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## MEDIA RELEASE

26 June 2018

### **Best practice tools and strategies central to on-farm OJD control**

Management of Ovine Johne's Disease (OJD) in Australia beyond 2018 will continue as part of the Sheep Health Project at Animal Health Australia, enabling producers to still be able to use all the on-farm practices and tools currently recommended as part of a best practice approach to control.

The previous five-year National OJDMP (due to end in June 2018) is not being extended. This decision has been made by the sheep industry's peak industry councils – Sheep Producers Australia and WoolProducers Australia – based on expert technical advice that producers can continue to effectively manage the endemic disease as part of their overall approach to animal health and biosecurity.

Sheep Producers Australia Sheep Health and Welfare Manager, Stephen Crisp says extensive stakeholder consultation earlier this year on the future of the National OJD Management Plan did not present a clear outcome to retain, change or cease the program beyond June 30.

“As a result, the Boards of both organisations reviewed the technical advice provided by Animal Health Australia on the actual, not perceived, risk OJD presents to the industry,” Mr Crisp said.

“The advice was that OJD can be treated as one of a range of endemic diseases, such as ovine brucellosis, and be managed through the tools of the Sheep Health Project, rather than having a separate management plan.

“The tools include vaccination, Sheep Health Declarations, SheepMAP, abattoir testing through the National Sheep Health Monitoring Project and Regional Biosecurity Plans.

“We're fortunate to have a vaccine against OJD, which is highly recommended for all flocks in endemic areas or at-risk properties, and we are working with AHA to increase the rates of vaccination across Australia.

“The Sheep Health Declaration is an effective tool for communicating health information when trading sheep, while the National Sheep Health Monitoring Project allows producers an insight into what conditions are detected in their sheep at the abattoir.

“The Market Assurance Program, better known as SheepMAP, provides auditable standards for managing OJD, helping producers to access some OJD-sensitive markets as well as provide a source of low-risk sheep.”

Mr Crisp said producers would not see any change in their day-to-day farming and those in Regional Biosecurity Plan areas would be able to continue to take a regional approach to management.

“As mentioned in the consultation phase, this does not affect the role of the states and how they regulate animal diseases. Producers will always need to be aware of, and comply with state regulations.”

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WoolProducers Australia Director Ed Storey says the decision by nearly all states to wind back legislation regulating OJD means governments play a less direct role in management of the disease.

“This puts the management of OJD in the hands of each producer, who can choose their own strategy,” Mr Storey said.

“This can be anything from managing your own risk through implementing on-farm biosecurity practices, joining an audited assurance program such as SheepMAP, or collaborating with nearby producers on a Regional Biosecurity Plan.

“We strongly encourage producers to use Sheep Health Declarations – the best tool producers have in prevention of infection is to request a declaration when buying sheep and to provide one when selling.

Mr Storey said the consultative review recommended an extension plan be undertaken to producers to reiterate the benefits to animal health and biosecurity in adopting more of the Sheep Health Project tools on offer.

“We realise that some producers may be using a portion of the tools available but implementing more would add significant strength and rigour to their on-farm biosecurity activities. Both organisations want to encourage producer uptake of these tools and so will be working closely with the wider industry toward this goal.”

Feedback provided during the consultation phase has been collated into a report for transparency, however individual submissions have been kept confidential. Download the National OJD Management Plan 2013-2018 Consultative Review [here](https://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/ojd-review/) (https://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/ojd-review/)

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### **About Sheep Producers Australia**

Sheep Producers Australia is the voice on issues that affect sheep production businesses. SPA does this through advocating for better business outcomes, monitoring investment of producer levies and improving information flow up and down the value chain.

### **About WoolProducers' Australia**

WoolProducers Australia (WPA) is the peak national body for the wool producing industry in Australia, representing farmers who have an interest in growing wool. WPA advocates the industries interests to the Federal Government and internationally enabling woolgrowers to determine policy and drive change in their industry. WoolProducers Australia is the only national organisation that can speak on behalf of the mainstream wool industry and represent the concerns and hopes of wool growers.