

## Revised OJD plan revealed

*WoolProducers Australia and Sheepmeat Council of Australia*

WoolProducers Australia and Sheepmeat Council of Australia have reached a decision on the future approach to the management of ovine Johne's disease post June 2012. The next phase will be a five-year national plan, with a transition period beginning 1 July 2012, and full implementation to begin on 1 January 2013.

The principal aims of the plan from July 2012 will be:

- > To minimise the risk of infection by *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis* (Mptb) spreading to properties and regions that currently appear disease free.
- > To reduce the financial impact and adverse animal health and welfare effects of the disease on individual flocks and on the sheep industry as a whole.

The High, Medium and Low Prevalence Area system will be replaced by two areas to be called 'Control' and 'Protected'. The proposed criteria for defining these areas are:

1. Protected Areas, as a general guide, have a 95% confidence limit for true prevalence of about 1% or less with a commitment by producers within the region to actively prevent and control infection through the implementation of Regional Biosecurity Plans. The boundaries are to reflect disease prevalence rather than be aligned with state borders.
2. Control Areas have an estimated flock prevalence of 1.0% or greater (effectively endemic). OJD is controlled by the use of vaccination and by property and regional biosecurity management.

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BJD NEWS

During the transition phase, groups of producers who are able to meet the criteria for the Protected Area will be encouraged to register an approved regional biosecurity plan.

As a result of these changes there will be a review of the Sheep Health Statement and Assurance Based Credit scheme, which will be undertaken by representatives of each state department, WoolProducers Australia and Sheepmeat Council of Australia. Current trading arrangements will remain in place until 1 January 2013.

Information about the revised plan is available on [www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/johnes](http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/johnes).

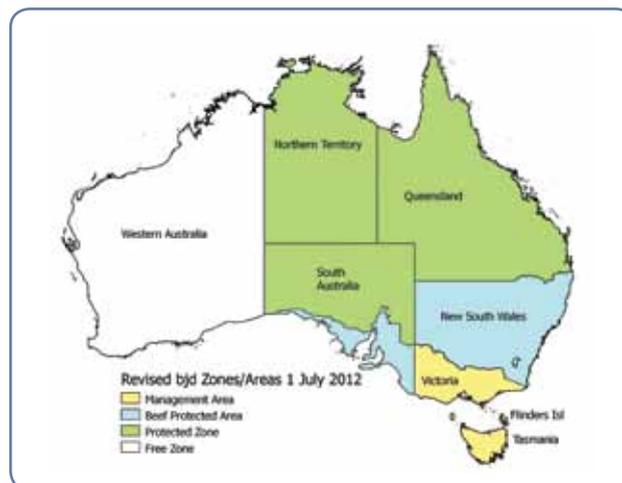
## BJD program update

*Dr Graham Bailey, Dr Jeremy Rogers, Dr David Kennedy*

In less than 6 months' time, major changes in BJD control will come into effect. Following a long period of consultation, Australian governments and the cattle industries have reaffirmed their commitment to protect the north and west of the country and the beef and alpaca sectors from BJD, while allowing dairy and goat producers greater control over how they manage the infection in their herds.

In many ways, the new approach strengthens the strategy that was started in the mid-2000s. Western Australia will continue as a Free Zone and the Northern Territory and Queensland will remain Protected Zones. Regulatory measures will continue to protect all susceptible species in these zones and BJD will be energetically controlled and/or eradicated when detected.

### Proposed BJD Zones and Areas (incorporating dairy compartments) post June 2012



Map courtesy of Biosecurity Victoria

### Management Areas

Recognising that BJD is endemic in the south-eastern dairy population, Victoria and Tasmania will be reclassified as Management Areas. In these areas, the dairy industry will continue to encourage dairy producers to voluntarily prevent and control BJD through calf-rearing to reduce the incidence of new infections within herds, and use the National Dairy BJD Score to source high-score, low risk replacements ([www.dairyaustralia.com.au/bjd](http://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/bjd)).



Beef producers seeking to protect their BJD status and to provide a measure of assurance will be able to use the *Beef Only* declaration when selling and buying cattle (<http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/programs/johnes-disease/bovine-johnes-disease-in-australia/beef-only-assurance-for-bjd>). Similarly, Q-Alpaca and the Goat Risk Rating will help these sectors assess and manage the risk of spreading BJD.

In all areas, the National Johnes's Disease Market Assurance Programs (MAPs) will continue to be supported for breeders who want to assure themselves of their herd status and provide a high level of assurance to their clients.

### Beef Protected Areas – NSW and South Australia

The main changes in July 2012 will affect New South Wales and South Australia, but again these are consistent with recent developments in BJD control.

Beef producers in NSW and the southern part of SA especially will need to be aware of changes. In summary the changes are:

- > Removal of zones – currently two zones are in operation:
  - Control Zones – southern SA and parts of NSW (north and south coast and Riverina)
  - Protected Zone – remainder of NSW
- > Replacement by the Beef Protected Area (BPA) – within the BPA there will be a separate dairy compartment (farms that supply milk to a dairy factory including any land the cattle run on). Unlike zones, which are lines on maps drawn to reflect state, local government or other boundaries, the dairy compartment will be a patchwork of dairies scattered throughout the BPA. For movement (intra and interstate) and other purposes where BJD is considered, the removal of zones from NSW will mean that location within NSW will be irrelevant. Quarantines will continue on infected and suspect beef farms.

Control Zones were described a decade ago, reflecting the high number of dairy farms in those districts. However trading patterns indicate that as a general rule, dairy and beef farms are separate enterprises. The BPA has been established because beef herds in the former control zones generally have a very low prevalence of infection, and there is a higher prevalence of infected dairy herds in the dairy population. The new BPA aims to separate beef and dairy enterprises so that the different levels of risk can be managed; therefore it is critical that separation of dairy and beef herds continues.

Farmers have responsibility for on-farm biosecurity and the last decade has seen regulation being replaced with education as farmers assume greater responsibility for managing the risks of BJD and other diseases. Most disease arrives on farm with the purchase of one or more infected animals that may look healthy and normal. Farmers need to use the Cattle Health Statement and ask questions of agents and vendors to ensure they manage the risk of introducing a disease that could affect the health and production of animals on their farm. In relation to BJD, close contact with the dairy industry and the Management Area are critical risk factors.

Local and national industry organisations have committed to contribute to a communication program about the changes. A new document that will describe the changes in detail, *Standard Definitions, Rules and Guidelines for BJD*, is nearly completed.

In the new BPA there will still be surveillance to detect BJD, especially on beef farms. Possible spread of BJD from infected dairy properties will be monitored by tracing movements of cattle to beef farms or operations. Beef farms that receive cattle from known infected dairy properties will be advised of this, and provided with advice as to the consequences. Beef properties with infected or suspect cattle will be placed in quarantine.

Government animal health services in the Beef Protected Area will be responsible for surveillance to show that BJD continues to be a very uncommon disease on beef farms. Governments will also conduct tracing from dairy farms with an infected or suspect status for BJD. Beef farmers receiving cattle from these dairies will also be classified as suspect and placed in quarantine.

## Abattoir monitoring ramps up in WA

*Alex MacLennan*

Following much negotiation, abattoir monitoring for OJD commenced at Shark Lake Abattoir in Esperance on 20 September 2011. Monitoring will continue at Shark Lake while there are sufficient lines of mutton available, and then move to other abattoirs in WA until the end of June 2012 as part of the current OJD Management Plan.

Abattoir monitoring provides local sheep producers with an excellent opportunity to get their sheep inspected for OJD. This is important for disease control at an individual property level and for the region as a whole. The presence of OJD has significant consequences for both productivity and market access and knowing a flock has the disease is the vital first step to minimise production losses.

Following inspection, producers will receive confidential feedback on the OJD status of their sheep and may also be able to claim additional Assurance Based Credit points if their sheep test negative for OJD.

While the primary aim of monitoring is for OJD, inspection also includes monitoring for other conditions, e.g. liver fluke, cheesy gland, pleurisy, hydatids, sheep measles and tape worm.

ASHEEP, which is part of the Western Australian Grower Group Alliance, is currently investigating how Esperance producers can minimise the risk of their flocks becoming infected with OJD. ASHEEP has been working with DAFWA, local veterinarians and Animal Health Australia to form a regional biosecurity group to manage OJD under the new national program.



## Abattoir inspector training at Cressy

Abattoir surveillance has made a significant contribution to the control and eradication of several infectious diseases of farm animals in Australia and has now been shown to have a major role in the control of Johne's disease in sheep. In recent times there has been an increase in the number of abattoirs involved in surveillance work. This has increased the demand for trained inspectors.

The National Meat Industry Training Advisory Council (MINTRAC), Tasmanian Quality Meats Pty Ltd, Animal Health Australia and Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment Tasmania collaborated in late 2011 to run an abattoir monitoring 'train the trainer' course in Cressy, Tasmania. The course provided instruction to meat inspectors on post-mortem monitoring of sheep for endemic conditions such as OJD and also how to train other inspectors in endemic disease monitoring.

The workshop was well attended with trainers coming from New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. Participants were very positive about the workshop, which provided the background and materials necessary to deliver abattoir monitoring training to meat inspectors as part of the national meat inspection curriculum.

Attendees also learned about the procedures that have been developed to ensure a nationally consistent approach to this important work, recording procedures and the correct way to sample, package and dispatch specimens for further analysis for ovine Johne's disease.



Photos: Chris Cocker

## Private business risk or risky business?

*David Kennedy and Alex MacLennan*

How much do you put your business at risk by not spending a little time on risk management? In all businesses, time always seems to be at a premium and it is easy to be swept up with the day-to-day management and forget how a little time spent can save a lot of grief in the long run. In the case of animal health matters, not taking the time to properly consider risks in your decision making can definitely result in long-term problems. This is never more so than with Johne's disease.

Johne's disease is a slowly developing infection that demands a long term perspective and very careful and sustained management. Any lapse in attending to biosecurity and control measures has the potential to undo previous good work. When Johne's disease is detected in a herd or flock, it has probably been there for some years. Likewise, by the time you notice that something is wrong with your stock, you can usually bet that the infection has probably been causing production losses and maybe deaths for years. The infection is probably well established so bringing it under control will take time, attention to stock purchases, on-farm management and quite a lot of money.

The consequences of not getting Johne's disease under control will be more costly than avoiding the disease in the first place. Experience tells us that producers who have recognised Johne's disease too late have had severe income loss. This is not only through deaths but the cost associated with buying in replacements, reduced cash flow as a result of not having surplus stock available for sale, disruption to the age structure of flocks and herds, not to mention a significant reduction in the meat value of culled animals.

And if the disease is not detected early, many infected herds and flocks will unknowingly on-sell their problem to others.

To stay in business a producer might well have to focus on the short term and day-to-day farm operations. This includes buying and selling stock to maintain cash flow and this can be the Achilles heel when it comes to Johne's disease.

Buying livestock presents the biggest risk for bringing in Johne's disease onto a farm. The more animals you buy, the bigger the risk – therefore the more the precautions you should take. Buy stock with high assurance for Johne's disease under the risk assessment schemes that fits your business.

Every industry sector has at least one method for minimising the risk of buying in Johne's disease. These include:

- Market Assurance Programs
- Dairy BJD Score
- Beef Only
- ABC Scheme for sheep
- Q Alpaca
- Goat Risk Rating

You should be familiar with the systems that can help you make informed choices. Just meeting minimum movement standards might not be good enough and eventually you may buy in Johne's disease.

If you're attempting to control existing infection, you don't want to buy infected replacements, so buy replacement stock that have a lower likelihood of infection. Don't let lack of time in the short term get you down in the long term. For instance, introducing unvaccinated sheep from OJD-endemic areas has resulted in increasing the pressure of infection and ongoing losses in otherwise vaccinated flocks. Similarly buying infected cows can put pressure on dairy calf rearing; and running a dairy-beef enterprise in conjunction with a pure beef herd is also a risky business unless calves have come from a CattleMAP or Score 7 Dairy.

Don't rely on verbal assurance – take time to check the vendor's signed declaration of high assurance on the Animal Health Statement **before** buying the stock, otherwise you might be buying a little bit extra!

## Effective ovine Johne's disease management requires a group effort

*Lorna Citer*

Currently some state policies on OJD encourage producers to manage 'individual business risk'. Tracing is not undertaken from infected properties and neighbours are not notified of the additional risks that have developed by having an infected property adjoining their farm.

The principal method of OJD spread is through the purchase of infected sheep or the movement of infected sheep onto a parcel of land, either as strays or through agistment. Once the organism has seeded into a region, there will be spread through local trade and the movement of faecal material across property boundaries, and by straying sheep.

Relying on individual business risk for regional prevention and control has been shown not to work in the states where this has been the basis of state OJD policy. In those regions the number of infected flocks has increased dramatically in the past two years.

This policy fails for the following reasons:

- > Some producers who trade regularly are buying sheep without assessing the risks associated with those sheep and 'seed' the infection into new areas.
- > Producers in an area where infected sheep have been introduced are unaware that the sheep have been introduced and so are not in a position to adjust their risk management strategy.
- > Once the disease is introduced into a region, lateral spread becomes an important method of disease dissemination and little can be done on an individual basis to avoid the spread of infection onto a farm.
- > Waiting for sheep to die before instituting a control program leads to considerable production losses and animal welfare issues since the method is unreliable in determining the presence of the disease. It is well documented under Australian conditions (Campbell et al 2011\*) that producers are not able to reliably identify flock mortalities from chronic diseases until mortalities reach 10% annually.

Sheep producers need to assess the risk that the sheep they are purchasing are infected with OJD and pro-actively implement regional strategies to effectively control and manage OJD. Some pro-active groups of producers have already developed regional biosecurity plans.

*Reference*

\*Campbell, A.J.D., Hill, C. and Bell, C. (2011) Surveillance for post-weaning sheep mortality in extensively managed Australian sheep flocks: challenges and practicalities, Proceedings of the International Conference on Animal Health Surveillance, Lyon, France.

## Well ManaJD dairy farms in SA

*Dr Jeremy Rogers*

*Primary Industries and Resources South Australia*

South Australia's 'Dairy ManaJD' program was launched in 2004 using the then new National Dairy Assurance Score for BJD.

Significant subsidies were offered to SA dairy farmers who wished to join the program and test their herds to gain a recognised Dairy Assurance Score. Herds found to be affected with BJD were assisted to eradicate the disease in some cases, and manage the spread of the disease in others.

Around 97% of SA dairy farmers have enrolled in the SA Dairy ManaJD program, which includes veterinary and processor auditing on farm and testing to maintain status. As a result over 81% of SA dairies have a Dairy Score of 7 or above.

A reduction in funding support for the program in 2010 has meant that SA dairy farmers are now paying most of the costs to maintain their status, but there continued to be perceived market and economic benefits to having a higher dairy assurance score.

In SA and NSW it is a legal requirement to declare the Dairy Assurance Score of dairy cattle when sold. This has assisted farmers to make purchasing decisions based on valid information in these states.





## SNIPPETS

### JD surveillance in SA feral goats

South Australia has a very low prevalence of Johne's disease infected goat herds. This is supported by extensive surveillance of the feral goat population, which is mainly found in the Protected Zone (pastoral area). Goats are examined by trained inspectors at processing works and samples from goats shot in national parks are tested. So far there have been no detections of Johne's disease in feral goats. Currently more samples are being collected from populations closer to the Victorian border.

### Falkland Islands sets new import requirements for sheep semen

The import health standard for ovine semen from Australia to the Falkland Islands has set new requirements for OJD. Specifically, there must be no reports of OJD on the property of origin in the two years before collection and the property is participating in the Market Assurance Program or the donor ram has been tested for OJD within 120 days prior to collection.

For further information visit [www.aqis.gov.au](http://www.aqis.gov.au)

### MAP vets Q&A page

MAP-approved veterinarians are now able to have their questions regarding the Johne's Disease Market Assurance Program answered on a new web page on the Animal Health Australia website. Questions and answers will be retained on the page and combined to provide a body of knowledge available to all veterinarians. The page will be password protected and questions will only be uploaded if they are appropriate. Veterinarians can obtain a password by contacting [it@animalhealthaustralia.com.au](mailto:it@animalhealthaustralia.com.au)

### New faecal test approved

The Herd Environmental Culture (HEC), a new type of faecal test, has been approved by Animal Health Committee's Sub-committee on Animal Health Laboratory Standards for use in dairy herds. HEC is approved for use as a surveillance tool in dairy herds in Free and Protected Zones and as a test equivalent to the Check Test and a Maintenance Test (i.e. used for maintenance of herd status in dairy herds).

### NT CVO awarded Public Sector Medal

Congratulations to the Northern Territory Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO), Brian Radunz, who was awarded the Chief Minister's Public Sector Medal. The prestigious medal recognises an employee's outstanding and meritorious public service. Brian Radunz has been the Northern Territory's Chief Veterinary Officer for the last 12 years. During this period he has; developed a highly experienced animal health team; done an excellent job of representing the Territory's interests at national forums; worked closely with industry to negotiate and gain agreement on a number of challenging issues; and played a leading role in achieving national consensus on some difficult and contentious topics. As a result he has gained Territory-wide recognition amongst his peers, and industry and nation-wide amongst interstate CVO's and other leading members of the animal health/biosecurity community.

Dr Radunz also is currently the Chair of the BJD Technical Advisory Group and has been instrumental in progressing and guiding the development of the new National BJD Program which will be implemented from July 2012.

### International Colloquium on Paratuberculosis

The 11th International Colloquium on Paratuberculosis (Johne's disease) will be held at Sydney University from 5-10 February 2012. The colloquium brings together experts in all areas of Johne's disease control and management to share the latest research findings and foster relationships to develop policies and strategies to combat the chronic disease.

A highlight of the colloquium will be an industry special-focus day on Wednesday, 8 February, featuring speakers from the Australian sheep, cattle and alpaca industries, as well as Canada, Ireland and the United States of America. The purpose of the industry day is to share experiences in Johne's disease management and improve understanding and awareness of control programs in Australia and around the world. A number of producers and advisors will speak from first-hand experience in managing Johne's disease over the past 15 years in Australia. Details are available from <http://www.icp2012.com.au/>

### BJD testing rebate

A BJD Check Testing rebate operates in all states for beef producers. This rebate allows a producer to claim up to \$550 per year for a herd test for the purposes of determining infection status, for movements interstate or for maintaining or advancing status in the Market Assurance Program. The rebate is administered by the state government BJD coordinators in NSW, Victoria and SA. In Tasmania it is administered by the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, which can provide a claim form to the producer or a private practitioner on behalf of the producer. For further details contact your state BJD Coordinator.

# JOHNE'S DISEASE & MAP STATISTICS



## Number of known infected herds and flocks January, 2012

Source: JD01 NAHIS

### CATTLE

Number of known infected cattle herds.

	March 2011	June 2011	Sept 2011
NSW	105	111	115
QLD	1	1	2
SA	60	47	60
TAS	16	14	14
VIC	894	896	911
WA	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1076</b>	<b>1069</b>	<b>1102</b>

### SHEEP

Number of known infected sheep flocks.

	March 2011	June 2011	Sept 2011
NSW	1286	1286	1286
QLD	0	0	0
SA	44	44	41
TAS	64	64	64
VIC	639	653	685
WA	41	41	41
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2074</b>	<b>2088</b>	<b>2117</b>

### GOATS

Number of known infected goat herds.

	March 2011	June 2011	Sept 2011
NSW	8	5	2
QLD	1	1	0
SA	1	1	1
TAS	3	3	3
VIC	7	7	6
WA	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>

### DEER

Number of known infected deer herds.

	March 2011	June 2011	Sept 2011
NSW	1	1	1
QLD	0	0	0
SA	0	0	0
TAS	0	0	0
VIC	4	4	4
WA	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>

## Number of assessed herds and flocks in MAPS 25 January, 2012

ALPACA	MN1	MN2	MN3	TOTAL
NSW	3	13	49	65
QLD	0	0	0	0
SA	0	3	7	10
TAS	0	0	1	1
VIC	1	1	2	4
WA	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>80</b>

CATTLE	MN1	MN2	MN3	TOTAL
NSW	62	76	112	250
QLD	0	0	0	0
SA	31	68	84	183
TAS	11	26	18	55
VIC	35	46	62	143
WA	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>631</b>

GOAT	MN1	MN2	MN3	TOTAL
NSW	7	9	4	20
Qld	0	0	0	0
SA	3	4	4	11
TAS	1	0	0	1
VIC	0	0	1	1
WA	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>33</b>

SHEEP	MN1	MN2	MN3	TOTAL
NSW	24	38	128	190
QLD	0	1	0	1
SA	14	25	116	155
TAS	5	1	13	19
VIC	21	5	37	63
WA	9	0	0	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>437</b>

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