

Urea Tightness, Poultry Feed ROI, and Wet-Season Sheep Risk

Global Agricultural Developments

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This brief tracks the latest urea-supply stress, a quantified poultry feeding case that cut total production cost, and practical livestock biosecurity lessons from Australia. It also highlights regional specialty-crop and direct-marketing innovations with clear operational implications.

1) Market Movers

- **Global / North America / Europe — nitrogen remains the clearest market driver.** More than 30% of world urea trade moves through the now-closed Strait of Hormuz, and Iran represents 25% of global export surplus ¹. Because urea trade is concentrated among a small number of firms and manufacturing sites, net importers such as North America and Europe have few alternatives; the source expects prices to keep rising until demand falls enough to match the lost supply ². North American demand is rising as farms head toward seeding with less fertilizer booked than they want ³.
- **U.S. grain trade — positioning has turned hostile to bearish old-crop views.** GrainStats said many analysts who viewed old-crop balances as bearish were stopped out ⁴.
- **Energy complex — fuel remains part of the farm margin story.** Gasoline futures were cited at 3.10, while commentary stressed that price stability still matters and that corn-based homegrown fuel helps stabilize

¹Urea Strategies for 2026

²Urea Strategies for 2026

³Urea Strategies for 2026

⁴ post by @GrainStats

energy security ⁵⁶⁷.

2) Innovation Spotlight

- **China, Daba Mountains — balanced feeding changed poultry economics.** A 1,000-bird mountain-chicken flock fed one daily corn ration was still below standard sale weight at 8 months, with birds around 4 jin versus a 5-jin standard at 6 months ⁸⁹. The diagnosis was that corn supplied energy but not enough protein or vitamins for birds walking 50,000-60,000 steps a day ¹⁰¹¹. Switching to a ration built around crushed corn, bean cake, and vitamins, and installing feeders and waterers at one per 25 birds, shortened the cycle to 6 months and lifted output to 5-6 jin ¹²¹³. Daily feeding cost rose from about 300 yuan to 350 yuan, but total cost fell from about 72,000 yuan to 63,000 yuan because the flock finished earlier, a savings of about 9,000 yuan ¹⁴.
- **North America — nitrogen-use efficiency options are getting more practical attention.** One advisory said around half of conventionally applied urea runs off or gases off before reaching roots, making targeted foliar-applied melted urea a way to feed the crop when nitrogen is converted more efficiently into yield and protein ¹⁵. Another option is legume intercropping, which fixes atmospheric nitrogen and can still feed conventional markets where seed-cleaning plants can separate the harvested mix ¹⁶.
- **China, Jiangsu — trust-based ag retail can improve price realization.** One operator said genuine old geese cannot be sold at the unrealistically low prices seen online, with poor-quality offers eroding buyer trust ¹⁷. The response was a hybrid of livestream selling plus offline community-store pickup and inspection so buyers could verify product quality before paying; more than 100 geese sold in 15 minutes under that model ¹⁸.

3) Regional Developments

- **Australia — sheep movement and wet summers remain a disease trigger.** The source said sheep movement spreads foot rot and described

⁵ post by @GrainStats

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⁸ 20260308 | Agriculture And Farming

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¹⁵ Urea Strategies for 2026

¹⁶ Urea Strategies for 2026

¹⁷ 20260308 | Agriculture And Farming

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significant issues in northern Victoria after a wet summer, including in places that had not seen the disease for years ¹⁹. It also noted that sheep bought years earlier can still be the source of a later problem ²⁰. Crossbred sheep from higher-rainfall areas can carry strains without strong expression, creating risk when introduced into merino systems ²¹.

- **China, Fujian and Yunnan — specialty fungi producers are differentiating through cultivation and processing.** In Gutian, silver-ear substrate supplemented with Chinese herbs increased mycelium density and gel content, while broken-wall processing was used to preserve leaf shape and cut cooking time to about 10 minutes ²²²³²⁴²⁵. In Yongsheng, golden ear was moved from a white juvenile stage into a double-layer house where light, temperature, and humidity drove color change; harvest standards centered on fist-sized, golden-yellow, elastic fruiting bodies ²⁶²⁷²⁸.
- **China, Jiangsu — provenance-led livestock and aquaculture remain part of rural branding.** Chenjia Village markets semi-free-range old geese raised under peach trees and freshwater crabs grown with water grass that serves as feed, shelter, and predator protection ²⁹³⁰.

4) Best Practices

Grains and nitrogen

- If land cannot shift away from high-nitrogen crops, one advisory was to secure upcoming fertilizer needs quickly because retail first-in-first-out pricing means future local prices will reflect today's higher replacement costs ³¹.
- Where growers need to cut nitrogen without giving up yield, the same source points to two levers: better timing through foliar-applied melted urea ³² and biological substitution through legume intercropping ³³.

¹⁹Managing Foot Rot in Sheep

²⁰Managing Foot Rot in Sheep

²¹Managing Foot Rot in Sheep

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³¹Urea Strategies for 2026

³²Urea Strategies for 2026

³³Urea Strategies for 2026

Crop protection

- The source set also flagged nozzle choice and maintenance as a controllable factor in herbicide performance ³⁴.

Sheep biosecurity

Surveillance is critical. Biosecurity is really important. ³⁵

- Buy only from sources willing to declare they are free of virulent foot rot; if they will not declare, avoid the purchase ³⁶.
- Keep purchased sheep isolated until a warm, wet spread period occurs so latent infections have a chance to express; in some areas that may mean holding them separately for up to two years ³⁷.
- After summer eradication programs, either continue vaccination or intensify inspection by catching and tipping sheep to look for under-running; keep any breakdown mob isolated and cull low-value groups if needed ³⁸.

Poultry

- In very active free-range systems, corn-only feeding can underperform because it supplies energy but not enough protein and vitamins for growth ³⁹. The quantified China example used crushed corn, bean cake, vitamins, and one feeder and one waterer per 25 birds ⁴⁰⁴¹.
- In one Sichuan black-chicken system, chicks received Marek's vaccine within 24 hours, were given herbal soup early, and were rotated through pine forest with corn and pumpkin supplements; the operator reported survival above 90% ⁴²⁴³.
- For catching free-range chickens, nighttime handling can be easier because the birds' night blindness reduces escape response ⁴⁴.

5) Input Markets

- **Fertilizer — North America / Europe.** Urea remains supply-driven, with more than 30% of global trade moving through Hormuz and no easy alternative supply for net importers if disruptions persist ⁴⁵⁴⁶. North

³⁴ post by @SuccessfulFarm

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⁴⁵Urea Strategies for 2026

⁴⁶Urea Strategies for 2026

American farms are already approaching seeding with less nitrogen booked than they want ⁴⁷.

- **Procurement — local pricing.** Retail FIFO inventory practices mean future farmgate fertilizer prices will reflect today’s higher wholesale purchases, which argues for earlier coverage where needs are unavoidable ⁴⁸.
- **Feed — poultry economics.** The China mountain-chicken case showed that spending 50 yuan more per day on balanced feed still reduced total cost because it cut the growout cycle by about two months ⁴⁹.
- **Chemicals and fuel.** The source set offered little hard price discovery for crop protection, but it did point to application efficiency through nozzle maintenance ⁵⁰. On fuel, gasoline futures were cited at 3.10 ⁵¹.

6) Forward Outlook

- **Spring 2026 planning — fertilizer exposure stays front and center.** If the war continues, the source expects further disruptions in urea and the energy products derived from it ⁵². The crops most exposed in the source material were high-nitrogen systems such as corn and canola ⁵³.
- **Marketing discipline — schedule risk reviews.** One grain-marketing note said regular check-ins are often what is missing, and that producers should review markets with a focus on managing physical risk, not just price talk ⁵⁴⁵⁵. That advice matters more when bearish old-crop views are being stopped out ⁵⁶.
- **Australia — watch wet weather windows.** Foot rot may stay hidden in dry periods and then express during warm, wet conditions, so seasonal surveillance becomes more important as moisture returns ⁵⁷⁵⁸.
- **Soils — circular-input systems are an emerging watch item.** A Colorado project is testing whether mycelium can turn wood waste from wildfire-mitigation work into a resource for depleted prairie soils ⁵⁹⁶⁰.

⁴⁷Urea Strategies for 2026

⁴⁸Urea Strategies for 2026

⁴⁹ 20260308 | Agriculture And Farming

⁵⁰ post by @SuccessfulFarm

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⁵⁹r/Permaculture post by u/Professional-Tip-950

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