

MEDIA RELEASE _{5_10}

Sheepmeat Council and WoolProducers urge vigilance to avoid OJD stock losses

Sheepmeat Council of Australia and WoolProducers Australia are urging sheep producers to 'act now' and vaccinate against ovine Johne's disease (OJD) to avoid expensive stock losses.

With OJD on the rise in some states, Don Hamblin, President of WoolProducers Australia, says sheep producers should be using Gudair vaccine to ensure maximum protection against the wasting disease of OJD.

"Now is the time of year when all lambs intended to be kept for breeding or wool production should be vaccinated against OJD," Mr Hamblin said.

Vaccination is a key tool to minimise the risk of sheep contracting OJD. In those flocks already infected with OJD, vaccination is one of the most effective ways of reducing mortalities.

Industry and government have developed the 'Assurance Based Credit' (ABC) scheme, an important tool for producers to help prevent the spread of OJD when trading sheep. The higher the ABC score, the lower the OJD risk status of the concerned sheep.

"Don't wait until OJD is affecting production before doing something about it; look at your options for managing OJD and go with the course of action that is going to best increase your ABC score," Mr Hamblin said.

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

Kate Joseph, President of Sheepmeat Council of Australia says a great way to gain additional ABC trading points is to vaccinate lambs before they reach 16 weeks of age.

"Lambs vaccinated before 16 weeks of age are protected from bacteria on contaminated pasture and therefore attract extra credit under the ABC scheme," Ms Joseph said.

"Remember, having a higher ABC score provides an additional level of assurance to prospective purchasers, so it's worth the investment both in terms of production and the later stages of marketing," concluded Ms Joseph.

Figures from 2009 abattoir monitoring demonstrate that a third of farms in southern NSW are affected by OJD. OJD is also increasing in other south-eastern states and in Western Australia. However, concerted efforts in vaccinating sheep by owners has shown that OJD is a disease that can be managed.

For further information on OJD visit www.ojd.com.au

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