

**ISSUE # 1
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STOCK HEALTH MONITOR

**IN THIS
ISSUE**

Welcome to *Stock Health Monitor*

After 14 years, *JD News* is getting a well-earned retirement so I am therefore proud to present the very first edition of *Stock Health Monitor*.

Stock Health Monitor will provide Australia's alpaca, cattle, goat and sheep producer communities with the latest information on avoiding, managing and controlling livestock production diseases; implementing best practice on-farm biosecurity measures on your property and updates on research and development.

The change from *JD News* to *Stock Health Monitor* was initiated by the livestock industries in recognition that livestock production diseases can and do impact the red meat value chain and Australia's market access certification requirements. *Stock Health Monitor* will however, also remain as the official communication channel for John's disease related matters, published by Animal Health Australia.

In announcing the beginning of this new publication, I would like to thank the many contributors who since the year 2000, have been providing insightful, fascinating and useful information to our livestock grazing communities. I also encourage contributions to our new publication. If you have a piece you could like considered for *Stock Health Monitor*, please email shm@animalhealthaustralia.com.au.

I hope you enjoy this new publication and as always, feedback is very welcome.

Kathleen Plowman
Chief Executive Officer
Animal Health Australia



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Tasmanian research initiative revealing the costs of OJD

Dr Rowena Bell, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE), Tasmania

A Tasmanian research program is helping improve animal health by adding to a national data collection program initiated by the Sheepmeat Council of Australia and WoolProducers Australia.

An innovative collaboration between government, industry and animal health service providers is giving Tasmanian sheep meat producers the chance to see the prevalence and the effects of ovine John's disease (OJD) by examining carcasses after slaughter. Funded by Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA),

Tasmanian Quality Meats (TQM) is working with Department of Primary Industries Parks, Water and Environment veterinarians and researchers at Charles Sturt University to estimate the financial impacts of OJD on both producers and processors. TQM is also working with Zoetis Australia (previously Pfizer)

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Animal Health) and DPIPW on a larger awareness campaign around the economic impacts of a range of animal health conditions in addition to OJD. This is done as part of the National Sheep Health Monitoring project, funded through Animal Health Australia (AHA).

According to Zoetis Australia's Phil Jarvie, the data is providing an invaluable tool for disease extension programs.

"We haven't really had an evidenced-based survey on a local level in the past that captures disease incidence. Certainly we haven't before quantified the economic losses off-farm, at the point of processing," Mr Jarvie said.

The results so far show the majority of Tasmanian sheep are healthy, with the average incidence of OJD across the state being four per cent. Three of the seven regions recorded OJD levels of one per cent or less. Mr Jarvie explains that the approach is revealing often hidden costs to producers and processors because the disease can be hard to detect on the farm and producers can be unaware of the opportunity cost in lost carcase volume.

Recognising the value of the evidence-based research, TQM has invested in an on-site learning centre in partnership with Zoetis Australia where producers can tour the processing floor and cool rooms to see first-hand the impacts of these diseases. TQM's Chris Cocker believes there is nothing like seeing the impacts to bring home the messages.

"We are taking interested producers through our state-of-the-art processing floor to see exactly how infectious diseases such as OJD are impacting on their bottom lines.

"Visitors not only get to see the new export-standard facilities, they are also shown examples of the kinds of impacts these diseases have on carcase yield, and the waste that results for producer, processor and livestock agents. Many have been surprised at the prevalence and extent of carcase damage to lines of sheep that show little, if any, outward signs of disease in the yards," Mr Cocker said.

Mr Jarvie says that, being unaware of the extent of these diseases, many producers are not tackling them effectively and probably think they have them under control. But the evidence



TQM's QA Manager Chris Cocker with producers during an information session on avoiding livestock production diseases.

shows that the producers are either using inappropriate products or an incomplete program.

The research initiative is built on the success of a series of hands-on workshops delivered across Tasmania last year. Hundreds of Tasmanian producers and service providers attended workshops that highlighted the key disease features, management strategies and safe vaccination techniques necessary to tackle OJD head on. These relationships are forging longer-term opportunities to address the full breadth of sheep health challenges in a really smart way.

Sheep Connect Tasmania is also a partner in the project and worked with DPIPW, TQM and Zoetis Australia to develop a range of concise fact sheets to support the workshops. A final report on the program is expected in the next few months.

For further information on the project contact:

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Sheep producers recognised at the 2013 Biosecurity Farmer of the Year awards

Mr Harley McNamara, Communications Coordinator, Animal Health Australia

A South Australian and Tasmanian sheep producer's commitment to biosecurity practices have been recognised at the Biosecurity Farmer of the Year Awards ceremony held in Melbourne on 12 September.

RICHARD AND JACQUIE HALLIDAY

Richard and Jacque Halliday from Bordertown, South Australia, demonstrated that when it comes to managing ovine Johne's disease (OJD), good communication is their biosecurity weapon of choice.

Thanks to their quick action and open communication with their neighbours and clients in managing their OJD experience, the Hallidays were chosen as one of three

finalists in the 2013 Biosecurity Farmer of the Year Award (animal category).

The Halliday's flock of 1750 Poll Merinos were diagnosed with OJD after a single positive test on a ewe was returned after 14 years of consistent negative test results through the Sheep Market Assurance Program. A thorough investigation has now led the Hallidays to believe that the OJD infection was transferred via a shared watercourse.

The Hallidays immediately undertook a series of actions to help stem the spread of disease in their flock. Some of the biosecurity actions taken include the removal and slaughter of animals kept with the OJD-affected ewe, vaccination of the remaining flock and the introduction of new, vaccinated, stock.

AHA Executive Director of Biosecurity Services, Duncan Rowland praised the transparent, honest and down-to-

earth approach the Hallidays adopted in notifying their clients, suppliers and neighbours.

“Richard and Jacque did not hesitate to act on their OJD discovery. As an example of their diligence, they contacted every one of their ram sale clients for the past two years and notified them of their OJD find. He said regular updates on their OJD status were provided on their website and fellow neighbours and industry peers were also informed. Up-front, crystal-clear communication is a key biosecurity tool and the Hallidays have used it very effectively,” Mr Rowland said.

The Halliday’s message to fellow producers is simple: don’t take anything for granted and think outside the box when it comes to biosecurity. They also advise producers to take responsibility for their own properties to guard themselves against disease.



(L-R) AHA’s Executive Manager, Biosecurity Services, Duncan Rowland; 2013 Biosecurity Farmer of the Year finalists Richard and Jacque Halliday and AHA CEO, Kathleen Plowman.

CHRIS AND SHELLEY COCKER

A first-hand experience with ovine Johne’s disease (OJD) seven years ago put wool producers, Shelley and Chris Cocker from Evendale in Tasmania on a crusade to help make other Tasmanian producers more aware of the disease and the biosecurity practices required to minimise the incidence of OJD.

Thanks to their efforts, the Cockers were also chosen as the second of three finalists in the 2013 Biosecurity Farmer of the Year Award – animal category.

Shelley and Chris were chosen for their biosecurity work on two fronts. The first because of their implementation of biosecurity practices on their own merino farm ‘Barega’, and the second through Chris’ role as the Quality Assurance Manager at the Tasmanian Quality Meats (TQM) Abattoir in Cressy, Tasmania.

AHA executive Director of Biosecurity Services, Duncan Rowland, highlighted that it was Chris and Shelley’s experience of having their own flock affected by OJD that was the catalyst for their campaign against the disease.

“After discovering OJD in their flock in 2007, Shelley and Chris began a vaccination program, stock inspections, used sheep health statements when trading animals and implemented Australian Breeding Values. The Cockers are now confident that the disease is under control,” Mr Rowland said.

Mr Rowland said Chris’ approach to his role as TQM Abattoir’s Quality Assurance Manager was a key factor in the Cocker’s nomination as finalists.

“Chris ensures that the abattoir meat inspectors follow correct procedures and record any health conditions, including signs of OJD, in slaughtered stock. Chris personally contacts any producer whose line of sheep has been detected with signs of illness or disease and provides information about the condition to the producer and encourages them to contact their vet.

“Chris also participates in the producer training program being developed and run by the abattoir since 2011, which has been integral in OJD management and vaccination workshops around Tasmania and has assisted with OJD research at Charles Sturt University,” Mr Rowland said.

Chris and Shelley advise fellow producers to use available resources like abattoir monitoring, which involves sending a sheep sample to a local abattoir for a diagnosis, and stresses that producers should always ask for a completed Sheep Health Statement when purchasing or agisting sheep.

Download a Sheep Health Statement at www.farmbiosecurity.com.au



(L-R) AHA’s Executive Manager, Biosecurity Services, Duncan Rowland; TQM’s John Talbot; 2013 Biosecurity Farmer of the Year finalist Chris Cocker and AHA CEO, Kathleen Plowman.

Why Johne’s disease has a national control program

Dr Rob Barwell, Biosecurity Officer, Animal Health Australia

Johne’s disease is hard to detect and impossible to cure, causing lost production and animal mortalities. The disease can afflict all commonly farmed grazing animals, with financial impacts on-farm and at the abattoir.

Despite some false starts in the 1990s, Australia has taken some giant steps towards controlling and significantly reducing the level of Johne’s disease. Australia’s programs to manage Johne’s are considered cutting edge by world standards. Implementing the National Johne’s Disease Program is important if Australia is to protect our international

reputation as a supplier of premium animal products to global markets. If Johne’s is left to run out of control, industry’s viability is threatened and our reputation is at risk.

Prior to 1996, Australian farmers had worked under state-based regulatory arrangements to protect their herds and

flocks from the spread of Johne’s disease. The need for a national approach and consistency in describing the status of stock, together with concerns about potential impacts on trade, were the catalysts to develop a nationwide Johne’s disease program.

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The National Johne's Disease Control Program (NJDCP), began in 1996 as a special initiative, funded by the beef cattle, dairy, sheep, goat and alpaca industries and supported by federal, state and territory governments. The program was developed through industry-wide consultation after evaluation of the previous state-based plans.

The national program is designed to provide greater assurance for the livestock trade nationally, whether selling and buying or agisting stock. The NJDCP coordinates the



management of Johne's disease across all affected species within Australia. The program encourages animal health risk assessments before purchase and the use of animal health declarations. These measures aim to simplify the procedures and give farmers greater control over how they protect their properties and control the disease.

In all the refinements made to the previous state-based plans, the overriding concern has been to minimise the spread of Johne's disease to areas where the disease is not currently known to occur. Another aim is to gradually reduce its incidence in all Australian livestock while recognising that farmers in heavily contaminated areas will need ongoing assistance and guidance.

Under the NJDCP, trading arrangements build on and recognise the achievements of producers in those areas that have successfully controlled the disease, while allowing other producers greater control over how they manage their risk.

AHA continues to work with stakeholders to ensure there is widespread consultation and establish annual operational priorities. We will also progressively implement agreed changes to the Market Assurance Programs to provide risk assurance and maintain the availability of low-risk stock for each industry.

For more information about the NJDCP visit:

www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/njdcp

What beef cattle producers need to know about BJD

Dr Bruce Watt, Senior District Veterinarian, Tablelands Livestock Health and Pest Authority

First, the good news about bovine Johne's disease (BJD). Despite it having been present in Australia for at least a century and despite it being common in some dairy regions, BJD still remains rare in beef herds.

However, the bad news is that BJD is an insidious disease that can arrive on a farm in an apparently healthy but infected animal. It causes cattle, normally in middle age, to develop persistent 'pea soup' diarrhoea and lose weight until they become emaciated, then die. Once on the property the disease is difficult to eradicate in part because it survives in the soil for up to a year.

BJD is also difficult to eradicate because while we have tests that are okay at the herd level, the tests are not accurate for an individual animal. Therefore, we cannot test a herd and confidently advise which animals are infected and which are free of the disease.

A drastic option if the farmer decides to eradicate BJD is to destock breeding cows for 12 months. We have a few other options but I mention this to emphasise the point that cattle producers do need to take BJD seriously.

My fellow district veterinarians would also like cattle producers to understand the consequences of BJD because for some of us, this disease consumes an inordinate amount of our time. How can we justify this for a disease that is rare and of relatively little consequence at least for the beef industry?

The reason we spend a disproportionate amount of our time working to control a disease that kills less beef cattle than lightning strike is because there are a

couple of elephants in the room in regards BJD.

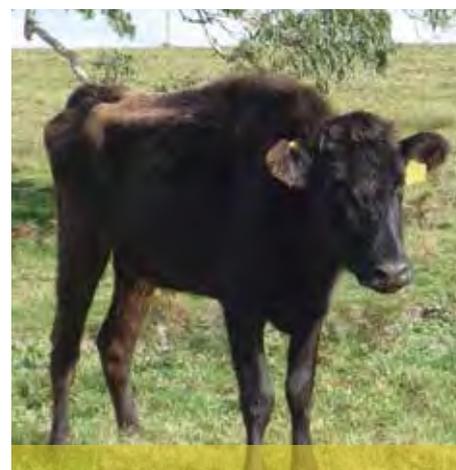
Some countries are working hard to eradicate BJD and when they do, may impose trade barriers on those that still have the disease. The most important is Japan, still our most valuable beef market. We consider that BJD has the potential to become a major trade issue in the future.

Which brings me to the question, what is the most important thing beef cattle producers need to know about BJD? The answer is that BJD is approximately 100 times more common in NSW dairy cattle than NSW beef cattle, therefore dairy cattle represent a significant risk.

If you are a specialist beef cattle producer considering the future and wishing to sell livestock to the widest range of markets, from quality restockers in NSW and Queensland to export beef (in the future), you need to ensure that you do not run or agist dairy cattle on your beef property.

It is easy to determine that a large lean cow with black and white spots or a small yellowish cow with dark points and baby seal eyes is a dairy cow and therefore poses a higher risk of BJD. However, Angus bulls, widely used over heifers in the dairy industry, produce progeny that are both productive beef animals and are almost indistinguishable from straight-bred beef cattle.

Fortunately, the steer progeny from the dairy industry, because they are usually



BJD is an insidious disease that can arrive on a farm in an apparently healthy but infected animal.

sold before two years of age and therefore before any BJD infected animals start shedding the bacteria, are considered a low risk. However, if the female progeny were kept as breeders, the risk increases markedly.

Our message to beef cattle producers is clear: To reduce the risk of BJD, only buy cattle from and agist cattle on properties that have only run a beef herd using traditional beef animals. To ensure this, request a Cattle Health Statement where the vendor tells you about the background of the animals.

For more information, please visit:
www.bjdaware.com.au

Paratuberculosis in the spotlight again in 2014

Mr Harley McNamara, Communications Coordinator, Animal Health Australia

AHA is attending the 12th International Colloquium on Paratuberculosis in Parma, Italy 22–26 June 2014 on behalf of Australia's livestock industries.

The International Colloquium on Paratuberculosis brings together leading researchers, livestock industry representatives, veterinarians and public health authorities from around the globe who share a common interest in this disease and related issues.

AHA staff will be participating in a number of scientific sessions covering a range of topics including the biology of MAP, pathogenesis and immunology, diagnostics, national control programs, epidemiology and control strategies. There will also be an update on public health and food safety aspects. AHA will also be presenting a series of posters outlining Australia's efforts in preventing and managing JD.

AHA's attendance at Parma builds on its involvement in the 11th International Colloquium on Paratuberculosis, which was held at the University of Sydney in February 2012. More than 290 delegates from 36 countries, attended the event, making it the largest colloquium to date.

The five-day event assembled an array of international experts in an exciting scientific program that included diagnostics, the host response to *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*, genotyping and

microbial diversity, microbiology, molecular biology, pathobiology, genomics, epidemiology, national and international disease control. Developments in diagnostic testing and public health issues were also discussed, with a key session on food safety, Crohn's disease and MAP in the environment.

For more information about the ICP 2014 visit:
<http://www.icp2014.eu/>



Participants from 36 countries attended the International Colloquium on Paratuberculosis held at the University of Sydney in February 2012.

Sheep measles and dogs

Dr David Jenkins, Senior Research Fellow School of Animal and Veterinary Sciences, Charles Sturt University

A parasite of dogs is causing sheep measles and is creating major financial losses for the Australian sheep meat industry.

Infection data generated by the National Sheep Health Monitoring Program (co-ordinated by AHA) has revealed sheep infected with the intermediate stage of a dog tapeworm (*Taenia ovis*) are more common than was previously realised. As a result, meat processors are carrying most of the associated financial losses. Sheep become infected through accidental ingestion of tapeworm eggs while grazing pasture contaminated with dog faeces. In the sheep, these eggs hatch and the larval stages exit the gut and set up home in the sheep's musculature, particularly the heart and diaphragm as small cysts (sheep measles). Eventually the cysts die and become pus-filled abscesses that ultimately turn into hard nodules in the muscle. Discovery of any form of these lesions in meat is unacceptable to consumers and sheep measles is also a potential impediment to international trade of sheep meat.

Current control recommendations centre on regular de-worming of domestic dogs and not feeding dogs raw sheep meat, especially hearts and diaphragm (skirt) unless they have been cooked or frozen for 10 days prior to feeding.

Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) is very keen to discover why so many Australian sheep are infected with this

parasite. The study is focussing on three areas: determining on-farm risk factors associated with transmission; establishing the actual financial losses carried by processors; and re-visiting the life cycle of the parasite with a particular focus on wildlife (wild dogs and foxes).

The project started in November 2011 with the final report due later this year. It is being undertaken in Tasmania, NSW and Western Australia. Tasmania has the lowest occurrence of infection in slaughtered sheep, NSW is mid-range and Western Australia is the highest. Tasmania was also chosen as a study site because, despite evidence of foxes on the island, they are in such small number as to be of no consequence in sheep measles transmission and wild dogs (dingoes and their hybrids) are absent.

To determine on-farm risk factors, almost 300 questionnaires were sent out to producers and these are currently being returned and analysed. Five abattoirs have agreed to contribute to the financial impact study that will be undertaken over the next year, and the fox and wild dog study is underway.

This MLA study is very important. If we can demonstrate industry losses are in-line with the anecdotal reports of the processors and we find foxes and wild dogs infected

with *Taenia ovis* tapeworms, despite the best efforts of farmers preventing infection in their own dogs, it will then be clear that the parasite will continue transmission to sheep through wildlife. Therefore, protection against infection would have to be provided directly for sheep.

About 25 years ago a highly effective recombinant vaccine for sheep against sheep measles was developed jointly by scientists at the University of Melbourne Veterinary Clinical Centre, Coopers Animal Health NZ and MAFTech, New Zealand. This vaccine has the potential to solve the sheep measles problem in Australia if good reasons can be identified for providing funding for its commercialisation and distribution at a cost, and in a form, that is attractive to farmers.

Following a thorough business case analysis, funding to develop a commercially available vaccine will be sought. **Stock Health Monitor** will keep you up-to-date as news on a potential commercially available vaccine comes to hand.

Dr David Jenkins is a long-time tapeworm researcher who is dedicated to investigating this problem.

Kid rearing plan helps raise healthy goats

Bob Evans on behalf of the Goat Industry Council of Australia

The Goat Industry Council of Australia (GICA) and AHA have jointly developed an important new biosecurity tool to help minimise the risk of disease in goats.

The National Kid Rearing Plan chiefly targets two major debilitating diseases found in goats: Johne's disease (JD) and Caprine Arthritis Encephalitis (CAE). The Goat Industry Council's Peter Lauterbach says it is well established that goats become infected with both diseases predominantly when they're young, so the plan aims to break the transmission of disease between generations by minimising the risk of kids becoming infected.

"By separating kids from adults, the young livestock gain increased protection from a range of diseases and conditions beyond just JD and CAE, including scouring," Mr Lauterbach said.

The plan focuses on hygienic kid rearing practices similar to those implemented in the dairy cattle sector and emphasises the following critical components:

- animal identification (NLIS and state requirements)
- National Goat Health Statement (compulsory use for compliance)
- annual review (by producer and/or approved veterinarian)
- record keeping (for transactions, transfers, reviews, audits, events and sales)
- audit (by an approved veterinarian every two years)

Mr Lauterbach added that while the plan is useful as part of an on-farm program to minimise the risk of CAE, it is important to note that it should only be used as an adjunct to the management of CAE.

"It is beyond the scope of the National Kid Rearing Plan to deliver complete control of CAE. Additional management practices are required to eradicate CAE and a supplementary section in the plan outlines these practices," Mr Lauterbach said.

Mr Lauterbach explained that adopting the practices recommended by the plan is a sound investment in future production, but in order to be effective, it must be implemented thoroughly and correctly. The plan is especially relevant to goat breeders and dairy producers as contaminated colostrum is a major avenue of transmitting JD and CAE.



GICA and AHA have jointly developed the National Kid Rearing Plan to help minimise the risk of disease in goats.

"With this plan, we have collaborated closely with government and AHA to formalise best practice kid rearing. This gives added protection and thus added credibility and commercial advantage to goat producers who apply it fully – it can also be used to provide additional assurance points in the National Goat Health Statement," he said.

While participation in the plan is voluntary, all goat producers who wish to claim points from kid rearing under the Johne's disease assurance rating must comply with all the elements of the plan and agree to the required audits.

To download a copy of the National Kid Rearing Plan or to learn more about keeping your goats healthy, visit: www.goathealth.com.au

Bob Evans is a freelance writer.

Caprine Arthritis Encephalitis (C.A.E.) in goats

Dr Sandra Baxendell, Goat Veterinary Consultancies

WHAT IS THIS DISEASE?

Caprine Arthritis Encephalitis (C.A.E.) is a slow virus disease largely affecting dairy goats. As a slow virus, clinical signs can take years to develop and in some goats, animals may be carriers and never show signs. It causes swollen joints, lameness and wasting in adult goats but can also cause nervous disease (mainly in kids) or a chronic pneumonia in adult goats. Another less common condition caused by this virus is 'hard udder', where the udder feels rock hard and produces very little milk. You may have seen CAE mentioned in the National Goat Health Statement:

www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Goat-Health-Statement-Final.pdf

This disease has no treatment and no vaccine, so it is definitely one you need to keep out of your goat herd. Goats are also infected with the CAE virus for life as the goat's immune system has no ability to cure this disease. This is not surprising as the virus uses the white blood cells of the goat's immune system as their means of reproducing even more viruses.

WHY IS IT MAINLY DAIRY GOATS?

This CAE virus is attached to the goat's white blood cells and is concentrated in the goat's udder and milk. This means that milk and colostrum are the main methods of spread, although any bodily secretion is a risk.

The feeding of pooled goat's milk is the main method of spread

for CAE (as it is for other disease such as Johne's disease and mycoplasmosis). Dairy goat kids are generally removed from their dams and fed separately. In the past many kids were fed bulk milk and hence one CAE carrier milking doe could infect the whole year's crop of kids with CAE. It is therefore essential that all goat keepers follow the National Kid Rearing Plan.

Dairy goats are also kept more intensively than other types of goats. This means that spread by other secretions (nose, eyes, vaginal etc) is therefore more likely. In addition, it has been shown that milking machines can spread the CAE by the transfer of tiny amounts of milk between the udders of does being milked by the same cups.

This does not mean that other types of goats can't get CAE, as we know they can (even Australian free-range goats). However spread between extensively reared goats is less likely and less rapid. CAE has been spread world-wide with the importation of dairy goats from North America, Europe, and Australia.

KEEPING GOAT AND SHEEP INDUSTRIES COMPARTMENTALISED

As dairy goats are the main source of the disease in all countries, meat and fibre goat producers should ensure that they have no contact with dairy goats or that any dairy goats they have contact with, are from a herd that is accredited free of CAE. This will also help prevent the spread of Johne's disease (which again is more prevalent in dairy breeds of both cattle and goats). To help avoid contracting CAE on your property, it is highly recommended that goat producers use a National Goat Health Statement when brining in new stock to the farm.

Unfortunately in the USA CAE has spread from dairy goats into meat goats and now it is recommended that when purchasing any type of goat that they come from herds that test annually and are free from CAE.



Caprine Arthritis Encephalitis (C.A.E.) is a slow virus disease of mainly dairy goats. Photo: Debra Simpson.

The disease CAE is known to cause lambs and sheep to become positive on a CAE blood test, although clinical signs have not been recorded in Australia. For this reason, it is a good idea to follow the general biosecurity advice of not grazing or keeping different livestock species together.

FURTHER INFORMATION

NSW DPI Factsheet

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/goats/health/cae

Facebook

www.facebook.com/EradicateCAEinGoats

Pinterest

www.pinterest.com/goatvetoz/what-cae-does-to-goats/

National Kid Rearing Plan

www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/national/kid/rearing/plan

National OJD Management Plan 2013–18

Dr Rob Barwell, Biosecurity Officer, Animal Health Australia

The Australian sheep industry has agreed on revised arrangements for a National Ovine Johne's Disease (OJD) Management Plan, which took effect from 1 July 2013.



The new SHS is the most important disease risk management tool that sheep buyers can use.

The National OJD Management Plan 2013–18, will enable producers to take a risk-management approach to their farm biosecurity and was developed following extensive consultation with producers, industry and state governments.

It was endorsed by the boards of WoolProducers Australia (WPA), the Sheepmeat Council of Australia (SCA) and the National OJD Management Committee. As a final step, the Plan was also noted by the inter-governmental Animal Health Committee, with industry implementation following.

Central to the plan is a new national Sheep Health Statement (SHS), which is the most important disease risk assessment tool that provides

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producers with the relevant information to make informed purchasing decisions.

The SHS has been designed for adoption nation-wide and includes recognition of OJD vaccination and testing results. It features a series of 'Yes/No' questions to allow buyers to quickly make informed biosecurity decisions.

SCA President Ian McColl said the onus will be on producers to request a completed SHS when purchasing sheep.

"The SHS will provide advice on the health status of sheep – not just OJD – and will allow buyers to assess disease risks against their own individual circumstances," Mr McColl said.

The new SHS is the most important disease risk management tool that sheep buyers can use.

Producer feedback during the public consultation on the National OJD Management Plan indicated that zoning should end.

"There are no nationally recognised trading restrictions, zones or areas in relation to OJD prevalence under the OJD Management Plan 2013–18," he said. "Some areas or states may choose to put in place entry requirements."

The plan also encourages producers to collectively develop their own Regional Biosecurity Plans (RBPs), due to the added effectiveness of a collective approach.

RBPs are a set of actions agreed to by a group of producers to manage biosecurity risk for their farms, (e.g. groups may agree to only buy vaccinated sheep).

Guidelines are available to assist groups of producers in preparing an RBP.

The National OJD Management Plan 2013–18 also provides for on-going funding of research and development.

A new OJD website, www.ojd.com.au, has been developed as a reference point on how to manage the disease, reduce the risk of disease spread and access key documents such as the SHS and guidelines on developing RBPs.

A copy of the SHS can be downloaded from the Farm Biosecurity website at: www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/toolkit/declarations-and-statements/

For more information about the 2013–18 plan visit: www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/OJDManagementPlan

Why we BJD assure

Glennister de Koning, Argio Park Square Meaters Stud

Participation in the CattleMAP is ensuring the long-term sustainability of Australian industry by reducing the impact of Johne's disease on livestock and trade.

CattleMAP is Australia's Johne's disease Market Assurance Program for Cattle and is part of a national effort to control JD.

As part of our involvement with the Cattle MAP, both the property and animals have to be 'risk assessed' by a vet. In a small herd (under 210 animals) all cattle over two years have to be blood tested, this may be a sample test or a maintenance test, depending on what BJD status the herd has reached.

Records must be kept and are audited every year by a vet with an external audit completed by Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) every three years. This includes recording all births, sales, destination of travel, and introduced stock from a tested herd of the same status or higher. Cattle can be introduced from a protected area or free zone under certain conditions but we must have our vet's approval and all the associated paper work all in order.

To ensure your herd's status is not compromised, there are a handful of restrictions when taking animals to shows, sales, field days etc. The show ground venue must be vet approved. The wash bays, stalling positions, watering and feeding of stock at the show, must meet the guidelines of the MAP program. This will help avoid any possible contamination. Records of all cattle taken to shows and which shows they attend must be kept.



*Participating in the CattleMAP is paying off for Square Meaters breeders.
Photo: Muurabay Square Meaters Stud.*

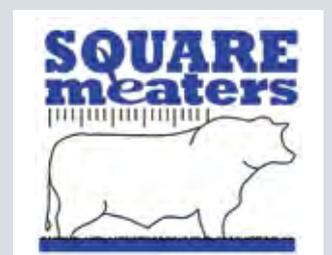
As in any assurance program there are requirements that we have to abide by and whilst that does take more effort, it means we have a clean herd free of BJD.

Has this extra effort payed off? We can say that in the 12 years that we have been accredited with the MAP program we have been able to make sales of cattle that would not have been possible, were we not accredited. We have been able to sell cattle to other accredited herds, bulls to accredited dairies and cattle to Protected Areas.

Protected Areas and Free Zones are considered to be the equivalent to MN1 and MN3 respectively. Through the MAP, trading with these areas is permitted and we look forward to selling 'new genetics from the south' to these and other markets in the future.

All in all, the additional paper work and costs, together with the anticipation of blood test results can sometimes be tiring, however, the longer we stay accredited, the more assurance our clients have that they are buying BJD-free Square Meaters from our herd.

For more information about the CattleMAP visit: www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/cattlemap



ASHEEP establishes a regional biosecurity group

Jen Clawson, Executive Officer, Australian Sheep Husbandry Excellence Evaluation Program (ASHEEP)

The Association for Sheep Husbandry Excellence Evaluation and Production Inc (ASHEEP) has formed the Esperance Regional Sheep Biosecurity Group to help members and producers combat OJD.

The ASHEEP committee first became concerned about the National Ovine Johne's Disease (OJD) Management Plan in 2010 when a decision was made to change the Western Australian prevalence area. The association followed the National OJD Management Plan changes over the years and developed the Esperance Regional Sheep Biosecurity Group to provide ASHEEP members and other local sheep producers with a cost-effective way of avoiding OJD and managing the disease if required.

The association's abattoir testing in the Esperance Ravensthorpe Shires has established a low prevalence of OJD in home bred flocks and the establishment of the Biosecurity Group is a way of protecting this status.

ASHEEP has commenced taking members into the Regional Sheep Biosecurity Group. Current founding members farm on approx. 44,000Ha and run some 54,000 sheep. These members are choosing to use biosecurity to protect their sheep flock from OJD. By adhering to a good biosecurity plan these farmers collectively are saving around \$75,000 per year by not having to vaccinate. Obviously these and future members have a real incentive to avoid disease.

The Esperance Regional Sheep Biosecurity Group is free to join and membership is open to all regional producers whether they be ASHEEP members or not. The group has created a user friendly, QA style plan and utilises the National Sheep Health Statement to provide assurance and mitigate risks in trading. A simple annual audit process supports the compliance credibility of the scheme.

ASHEEP encourages anyone who has received a negative test result from OJD testing to consider joining this group as a way of protecting their sheep enterprise. For those unlucky enough to have received a positive test, they can still join under a 'control' status and receive help and assistance from ASHEEP.

As a producer group with some 80 farmer members, ASHEEP is based in the Esperance and Ravensthorpe Shires in Western Australia. The association was established in 2003 to meet a number of industry issues including the declining sheep numbers, the perceived danger of losing a generation of skilled sheep producers and the role of sheep in the farming system.

Apart from providing up-to-date information through our quarterly newsletter, ASHEEP also aims to maximise market opportunity for sheep producers in the region, improve productivity by increasing grower awareness of better farming systems and assist producers improve their bottom line by encouraging uptake of known, new and developing information and technology.



ASHEEP has begun accepting members into the Esperance Regional Sheep Biosecurity Group. Photo: ASHEEP

In January 2011 Western Australia's OJD prevalence was changed to a blanket medium status which meant that the association lost access to the South Australian market. It is the long term goal of the group to accumulate sufficient numbers within the group to regain access to that premium market with certifiable flock tested OJD-negative sheep. The association can only do this by delivering credible group assurance to our purchasers.

The association has also received funding from Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) for a project called the *Esperance Self-Managed Sheep Biosecurity Group*. This funding will enable ASHEEP to establish producer demonstration sites to show how sheep producers can maintain an OJD free flock and also how you might clean up an infected farm using crop rotation and paddock management. Funds from MLA will partially cover the auditing cost for the first year or so.

ASHEEP will be running a workshop later this year. The workshop will cover managing and reducing the risk of an OJD incursion.

At the end of the project it is expected this group will be self-managed either through ASHEEP or independently.

If you would like more information please contact Jan Clawson, ASHEEP Executive Officer, on 0407 990 497 or Bob Reed, OJD Sub Committee Chairman, on 090713 655.



News roundup

CATTLE HEALTH STATEMENT

The Cattle Health Statement is now available on the Farm Biosecurity website.

Cattle Council of Australia (CCA) strongly encourages the use of the Cattle Health Statement for all transactions. Contact your Department of Primary Industries for further information on movement requirements.

<http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/toolkit/declarations-and-statements/>

SHOW SOCIETIES ARE RAMPING UP BIOSECURITY

AHA has worked with Federal Council of Agricultural Societies (FCAS) to develop a simple set of guidelines and checklist for cattle show stewards to help them prepare for a CattleMAP showground audit.

FCAS has also agreed to adopt the National Cattle and Sheep Health Statements as the standard show health declaration form.

<http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/toolkit/declarations-and-statements/>

LIVESTOCK BIOSECURITY NETWORK AT YOUR SERVICE

The Livestock Biosecurity Network (LBN) is now in full swing getting amongst Australia's livestock producers to provide up-to-date information on best-practice strategies to help secure their farm and secure their future.

The LBN was established last year by the Sheepmeat Council of Australia, Cattle Council of Australia and WoolProducers Australia.

The councils pooled reserves to fund the initiative for an initial three years using producer transaction levies, in response to industry concerns about the possible impact of diseases and pests on the farming economy.

The LBN has regional officers working in most states and territories, where they are building networks of public-private partnerships. Through these partnerships they provide information about the biosecurity risks to sustainable farming and livestock health and welfare.

The LBN is designed to support all jurisdictions by enhancing regional industry capability in the event of an emergency animal disease outbreak from exotic or endemic diseases.

AHA's Executive Manager, Biosecurity Services, Duncan Rowland said the LBN is playing an integral role in spreading the farm biosecurity message to a range of livestock sectors in the food chain.

"The LBN officers are the troops on the ground, meeting face-to-face with the livestock producing community to build awareness and understanding of good on-farm biosecurity practices," said Mr Rowland.

"The Animal Health Australia (AHA and Plant Health Australia (PHA) Farm Biosecurity Program is working closely with the LBN to further enhance this message and we are excited to have another willing and able ally on-board as we help producers secure their farm and secure their futures," Mr Rowland said.

For more information, go to the LBN website at www.lbn.org.au

CHANGES TO THE NATIONAL JOHNE'S PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

AHA would like to welcome Dr Evan Sergeant as the new National Technical Advisor to the National Johne's Disease Control Program (NJDCP).



Evan Sergeant

With a PhD on the epidemiology of ovine Johne's disease in Australia with a focus on diagnosis, prevalence estimation and risk analysis, Dr Sergeant brings a wealth of practical and field experience to the role which includes 18 years as a District Veterinarian in NSW.

Dr Sergeant has made significant contributions to epidemiology and disease control in Australia at both state and national levels. As an epidemiologist working for NSW Agriculture and since then with AusVet, he has contributed to the ongoing development and refinement of state and national programs for both ovine and bovine Johne's disease and the National Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy Surveillance Program.

Dr Sergeant replaces Dr David Kennedy (who served as technical advisor to the NJDCP for 16 years). AHA staff, on behalf of the NJDCP, acknowledges Dr Kennedy's commitment to the program and wish him all the best for his future endeavours.

For 15 years Dr Kennedy was the national coordinator and most recently, technical adviser to the NJDCP. Dr Kennedy announced his retirement in 2012 as a partner in AusVet Animal Health Services (which he co-founded in 1996) handing over his responsibilities in the NJDCP.

In addition to graduating in veterinary science with first-class honours and a Masters of Veterinary Studies in epidemiology, Dr Kennedy has held positions as an examiner in epidemiology and as President and Honorary Treasurer of the College and as Vice-President of the International Association for Paratuberculosis.

In addition to his Johne's disease role, David has also worked on a broad range of animal health projects in Australia and overseas.

For technical enquiries about the NJDCP contact the AusVet Office in Toowoomba, (07) 4688 2602.

For more information about the NJDCP visit: www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/njdcp

FARM BIOSECURITY FARM GATE SIGN

If it can move, it can carry diseases, pests and weeds. Signs can be used to indicate to visitors the importance of following biosecurity procedures on your property.

This 900 x 600 mm Farm Biosecurity gate sign is available for just \$40, including postage and handling to anywhere in Australia. Printed on 5 mm thick corflute they include four eyelet holes to attach the sign to a gate or fence.

To buy your sign today, visit www.farmbiosecurity.com.au



Number of known infected herds and flocks, March 2014

CATTLE

Number of known infected cattle herds

State	Jan-Mar 2013	June 2013	Sep 2013	Dec 2013
NSW	124	124	124	124
QLD	8	8	8	6
SA	59	56	56	56
TAS	39	39	39	39
VIC	916	913	918	887
TOTAL	1146	1140	1145	1112

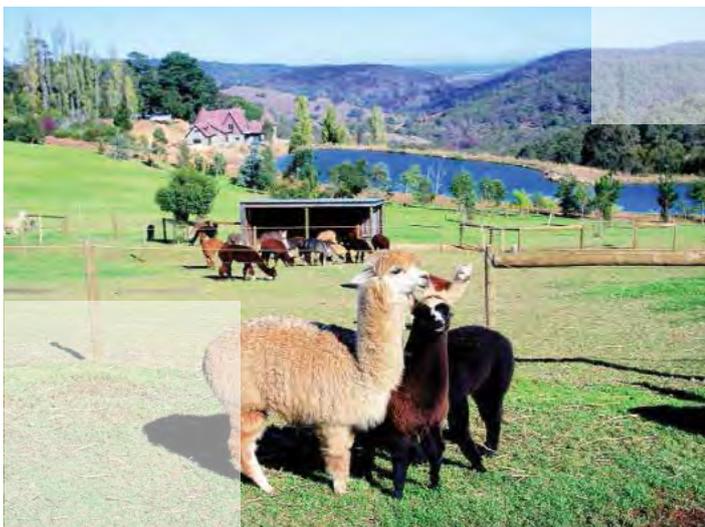
GOAT

Number of known infected goat herds

State	Jan-Mar 2013	June 2013	Sep 2013	Dec 2013
NSW	3	3	3	3
QLD	1	1	1	1
SA	1	1	1	1
TAS	4	4	4	4
VIC	7	7	8	9
TOTAL	16	16	17	18

Note: No deer or alpaca herds have been reported as infected in 2013.

The reporting of sheep flocks infected with Johne's disease has been replaced with the annual reporting of area prevalence estimates for ovine Johne's disease in the Animal Health Surveillance Quarterly.



Number of assessed herds and flocks in MAPS, 2nd March 2014

ALPACA	MN1	MN2	MN3	TOTAL
NSW	2	8	20	30
Qld	0	0	0	0
SA	0	0	0	0
Tas	0	0	0	0
Vic	0	0	2	2
WA	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	2	8	22	32

CATTLE	MN1	MN2	MN3	TOTAL
NSW	48	57	73	178
Qld	0	0	0	0
SA	20	56	78	154
Tas	7	20	20	47
Vic	22	33	34	89
WA	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	97	166	205	468

GOAT	MN1	MN2	MN3	TOTAL
NSW	7	5	2	14
Qld	0	0	0	0
SA	0	3	5	8
Tas	1	0	0	1
Vic	0	1	1	2
WA	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	8	9	8	25

SHEEP	MN1	MN2	MN3	TOTAL
NSW	21	36	113	170
Qld	0	1	0	1
SA	17	27	115	159
Tas	4	1	14	19
Vic	11	9	42	62
WA	14	1	0	15
TOTAL	67	75	284	426

Contacts

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

OJD

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