

MEDIA RELEASE 4_10

Increasing prevalence of ovine Johne's disease may affect sheep producers

President of WoolProducers Australia, Don Hamblin says that the prevalence of ovine Johne's disease (OJD) is increasing in some regions throughout Australia, which may lead to those regions being reclassified, and affecting producers 'Assurance Based Credit' (ABC) trading points.

If changes occur that take producers from a low OJD prevalence area into a medium or high OJD prevalence area then they will lose ABC points, but there are ways to gain additional points," said Mr Hamblin.

Additional ABC trading points can be gained by producers' following the recognised OJD management practices outlined in the National Sheep Health Statement. These include vaccination, abattoir surveillance testing, or participation in the Sheep Market Assurance Program.

"In some instances, vaccination is subsidised, which makes it really worthwhile," said Mr Hamblin.

While some parts of Australia have recorded reduced incidence of ovine Johne's disease, over the past 12 months, others still have seen increases.

Figures show that increased prevalence correlate with those areas where the disease is not being actively managed through simple and effective measures available through the ABC scheme.

Rodney Watt from the Sheepmeat Council of Australia said ovine Johne's disease can affect productivity and stock prices.

"OJD infection rates can be minimised if sheep producers take appropriate steps to help stop the disease from spreading by careful stock purchases.

"Producers should choose to buy sheep with a high ABC score to avoid 'buying in' OJD and insist on the vendor supplying a National Sheep Health Statement, a declaration as to the health status and treatment history of the sheep," said Mr Watt.

"National data indicates that OJD is spreading to previously uninfected flocks in some states, which calls for action from all sheep producers to ensure they're doing everything within their means to avoid transmission of OJD," said Mr Watt.

The National OJD program exists to help producers manage the risks of ovine Johne's disease Australia wide. Whether selling or buying stock, the ABC scheme and the National Sheep Health Statement allow producers to consider and manage their risks and to protect their flocks' welfare and their own livelihoods.

For the most recent information about prevalence areas and gaining additional trading credits, visit www.ojd.com.au

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