

It's a powder keg

By ANDREW MOLE

VICTORIA'S post-flood flystrike has reached tipping point with supplies of jetting and back-line treatments out of stock.

Supply concerns reported recently in *The Weekly Times* have been dramatically compounded by unprecedented demand to cope with hot and wet conditions.

The two most popular treatments — which were out of stock — were Novartis's Clik containing the active ingredient dicyclanil and the cryomazine-



Sue Brumby

based products which are manufactured under a range of brands including Novartis' Vetrizin.

Major rural agencies report that while most of them have strike treatment-dressing product available, supplies of jetting and back-line products for short-term protection are low to zero, depending on individual stores.

A spokeswoman for Novartis said the company was hoping to fulfil outstanding orders within the next two weeks.

She said the demand for Clik had been exacerbated by the unusually high rainfall which had reduced the normal protection period of 18-24 weeks.

Another major threat is the

proliferation of diazinon, which has been banned from all but a few limited on-farm uses because of its threat to humans.

It is understood farmers with old supplies are turning to this product rather than trying to buy in lines such as Extinosad.

At the same time, farmers relying on flystrike powder have been warned about health risks from incorrect use.

National Centre for Farmer Health director Sue Brumby said it was vital farmers were aware of both treating sheep effectively and efficiently and keeping themselves safe.

Ms Brumby said Victorian rural merchandise stores have reported selling crate loads of flystrike powder.

Some of these are hazardous and contain organophosphate insecticide which is a direct threat to farmer health even at low exposures, Ms Brumby said.

A recent UK study has linked organophosphates to impaired neurobehavioral functioning (memory, response, fine motor skills control) in sheep farmers at low exposures, she said.

Death has occurred in some instances from both skin and

oral exposures at very high levels. Whenever using flystrike powder — gloves, masks, overalls and goggles were recommended, she said.

These needed to be washed every day and the powder should be stored below 30C in a well ventilated area — not the ute.

Hamilton sheep veterinarian David Rendell said organophosphate powders have been around a long time and flies have developed resistance to them. He said there was far less risk of resistance to newer products which were safer, less irritant and toxic to sheep.