

# A WORD FROM THE WISE! CHECK BEFORE YOU BUY.

## Improving the health and productivity of farmed goats in Australia

Stakeholders in the Australian goat industry work collaboratively to deliver animal health benefits to goat producers and to improve farm production. However like other livestock, goats can be affected by a number of endemic diseases that can impact the health of goats, causing lost production for the goat industry and significant losses for some individual farmers. Diseases such as lice, footrot, Johne's disease and Caprine Arthritis Encephalitis (CAE) are well established in some regions and can have a serious effect on your herd if you unintentionally purchase infected goats.

These diseases and parasites have been in Australia for many years and they continue to spread as a result of purchases and goat movements where owners and buyers can't get the right information to manage the risk.

## BIOSECURITY TIP:

Diseases are often spread with animal and people movements. Managing the common farm diseases involves understanding the risks associated with stock and vehicle movement and carefully managing what comes onto your property.

To help you make better buying decisions the goat industry, governments and agents have agreed on a National Goat Health Declaration (GHD) that encourages potential buyers of goats to ask about the health status of the goat. The National Goat Health Declaration covers lice, footrot, Johne's disease and resistant worms. For most diseases a simple "yes" or "no" answer is required, however on Johne's disease you will also need to work out your Assurance Rating as well.

**REMEMBER:** Ask for a copy of the Goat Health Declaration before you commit to a purchase. Poor purchasing decisions cost you time and money.

## What is risk based trading?

Risk based trading for the goat industry is a nationally agreed aid to help determine the likelihood that goats put up for sale have lice, footrot, or Johne's disease.

## When should I complete a National Goat Health Declaration?

The form is designed to guide you through the steps for completing an animal health risk assessment for any goats you wish to sell/move to agistment, or show. You should always complete a National Goat Health Declaration for each of these occasions. Having filled in your name, property and other details, and completed the risk assessment section you must sign and date the declaration.

Completed National Goat Health Declarations are legal documents under State laws. They are audited from time to time and there are penalties for false declarations. Not only that but a false declaration could leave a producer liable to be sued. By purchasing goats with a high rating you are taking steps towards protecting your herd from a number of important economic diseases, preserving the status of your own herd and supporting the health status and biosecurity of the national goat herd.

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## Spelling out your Assurance Rating for Johne's Disease

All goat owners will be able to declare their goats' rating in writing on the National Goat Health Declaration.

You should ASK to see the National Goat Health Declaration for any consignments that you are interested in buying and learn what the Risk Management Rating on it means for you. You can then work out whether the goats you want to purchase or move are an acceptable risk to your own herd.

## Working out your Assurance Ratings is simple

You can claim assurance rating points for your goats under two categories. These are:

- **A. Herd of Origin** - the known Johne's disease rating of your herd or level of risk to which your herd has been exposed.
- **B. Risk management** - the activities you have put in place to reduce the risk of having Johne's disease in your herd.

The number of assurance rating points assigned under each category is based on an industry agreed risk assessment. To determine your herd's assurance rating add the points from the two categories.

And purchasers **REMEMBER**, the **HIGHER** the rating a herd has, the **LOWER** the risk these goats represent to your own herd. By buying goats with a high rating you can greatly reduce the risk that you will buy in Johne's disease.

The rating of the herd from which the sale goats originated remains a significant risk factor. Animals that are derived from a GoatMAP herd represent the lowest trading risk. Purchasing animals from an infected property is a risky business.

However, on-farm management of Johne's disease can lower the risk of this disease spreading in a herd should the infection be present or be unwittingly introduced. The combination of on-farm management and risk-based trading are the best strategies identified by industry to minimise the impact of all these diseases nationally.

It also provides a pathway for owners of infected herds to improve their trading position via on-farm management of these diseases.

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