

# 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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**Animal Health**  
AUSTRALIA  
Australian Animal Health Council Ltd ACN 071 890 956



*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.*

## Updated National Sheep Health Statement - now available

**A revised version of the National Sheep Health Statement is now available to download from the Farm Biosecurity website [www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au) .**

The health statement has been updated to reflect changes to the Category 4 definition for 'flock(s) of origin' listed on page 2 of the statement. The 'flock(s) of origin' definition now states that it is the lowest Category A credits of any property on which any of the sheep in the consignment have been run during their lives.

Another change for noting is found in the Explanatory Notes. The definitions for Abattoir 500 status and Abattoir 150 status have now been aligned to the National Guidelines and Standard Definitions and Rules (SDRs), the agreed national standards for the disease control programs.

*These standards are available from the AHA website: <http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/programs/jd/njdcp.cfm#sdr>*



## APOLOGIES

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# Would you buy a car without a pink slip?

by Rhiannon Brodie

On many occasions I have been asked by producers the reason why they should use a National Sheep Health Statement when intending to trade or buy sheep, cattle or goats.

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.

The question I now ask when producers want to know what's in an animal health statement for them is: 'Would you buy a car from anyone without a pink slip?'

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.'

Just like you I would not buy a car without knowing if it had been in an accident, the tyres are roadworthy, the engine is working and it has been certified by an appropriate mechanical authority of its road worthiness.

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.

Of course you can do a visual check of the animals you intend to purchase but unfortunately what you see is not always what you get. Sometimes animals come with that little bit extra - internal parasites, or bacteria and viruses - that can cause disease and infect the flock or herd in which they are placed.

Here again there is a similarity with purchasing a car. The car may look shiny, brand new and in good condition, so you decide to purchase the car and drive it home all happy and content with your purchase. But two weeks later the engine seizes or the brakes fail.

Just like the car, an animal can appear to look fit and healthy but as some people know to their regret, diseases become apparent after the delivery.

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.*



## New CattleMAP manual - now available

**CattleMAP is Australia's Johne's Disease Market Assurance Program for Cattle. It is part of the national effort to control Johne's disease.**

The new edition of the CattleMAP manual is now available and can be downloaded as an electronic document from the Market Assurance website:

[http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/aahc/programs/jd/maps\\$/cattlemap.cfm](http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/aahc/programs/jd/maps$/cattlemap.cfm)

The new manual has been developed as a result of extensive consultation with stakeholders and incorporates a number of changes requested by producers and veterinarians. Animal Health Australia has distributed a copy of the new manual on CD to all registered CattleMAP producers and veterinarians.

The manual provides introductory material covering the background to the program, how and by whom the program is managed, brief details of how testing operates in the program and the review processes that are involved. The main section of the manual (Elements 1-7 and Appendices) details how to establish and maintain a CattleMAP herd. Alternatively, you can order a hard copy from Animal Health Australia.

Participation in the program contributes to the ongoing efforts to control Johne's disease through on-farm biosecurity practices and testing. The program aims to reduce the impact on Australian livestock and trade, and ensures the long-term sustainability of the cattle industry in Australia.

*Photo: Paul Temple*

## Update: Show forms

Did you know all show health declaration forms and the national animal health statements are available from the Farm Biosecurity website: [www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au) (under toolkit)



# Biosecurity at Showgrounds

Earlier this year, three Animal Health Australia staff members visited the 2009 Royal Agricultural Show in Sydney to get an inside and detailed tour of the showground to assess and identify what biosecurity action plans and practices the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (RAS) have in place.

If a disease were to enter a showground the opportunity for dissemination is high, because livestock from multiple sources are brought to a central location for a number of days. The animals then leave the show and are transported to many different locations. Fortunately the major show societies are aware of the need to manage this risk and most show societies now require exhibitors to complete animal health declarations which include the National Animal Health Statements.

The RAS have strict rules and regulations that exhibitors must adhere to while at the show. All animals arriving must be inspected for their health status as they are unloaded and all animals must be individually identified (either using existing nationally agreed systems or RAS imposed) and have all RAS required forms attached with the consignment.

If animals become sick during the show, veterinary attention is sought and they are moved to a hospital area if necessary. Liquid effluent disposal occurs without risk of cross contamination, contamination of personnel, or contamination of water and feed supplies.

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:

1. Ensure all animals have been drenched, vaccinated (with booster shots), etc for diseases of concern
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.
4. Keep a close eye on your animals for any signs of disease in the first two weeks after they return to your property.
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](http://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

Flockowners of Broken Hill along with Swift Australia and have set a very high standard as winners of the first Farm Biosecurity Award.

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
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1077</b>	<b>1086</b>	<b>1150</b>

### 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
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1964</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1998</b>

### 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
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>

### 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
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>

## 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>126</b>

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
<b>Total</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>857</b>

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
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>43</b>

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
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>457</b>

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# STATE JOHNE'S DISEASE CONTACTS

## NEW SOUTH WALES

### OJD

Dr Therese Wright, NSW Department of Primary Industries

Phone: (02) 6391 3351

Fax: (02) 6391 3740

Email: [therese.wright@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:therese.wright@dpi.nsw.gov.au)

### BJD

Dr Sally Spence, NSW Department of Primary Industries

Phone: (02) 6391 3630

Fax: (02) 6391 3388

Email: [sally.spence@dpi.nsw.gov.au](mailto:sally.spence@dpi.nsw.gov.au)

## VICTORIA

### OJD

Dr David Champness, VIC Department of Primary Industries

Phone: (03) 5573 0703

Fax: (03) 5573 0706

Email: [david.champness@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:david.champness@dpi.vic.gov.au)

### BJD

Dr Cameron Bell, VIC Department of Primary Industries

Phone: (03) 5430 4545

Email: [Cameron.Bell@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:Cameron.Bell@dpi.vic.gov.au)

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### OJD

Dr Peter Whyte, Primary Industries and Resources

South Australia

Phone: (08) 8207 7925

Fax: (08) 8207 7852

Email: [whyte.peter@saugov.sa.gov.au](mailto:whyte.peter@saugov.sa.gov.au)

### BJD

Dr Jeremy Rogers, Primary Industries and Resources

South Australia

Phone: (08) 8391 7138

Email: [rogers.jeremy@saugov.sa.gov.au](mailto:rogers.jeremy@saugov.sa.gov.au)

## QUEENSLAND

Dr Janet Berry, QLD Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries

Phone: (07) 3239 3947

Fax: (07) 3239 6994

Email: [janet.berry@dpi.qld.gov.au](mailto:janet.berry@dpi.qld.gov.au)

## TASMANIA

### BJD

Dr Rick Campbell, Department of Primary Industries and Water

Phone: (03) 6421 7644

Fax: (03) 6421 7666

Email: [rick.campbell@dpiw.tas.gov.au](mailto:rick.campbell@dpiw.tas.gov.au)

### OJD

Dr John O'Dell, Department of Primary Industries and Water

Ph: (03) 6359 2148

Fax: (03) 6359 2096

Email: [John.O'Deil@dpiw.tas.gov.au](mailto:John.O'Deil@dpiw.tas.gov.au)

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Dr Peter Morcombe, Department of Agriculture and Food

Phone: (08) 9368 3542

Fax: (08) 9367 6248

Email: [pmorcombe@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:pmorcombe@agric.wa.gov.au)

## NORTHERN TERRITORY

Dr Brian Radunz, Department of Regional Development, Primary Industries, Fisheries and Resources

Phone: (08) 8999 2130

Fax: (08) 8999 2089

Email: [brian.radunz@nt.gov.au](mailto: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](mailto: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



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"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.*