

# **New Zealand Lamb - Snow hits farmers big time!**

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Following a reasonably benign winter, the Southland region of New Zealand (NZ) has in the past week been hit by “the worst spring storm in living memory” according to the NZ Herald. Six days of blizzards have caused deaths among new lambs numbering in the hundreds of thousands, and raised concern over the welfare of ewes yet to lamb. Besides the effect of the cold weather itself, the continued snowfall has not allowed snow on the ground to thaw, making it much harder for stock to feed. This makes ewes about to lamb particularly susceptible to metabolic illnesses from a lack of nutrients. Reportedly, lamb mortality in the area may be as high as 15% for some farmers. With average prices for lambs expected to be around NZ\$80/head this season (NZ Herald), the financial loss to NZ producers will be significant, estimated to exceed NZ\$50 million (NZ Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry).