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STOCK FEED RETAILERS A VITAL LINE OF DEFENCE AGAINST MAD COW DISEASE

Diseases like mad cow disease and scrapie in sheep, which pose a significant threat to the viability of our livestock export markets and human health, are spread by feeding contaminated feed products to livestock.

Animal Health Australia's (AHA) Biosecurity Officer, Dr Rob Barwell reminded stock feed suppliers across the country that they have a legal obligation to ensure feed they supply for ruminants is not contaminated, stored or supplemented with restricted animal material (RAM).

"RAM is any meat, meat and bone meal, blood meal, poultry offal meal, feather meal, fishmeal or any other animal meals or manures," Dr Barwell said.

"Since 1996, the Australian Ruminant Feed Ban has been protecting our country from Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) which are more commonly associated with causing mad cow disease and scrapie.

"Thanks, in part, to our strict RAM enforcement, Australia is free of TSEs," Dr Barwell added.

Stock feed retailers play an important role in maintaining the ban, as it would only take one instance of a contaminated feed product affecting one animal, to have a significant impact on Australia's livestock industries and potentially jeopardising public health.

"Whilst the majority of retailers do maintain excellent standards in ensuring they meet their obligations, we are still finding a few retailers during random annual inspections that are not meeting the high standards required," Dr Barwell said.

Tips for stock feed retailers to help them comply with the ruminant feed ban include ensuring all equipment handling stock feed is thoroughly cleaned, storing RAM stock feeds and other stock feeds separately from each other and ensuring that animal feed containing RAM is adequately labelled.

Correct stock feed labelling should include the following words in bold capital letters: This product contains restricted animal material. Do not feed to cattle, deer, goats, sheep or other ruminants.

For additional tips and to learn more about TSEs, stock feed retailers are encouraged to visit AHA's TSE Freedom Assurance Program webpage. Just type 'TSE Freedom Assurance' into your preferred search engine.

ENDS

About Animal Health Australia

Animal Health Australia works in partnership with our Members and other stakeholders to keep Australia free of new and emerging diseases and to improve animal health, enhance market access and foster resilience and integrity of the Australian animal health system.

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