

NATIONAL SHEEP HEALTH MONITORING PROJECT

The National Sheep Health Monitoring Project

(NSHMP) commenced in 2007 and monitors lines of adult sheep in abattoirs for a number of important animal health conditions that reduce farm profit through productivity losses or wastage in meat processing plants through condemnations.

If producers are aware that the conditions are occurring in their flock, these can be managed or prevented on-farm and losses reduced.

The NSHMP has two aims, to collect information that can be used by producers, industry groups, processors and governments to support ongoing market access and to provide animal health status reports to each individual producer.

The project commenced in 2007 with monitoring occurring nationally at several meat processing plants. It is conducted in parallel with abattoir monitoring for ovine Johne's disease. To date, individual reports have been returned to producers in NSW and South Australia through the departments of primary industries.

Which animal health conditions and why?

There are up to twenty different animal health conditions monitored throughout Australia including:

Liver fluke

Sheep measles

Caseous lymphadenitis (cheesy gland)

Hydatids

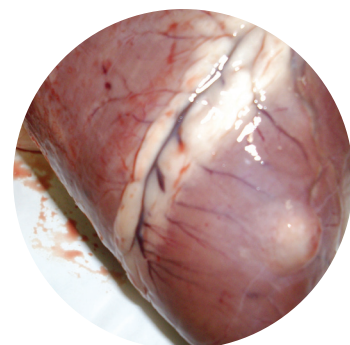
Image Credit: Wayne Gilbert

All the conditions which are monitored can either cause on-farm loss or may affect market access if identified in export meat shipments.

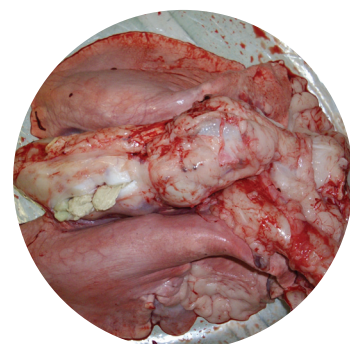
Product is discarded or downgraded as a result of the presence of these conditions. These losses are avoidable.



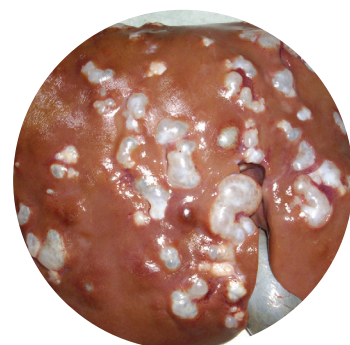
Liver fluke (*F.hepatica*)



Sheep measles (*C.ovis*)



Cheesy gland (*C.pseudotuberculosis*)



Hydatids (*E.granulosus*)

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Benefits

- The NSHMP has generated a comprehensive and contemporary data set that provides a good indication of the animal health status of the Australian flock. This information can be used by governments, industry groups and processors to provide solid evidence in support of market access and demonstrates the quality of Australian product.
- The information provided to individual producers can assist them improve their flocks' productiveness and fine tune their animal health programs.
- For processors there is the opportunity to reduce product non-compliance, lifting productivity and reducing costs.

Findings to date

The animal health conditions identified through monitoring occur nationally but there is regional variation. Information analysed to date shows that the proportion of affected lines for some conditions is high, but the average number of sheep infected within a line is quite low. **(Fig1a-d)**

A recent report commissioned by Cattle Council of Australia, Sheepmeat Council of Australia, WoolProducers Australia, and Goat Industry Council of Australia and Australian Meat Industry Council has confirmed the benefit to the whole supply chain from information collected during abattoir monitoring.

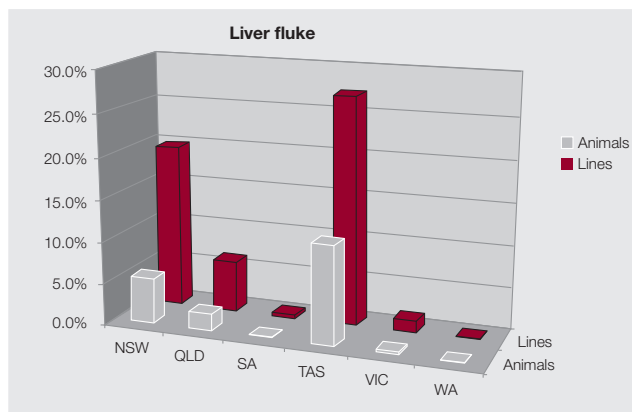


Figure 1a. Prevalence of liver fluke damage in lines inspected and sheep slaughtered in the period July 2008–June 2009.

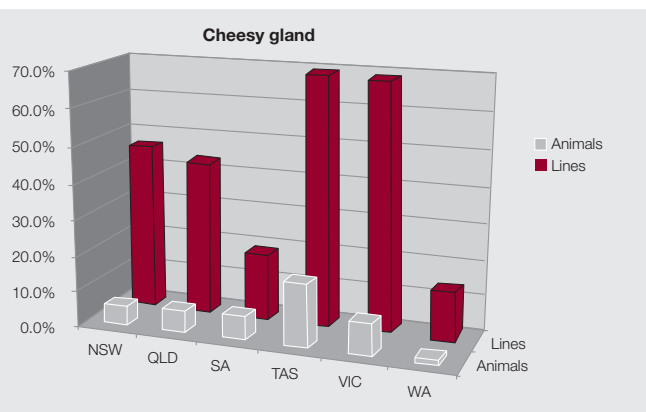


Figure 1c. Caseous lymphadenitis (cheesy gland) prevalence in lines inspected and sheep slaughtered July 2008–June 2009.

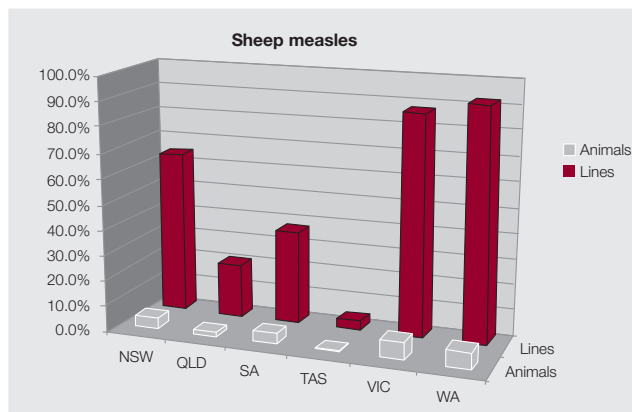


Figure 1b. *T. ovis* cyst prevalence in lines inspected and sheep slaughtered July 2008–June 2009.

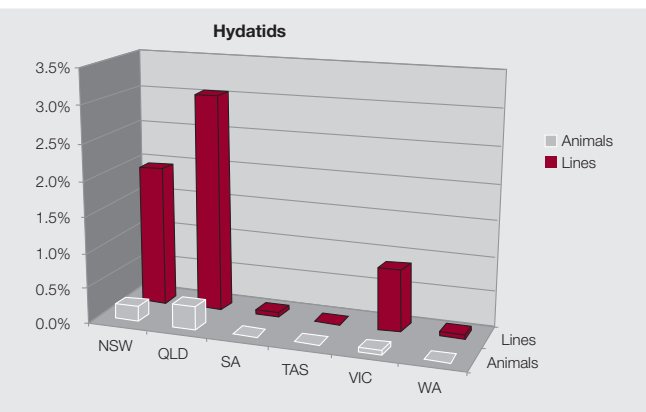


Figure 1d. Hydatid cyst prevalence in lines inspected and sheep slaughtered July 2008–June 2009.

Future developments

The present project will continue for another two years during which time stakeholders will be working to determine whether a long-term sustainable model for the return of information to producers can be developed.

For more information about this project contact:

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