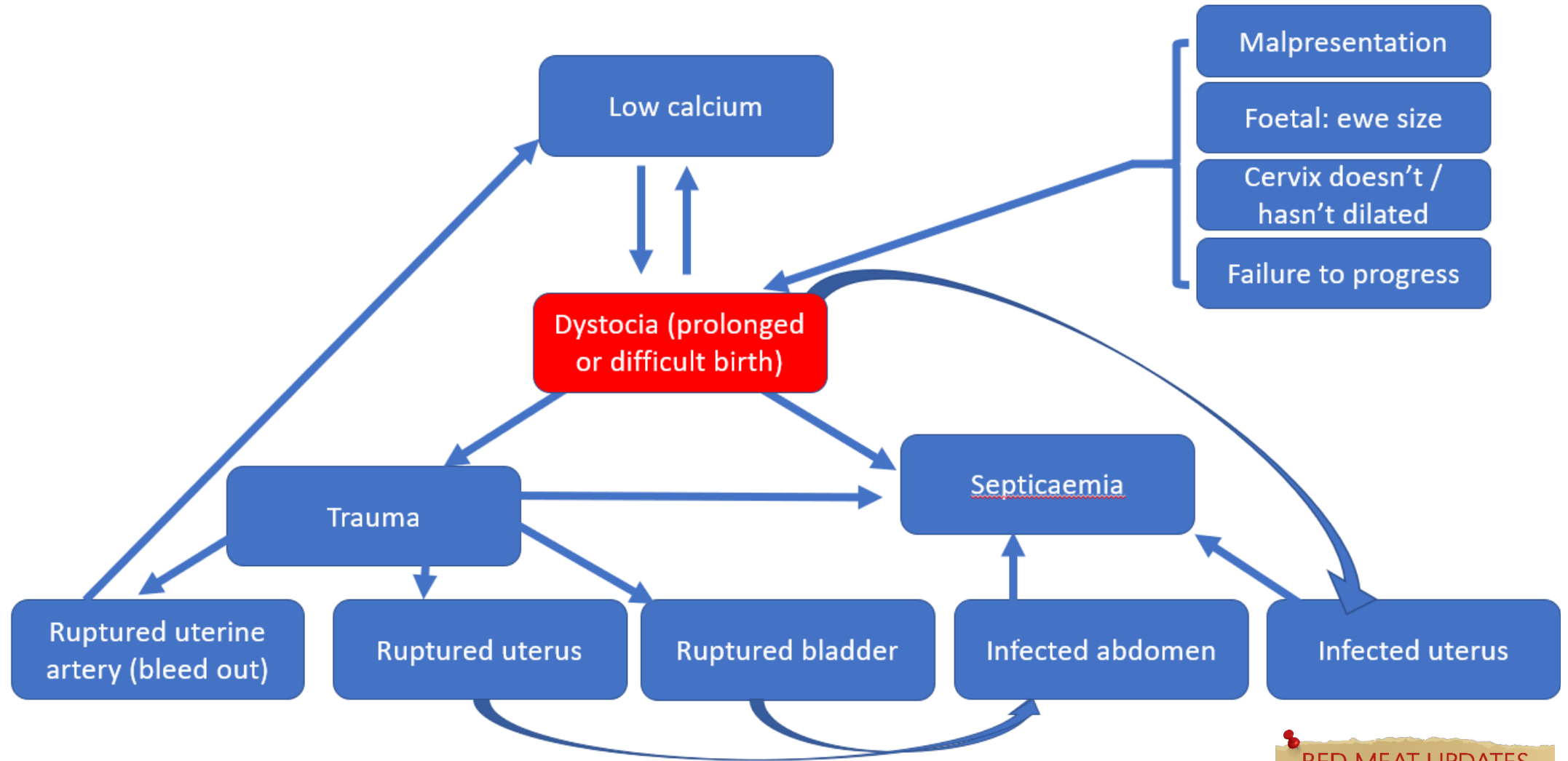


1.6 – 2.6 fold increased risk of **dystocia**
being recorded as cause of death

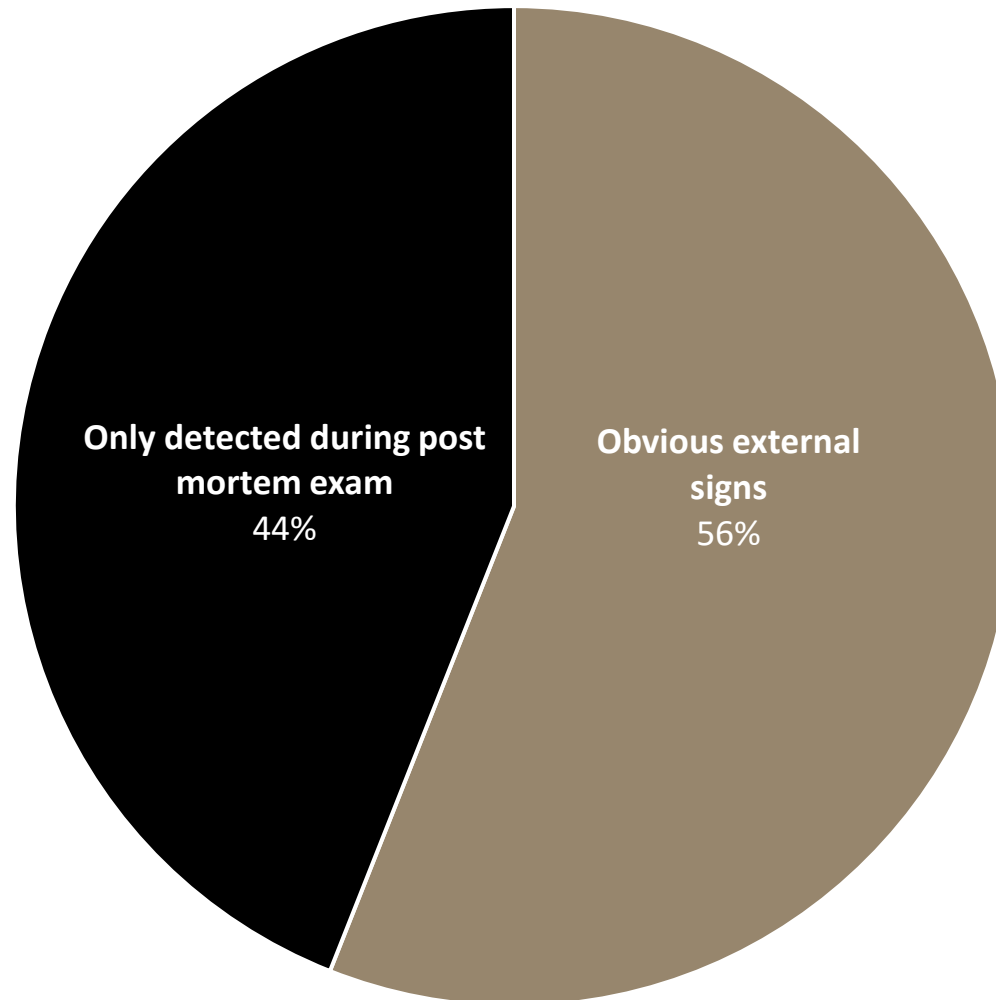
Vet post mortem exams: cause of death



Dystocia – causes and consequences

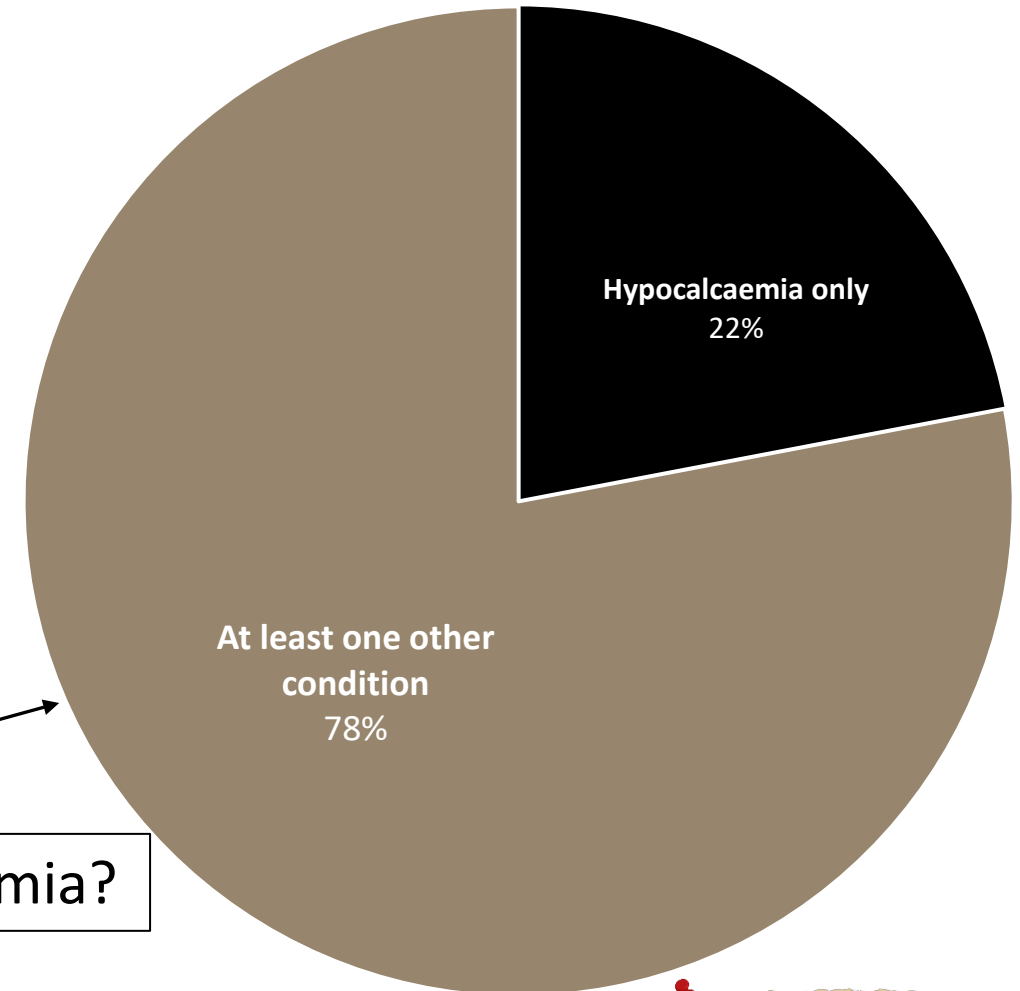


Dystocia



Hypocalcaemia (milk fever)

- Higher risk of diagnosis in dead:
 - Ewes >5 years old
 - Ewes in BCS ≤ 2.0



Died **FROM** hypocalcaemia or **WITH** hypocalcaemia?

Dorsal vaginal wall rupture

- 11% in 2020
- Higher risk of diagnosis in dead ewes with:
 - Body condition score ≥ 3.5
 - High total litter weight
 - Multiples



Take home messages

- Where do you/ your clients sit in terms of ewe mortality over lambing?
 - <1% Brilliant
 - <2% good job
 - 3-4% opportunities for improvement
 - >4% Action needed!
- Do you have a high risk flock/mob?
 - Triplets, Maiden ewe lambs, low/high BCS, ewes >5years
- Producer observations are not a bad guide if you record them BUT
 - For every 1 cases of obvious dystocia, 1 extra case is missed without a full post mortem exam
- Dystocia losses higher than previously thought

“Many of these dystocia cases I previously thought were preg tox or hypocal”

Tools, resources & training

- Final report (L.LSM.0019) Published on MLA website
- Farm diary available to use via a print out and excel spreadsheet

Acknowledgements



The 50 producers involved

Funding: Meat and Livestock Australia

Livestock Logic: Andrew Whale, Lexie Leonard, Pat Hannemann, Alice Batty, Sally Gazzard, Genevieve Kroussaniotakis, Darcy Doyle, Ory Wilson & Sarah Hamilton

Mackinnon Project, University of Melbourne: Elsa Glanville, David McGill, Angus Campbell, Beata Kirk, Ben Linn & Daniel Brookes

Murdoch University: Caroline Jacobson, Tom Clune, Henry Annandale

Pinion Advisory: Leanne Sherriff

