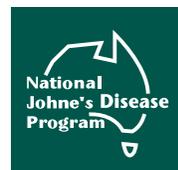


JD NEWS

Official Newsletter of the National Johne's Disease Control Program

Spring 2009



Producer initiated animal health biosecurity program – innovation in disease control

The Ovine Johne's Disease Exclusion Area in western and northern NSW is an innovative and effective community-based animal biosecurity program.

Following the adoption of a less regulated national approach to the management of ovine Johne's disease in 2004, producers were asked to democratically decide whether they wanted to work together to prevent OJD. About three quarters of the districts in NSW decided that they did not want OJD in their districts; they would work to keep it out; and would prevent and control the disease, and eliminate it where possible.

This biosecurity program is coordinated and delivered by eight of NSW's fourteen regional Livestock Health and Pest Authorities (LHPA), which have been recently formed by strategically aggregating the former Rural Lands Protection Boards. LHPAs are producer funded pest and disease control organizations. Their effectiveness is based on community ownership and cooperation. Over the past 20 years, the former Boards have demonstrated how effective long-term community commitment and management of a major animal disease can be.

Virulent ovine footrot, once the scourge of sheep producers over large parts of NSW, has been eradicated from the vast majority of flocks and districts, largely through members for the rural community working diligently with Board staff in local footrot control groups.

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Photo: Adrianne Yzerman

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In the last five years, using skills developed during the footrot program and working from an understanding of risk management, the OJD Exclusion Area has also demonstrated the effectiveness of community commitment by keeping OJD at extremely low levels. Commitment to biosecurity and to assisting owners of OJD infected flocks has underpinned the success of the Exclusion Area in many areas.

Destocking of suspect or infected mobs has been effective in areas where heat and dryness have a big impact on the survival of the bacteria causing Johne's disease (*Mycobacteria paratuberculosis*) and footrot (*Dichelobacter nodosus*).

A major risk assessment was carried out in 1998 of all sheep that had been introduced into the 9 Western Division Boards (forerunners of the LHPAs) between 1988 and 1997. This was undertaken by special OJD committees, made up of flockowners, government agencies, Board staff and Directors, and, importantly, stock agents. All 1500 flockowners were asked to report all sheep introduced in that period to their OJD committee, as part of establishing a case to allow flockowners to protect their animals from OJD. Remarkably for a voluntary survey, more than 95% of flockowners in all Boards responded. Responses were checked against local knowledge of movements of sheep, and audited against stock agent and agistment records. Most sheep had come from drier pastoral areas, or studs in areas known to have low risk of OJD. Where the OJD committees considered that an introduction had some risk of being infected, the sheep were either tested or their history checked with veterinarians in their area of origin. The OJD committees fully documented their work and findings. All were granted "Protected Area" status, a low risk descriptor used prior to the implementation of formally recognised biosecurity practices and each adopted a common approach to OJD biosecurity.

Coincidentally, this helped biosecure their flocks from footrot and their cattle herds from BJD, with recognition of the particular risk of introducing sheep and cattle from wetter areas with high stocking density. Today, there are only 3 landholdings known or suspected to have OJD in these 9 former Western Division Boards, all of which are working to eliminate or control the infection.

The community-based nature of these LHPA initiated biosecurity plans programs continues to be a critical factor for their success and demonstrates the great potential of this approach for effective management of animal health, particularly when contrasted with the variable successes of alternative forms of disease control such as government regulation or market – based approaches.

Submitted by Greg Curran, Regional Veterinary Officer – Broken Hill, NSW Department of Industry and Investment.

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Since my background is an urban one, I have tried to relate the statement to something that everyone can identify with. I set about thinking whether I would purchase any important item without some form of assurance that I was getting what I thought I was paying for.

One thing that struck me was the parallel between purchasing livestock and purchasing a second hand car.

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The most common response I get is: 'Well no, I would not buy a car without such an important document, because a car is valuable.'

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Buying livestock is an expensive business. Would you take the risk of not knowing where the animals had come from, whether they had been vaccinated or the state of their health condition? Producers who have an expectation that the stock they purchase are healthy, need to ask for an animal health statement, this is the animal health equivalent of a pink slip.

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To protect your investment and your flock and herd, always ask for an animal health statement before you make that purchase. The consequences of uninformed purchasing decisions are not worth thinking about.

Footnote: This article was prepared by Rhiannon Brodie, Animal Health Australia. Rhiannon is now travelling in England Europe. All staff wish her well in her new adventures.



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The Sydney Royal Agricultural Show is the biggest agricultural show in Australia so having these rules and regulations is vital in minimising the spread of animal diseases.

With agricultural shows occurring around Australia throughout the year it is a timely reminder that anyone exhibiting animals at any show to ensure they are well prepared and should remember to:

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2. Only take animals in peak condition to shows - do not risk infecting other's animals if yours are unwell.
3. Isolate animals for a suitable period on return to your property.
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5. Complete the National Animal Health Statement and associated entry forms clearly; the information you provide could help contain an emergency animal disease outbreak.
6. Take all husbandry and feed equipment, do not share.

Information for producers on biosecurity risks and how to reduce them can be found at: www.farmbiosecurity.com.au. The website includes information about disease risks, reducing those risks and how to go about it. It now also contains health statements and show declarations.



Farm Biosecurity Award winners lead the way

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Farm Biosecurity spokesman Duncan Rowland said it was terrific to see so much evidence of biosecurity awareness and understanding.

“The Farm Biosecurity program aims to raise awareness and the word is really getting out there. Producers are starting to recognise the benefits of implementing simple biosecurity measures,” said Mr Rowland.

“We were surprised by the depth of understanding shown in the nominations. The top 10 entries were outstanding and it was very difficult to narrow them down to just two winners,” he said.

Flockowners of Broken Hill and Swift Australia were ultimately rewarded for their demonstrated commitment to biosecurity and for the positive outcomes they have achieved by implementing simple biosecurity measures.

Flockowners of Broken Hill were recognised for their cooperative effort in preventing ovine Johne's disease from entering their region.

In 1997, Broken Hill's flockowners decided to work together to keep out OJD. This insidious disease was sweeping across cooler, wetter areas of NSW and Victoria and resulting in significant market losses for those affected. The flockowners worked with veterinarians to implement biosecurity measures to demonstrate that their flocks had little to no risk of being infected and to build awareness of OJD and how to prevent it when introducing sheep. This included educating themselves on the need to check the risk of sheep introduced to the area being infected with OJD. Their ongoing voluntary work has ensured no Broken Hill flock has been infected.

The second award was presented to Swift Australia for its comprehensive, companywide biosecurity strategy, recently implemented to support the security of the business. To ensure that they can continue to deliver to their clients, Swift Australia implemented a quality assured biosecurity program across all of their properties in Australia.

The awards were announced at a gala dinner in Canberra on 19 September with each winner receiving \$2,000 and a hand crafted glass trophy.

The Farm Biosecurity program is a joint initiative of Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia and the two companies have co-sponsored the Farm Biosecurity Award to promote greater understanding of the importance of biosecurity on farm.

Above left to right: Mike Bond, CEO Animal Health Australia, Max Hams and David Gowing from Flockowners of Broken Hill, and Greg Fraser, CEO Plant Health Australia.

JOHNE'S DISEASE & MAP STATISTICS



Number of known infected herds and flocks June 2009

Source: JD01 NAHIS

CATTLE

Number of known infected cattle herds.

	Dec 08	March 09	Jun 09
NSW	110	111	112
SA	67	67	63
TAS	16	16	16
VIC	884	892	959
WA	0	0	0
TOTAL	1077	1086	1150

SHEEP

Number of known infected sheep flocks.

	Dec 08	March 09	Jun 09
NSW	1286	1286	1286
SA	57	55	54
TAS	64	64	64
VIC	533	539	567
WA	24	26	27
TOTAL	1964	1970	1998

GOATS

Number of known infected goat herds

	Dec 08	March 09	Jun 09
NSW	8	8	8
SA	1	1	1
TAS	3	3	3
VIC	4	4	8
WA	0	0	0
TOTAL	16	16	20

DEER

Number of known infected deer herds

	Dec 08	March 09	Jun 09
NSW	1	1	1
SA	1	1	1
TAS	0	0	0
VIC	2	2	0
WA	0	0	0
TOTAL	4	4	2

Numbers of Assessed Herds and Flocks in MAPS October 2009

Alpaca	MN1	MN2	MN3	Total
NSW	2	15	73	90
Qld	0	0	0	0
SA	0	1	19	20
Tas	0	0	2	2
Vic	2	5	7	14
Total	4	21	101	126

Cattle	MN1	MN2	MN3	Total
NSW	74	105	162	341
Qld	0	0	0	0
SA	39	89	82	210
Tas	17	29	26	72
Vic	65	85	84	234
Total	195	308	354	857

Goat	MN1	MN2	MN3	Total
NSW	7	11	6	24
Qld	0	0	0	0
SA	1	5	3	9
Tas	5	2	1	8
Vic	0	1	1	2
Total	13	19	11	43

Sheep	MN1	MN2	MN3	Total
NSW	35	39	138	212
Qld	0	1	0	1
SA	11	25	113	149
Tas	2	2	15	19
Vic	9	15	52	76
Total	57	82	318	457

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Email: brian.radunz@nt.gov.au

For further information on any of the items in this newsletter please contact Lorna Citer, Manager, Johne's Disease, Animal Health Australia at lciter@animalhealthaustralia.com.au, (02) 6203 3922 or visit the Animal Health Australia website at <http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au>.

Photos above:
Rebecca Ogrady
Mohair Australia Ltd

>> *Continued from cover*

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