

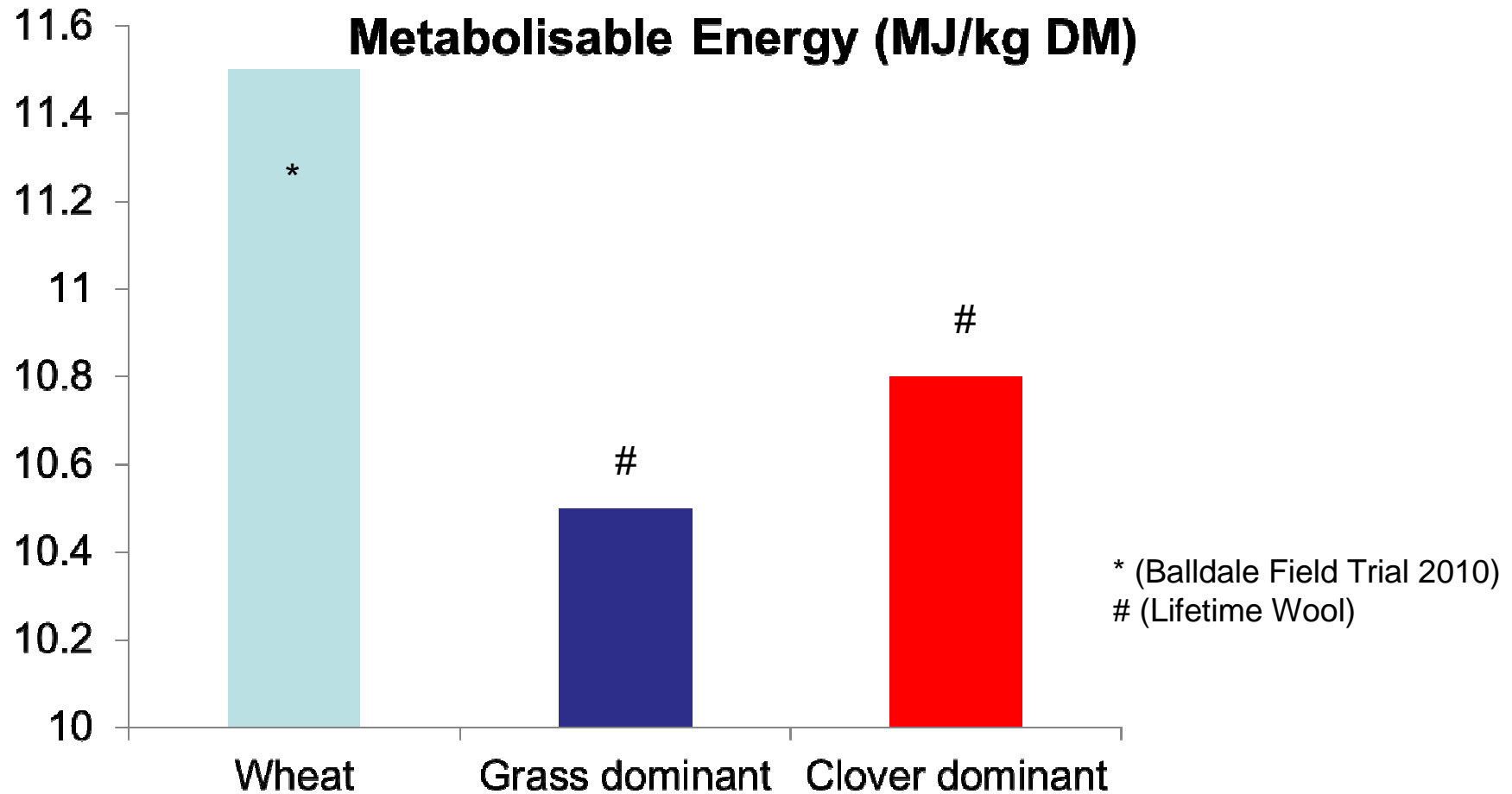
Lambing ewes on dual- purpose wheat

What can we learn from
producer's experiences?

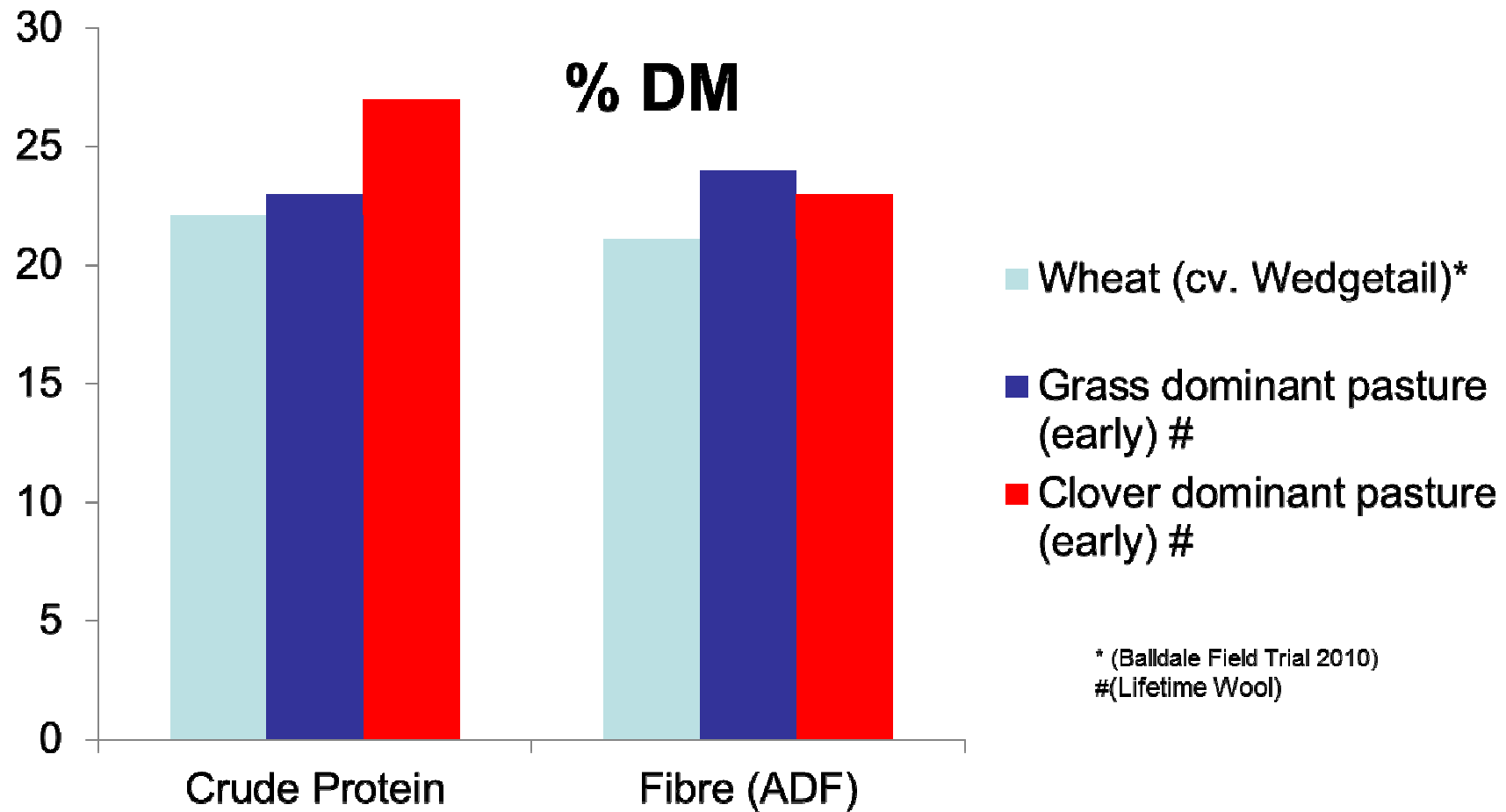
What is the benefit of dual-purpose wheat?

- Winter feed!!!

Energy content of wheat forage

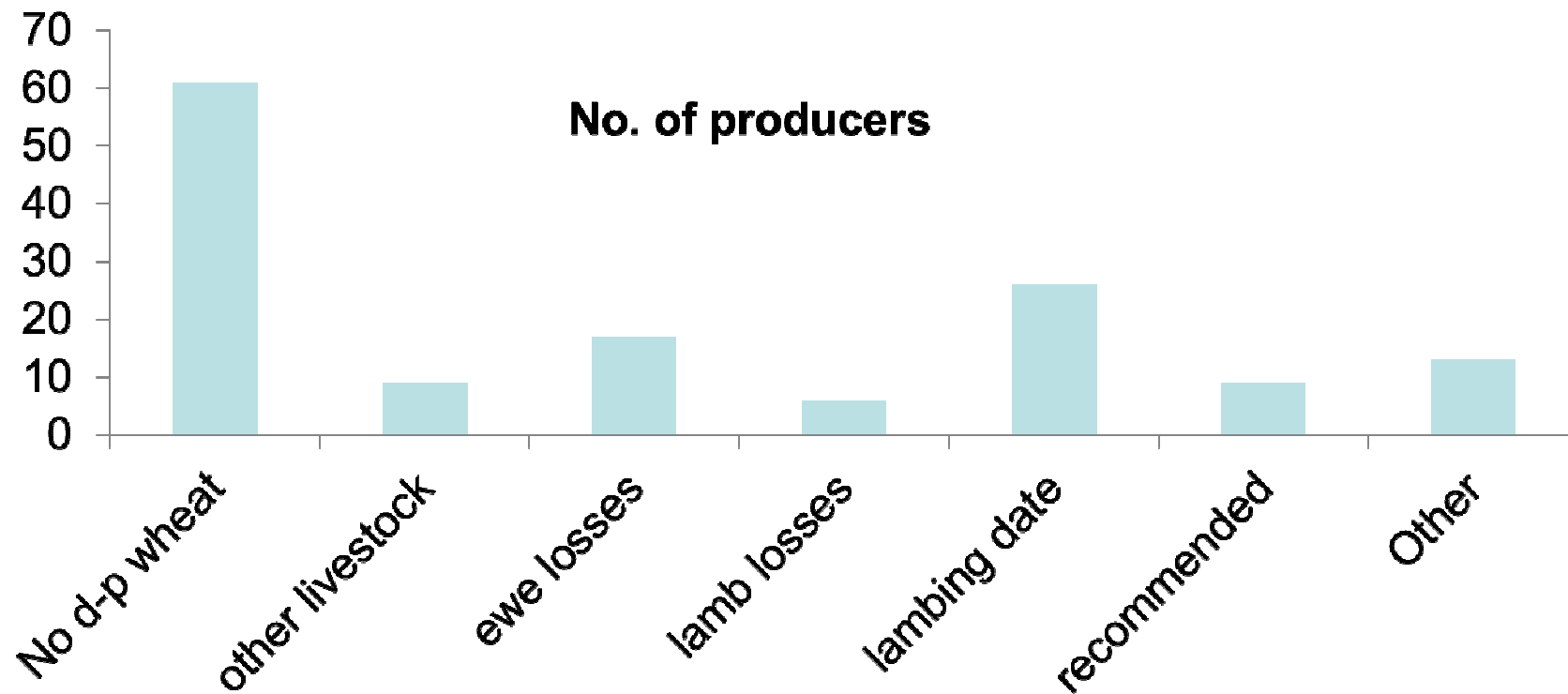


Protein & Fibre content

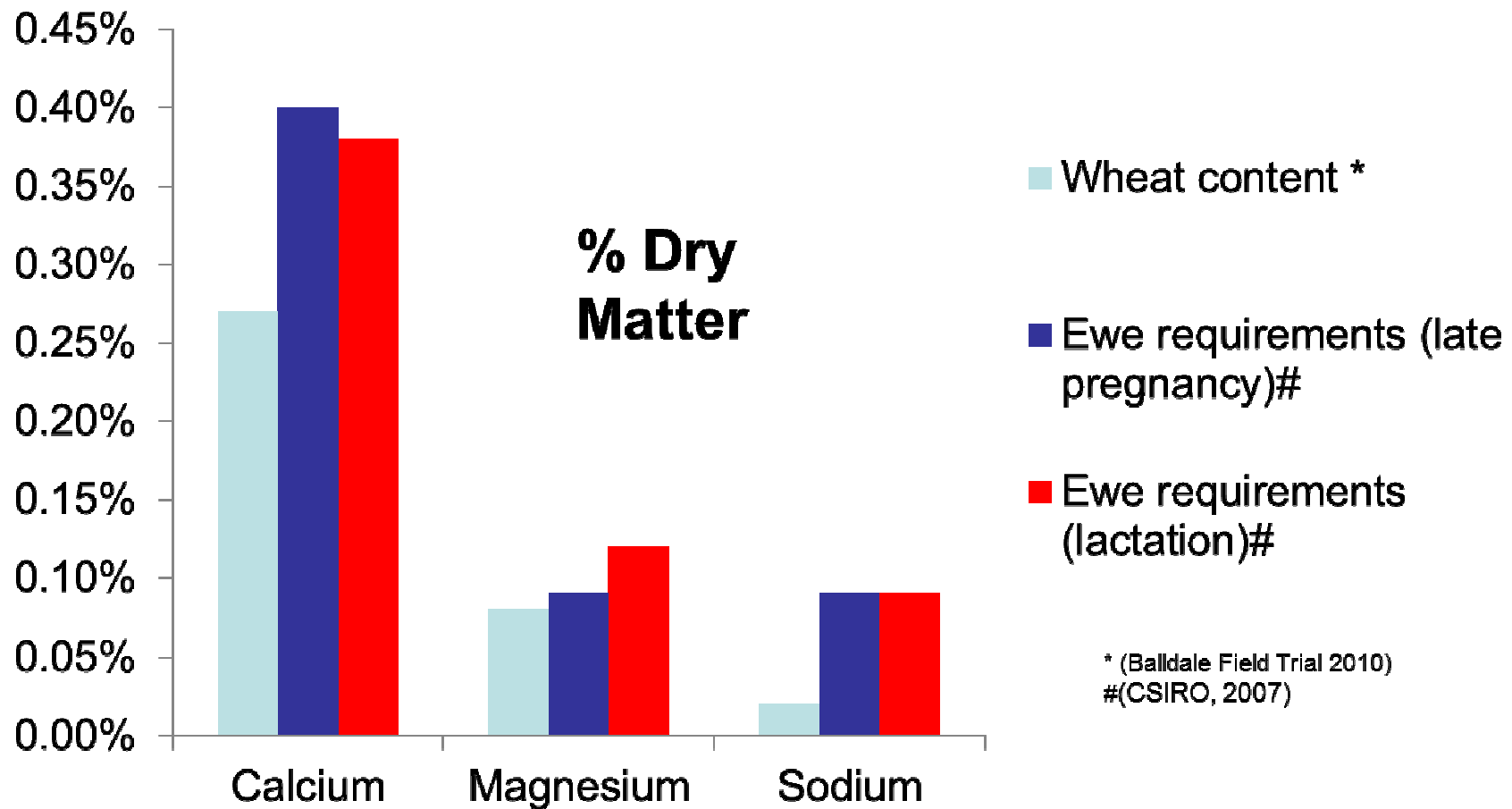


Why are producers not lambing onto dual-purpose wheat?

Reasons given for not grazing late-pregnant or lambing ewes on dual-purpose wheat



Nutrient profile of dual-purpose wheat (cv. Wedgetail)



Pregnancy toxaemia

- Net energy deficit in late pregnancy
- Risk factors include body condition and number of foetuses
- Stress factors, temporary inappetance
- Ca and Mg deficiencies

Hypocalcaemia

- Ca deficiency, due to inadequate absorption (G-I tract) or resorption (bone)
- Ca resorption from bone maximum from 3 weeks pre-lambing
- May develop during hypomagnesaemia

Grass tetany

- Often associated with hypomagnesaemia
- Ruminants need regular intake of Mg
- 1st 4-6 weeks after lambing
- Risk factors include older ewes rearing twin lambs, high production

Field Trial 2010

- Lambing merino ewes on dual-purpose wheat
- Benefits of providing a basic mineral supplement

Field Trial 2010

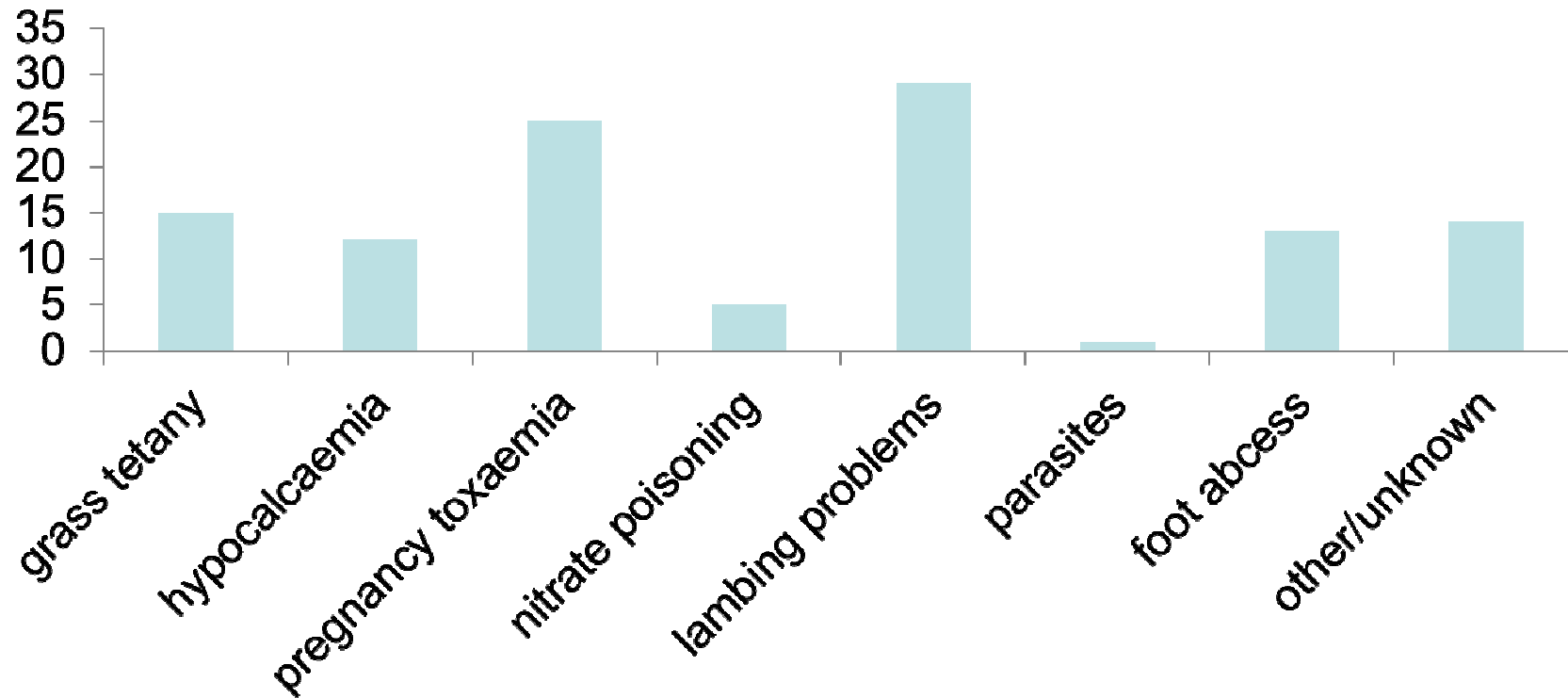
- No clinical cases of metabolic disease
- Small increase in growth rate in twin-born lambs only

Mail-out survey

- When and where are problems occurring?
- 200+ responses
- 85 producers had grazed ewes on dual-purpose wheat in period
- Of these, 25 had experienced at least one incidence of “abnormally” high losses between 2005-2010

Causes of death 2010

Number of producers identifying losses in each cause of death category



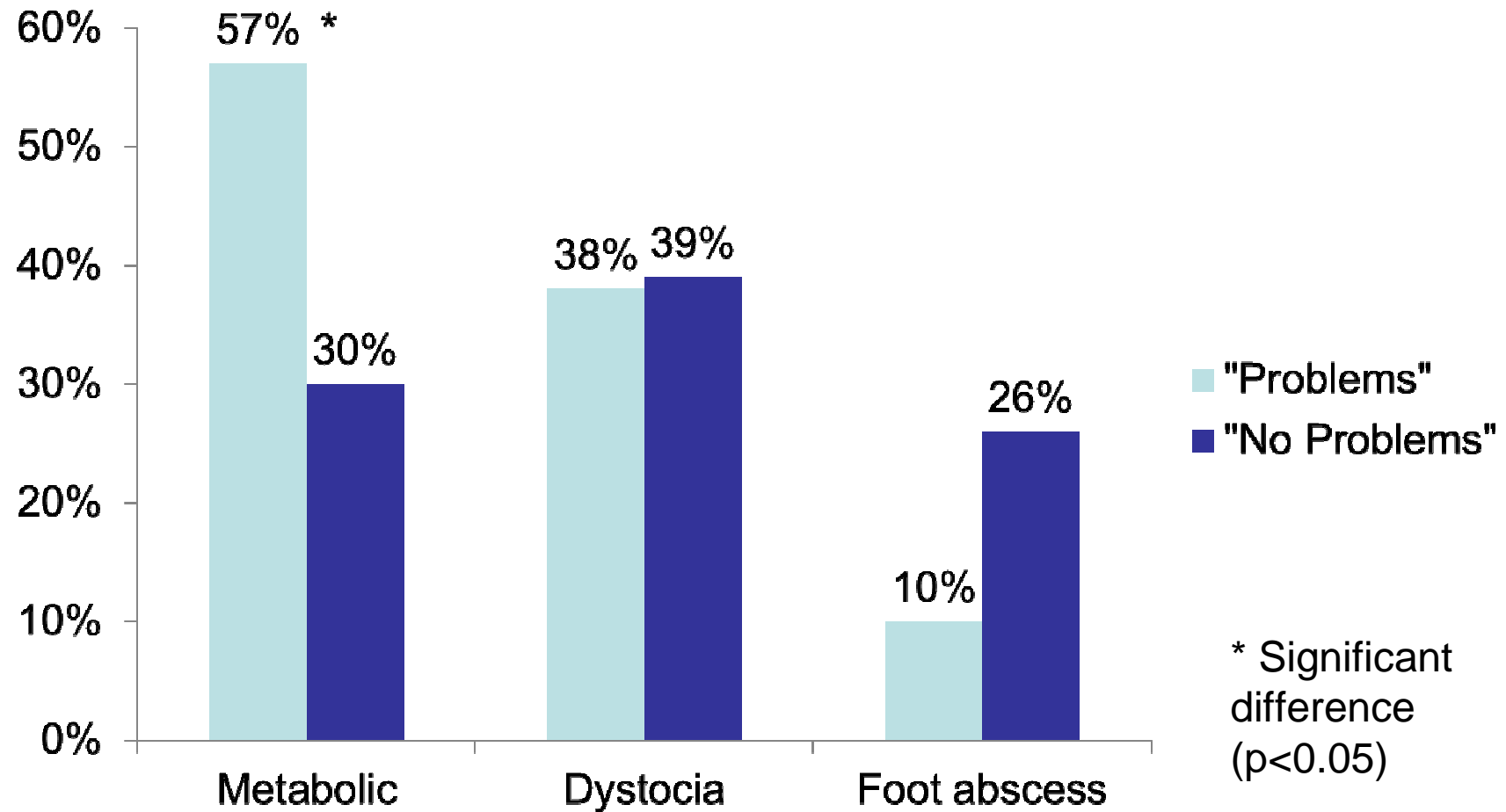
Comparative survey

- Follow-up with some of the respondents
- 27 producers
- Problems (21) vs. No Problems (23)
- What they did, When they did it

Questions included

- Reasons for deaths
- Timing of operations around grazing wheat and lambing
- What ewes were grazing before put onto crop
- Supplements used
- Age and condition of ewes
- Agronomic

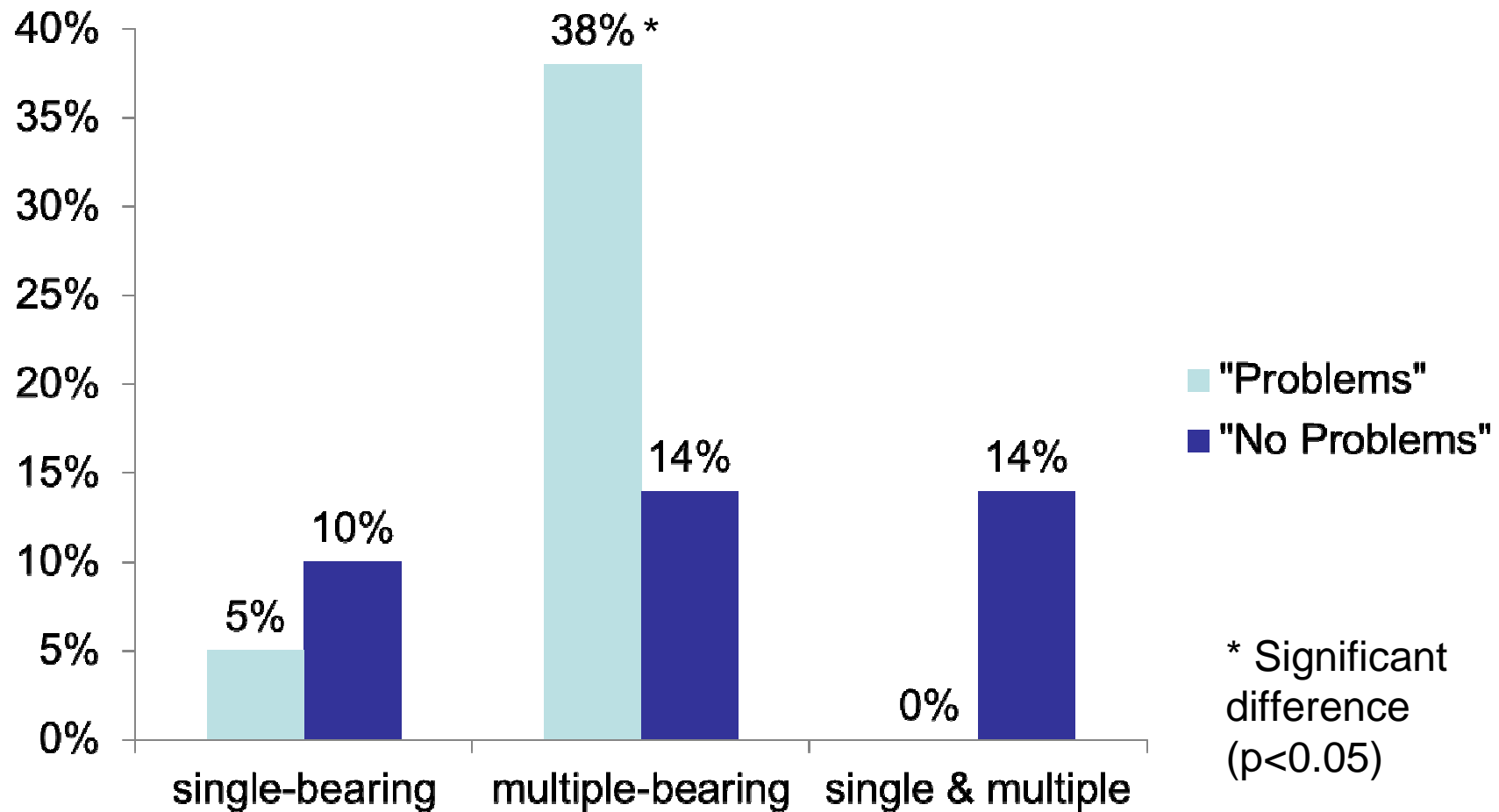
Reasons for losses



Body Condition Score

- Average BCS lower in “Problem” vs. “No Problem”
- Low BCS a risk factor for metabolic disease
- Industry recommendation: target BCS 3 at lambing (3-3.3 for twin-bearing ewes)

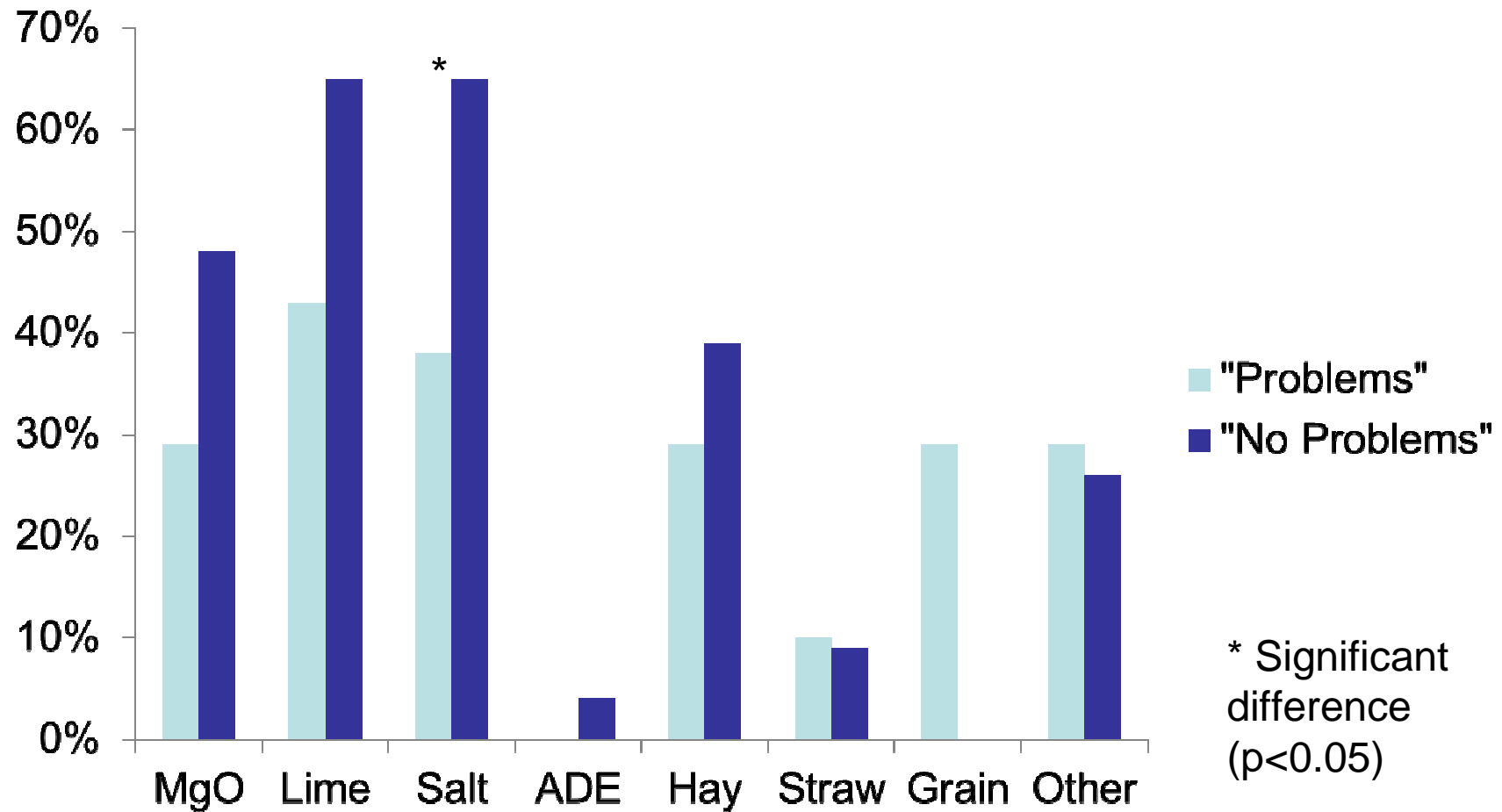
Death category – singles vs. multiples



Single vs. multiple

- Case had higher correlation with multiple bearing ewes
- Higher demand in multiple-bearing ewes
- Risk factor in metabolic diseases

Supplementation



Feeding grain prior to grazing

- 90% of “Problem” cf. 50% of “No Problem”
- Not expected to be important
- Perhaps relates to drought conditions/BCS

Breed

- No differences detected for ewe or ram breed
- Are crossbred ewes more susceptible to grass tetany? Breed or management?
- Field trial this year using crossbred ewes

The weather

- 6 producers noted a bad weather event associated with losses (5 case, 1 control)
- Trend to higher % wet days in “Problem” group
- Effect on plant composition?
- Animal stress?

Preliminary Conclusions

- Dual-purpose wheat may be a valuable stock feed for lambing ewes during winter
- Deficiencies and link to metabolic diseases are recognised - supplement
- Other risk factors may exacerbate imbalance
- High ewe losses have occurred, but can manage the risk factors (especially BCS)

Acknowledgements

- Australian Wool Education Trust & NSW Rural Assistance Authority
- Hume LHPA
- Producers who responded to the mail-out survey, and those who assisted in the follow-up survey.

Reference List

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- Lifetime Wool website www.lifetimewool.com.au

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