

Guidelines for the development of a regional biosecurity plan for sheep

AIM

Provide guidelines for producers groups to set up and maintain a regional biosecurity plan (RBP) for endemic disease(s).

BACKGROUND

An RBP is a set of agreed actions that a group of producers with common goals implement to prevent the incursion of disease(s) into a flock or onto a property. It may outline measures including (but not limited to) conditions on sheep movements into the area, vaccine policy and response to disease detection.

The use of a property biosecurity plan is important to underpin an RBP. The *National Farm Biosecurity Reference Manual for Grazing Livestock Production* is available at www.farmbiosecurity.com.au. It is the reference document for use in developing a livestock property biosecurity plan. Each production system could have a different set of biosecurity threats, challenges and operating environments, which must be addressed utilising the principles and approaches identified in the reference manual.

GUIDELINES FOR A REGIONAL BIOSECURITY PLAN

An RBP that covers one or more endemic diseases could include the following components;

- a) Demonstrable producer commitment from all producers within the regional biosecurity group to protect the disease status of the region, including agreed aims and objectives of the group and disease(s) covered by the RBP***
- b) Members of the RBP have a property biosecurity plan in place***
- c) (If possible) Formal regional industry-government partnership to provide the recognition necessary for industry to successfully implement and manage the regional biosecurity plan.***
- d) Surveillance appropriate to the disease(s) of concern is undertaken to detect disease early***
- e) Entry requirements for sheep moving into the area are set and followed***
- f) Technical assistance is provided to flocks that are suspected or infected with disease***
- g) Suspect cases are investigated and reported***
- h) Control or eradication programs (as appropriate) are implemented on infected properties***
- i) High risk neighbouring flocks are investigated***
- j) Tracing of high risk movements backward and forward is undertaken promptly***
- k) A Sheep Health Statement is required for all stock purchased or on agistment***
- l) Technical information and operational aspects of the regional biosecurity plan are actively communicated to producers, agents and advisers***
- m) Compliance is audited and performance is reported at an agreed frequency.***

EXAMPLES OF THE REGIONAL BIOSECURITY PLAN FRAMEWORK AND CHECKLIST

NOTE: Below are some examples of how the regional biosecurity plan framework and checklists may look. These are examples only and have been developed to assist potential groups of producers understand how the criteria may be met.

STEP 1. FORMATION OF THE GROUP

- Regional biosecurity groups will be an aggregation of producers from a defined geographical region who are all committed to working together to prevent an incursion of specified disease(s).
- The group may be initiated by several enthusiastic farmers, farm advisors/vets from a local area or members of a trading group with common goals (for example a group breeding scheme or breed society who have a common desire to reduce or maintain the level of disease in their area).
- Alternatively, the group may already be established and could include current OJD Exclusion Areas or other existing grower groups.
- Support from potential members of the group should be demonstrated.
- The group should nominate a coordinator or a chairperson and should name the group.

STEP 2. ACCOUNTABILITY/RESPONSIBILITY

The group should determine responsibilities for each member of the group and identify the activities required to develop and maintain an RBP.

Example responsibilities of producers may include:

- ✓ Implementing property biosecurity plans
- ✓ Comply with the RBP requirements
- ✓ Maintain records of any stock movements
- ✓ Meet the annual audit requirements
- ✓ Regularly monitor their sheep for signs of disease
- ✓ Development of a property disease management plan for relevant diseases

a) Demonstrable producer commitment from all producers within the regional biosecurity group to protect the disease status of the region, including agreed aims and objectives of the group and disease(s) covered by the RBP

OBJECTIVE: Producers within the regional biosecurity group are able to demonstrate that they are committed to protecting and maintaining the disease status of the region.

HOW (example actions): The group needs to decide on the following principles and record these:

- ✓ Discuss and agree on the expectations of the group
- ✓ Identify specific diseases or conditions of concern to the group
- ✓ Agree on the disease(s) that will be included in the RBP
- ✓ Determine and agree on the aims and objectives for the prevention/control of specified disease(s) in the RBP, for:
 - the regional biosecurity group as a whole; and

- at the individual property level of each property within the RBP
- ✓ Determine the roles and responsibilities of each member of the group for:
 - their involvement with the group; and
 - what they will do on their property to meet the criteria of the biosecurity plan.
- ✓ An set of agreed actions should be developed which outlines a clear strategy for suspect and confirmed infection with diseases of concern and which includes a process for high risk neighbours
- ✓ Develop a set of clear business/operating rules for the group which aims to reduce the risk of personal conflict within the group (review these at least annually)
- ✓ A copy of the RBP (and business rules) should be distributed to all flock-owners within the group

b) Members of the RBP have a property biosecurity plan in place

OBJECTIVE: Property biosecurity plans are implemented by members to under-pin the RBP.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ Members should use The *National Farm Biosecurity Reference Manual for Grazing Livestock Production* available at www.farmbiosecurity.com.au to develop a property livestock biosecurity plan
- ✓ Each production system should address the different range of biosecurity threats, challenges and operating environments with relevant approaches based on the principles identified in the manual

c) (If possible) Formal regional industry-government partnership to provide the recognition necessary for industry to successfully implement and manage the regional biosecurity plan

OBJECTIVE: A formal regional biosecurity group (ideally with input from industry and government) is established and an RBP is written

HOW (example actions): Following agreement on a) above:

- ✓ Work out who needs to be involved in the group and what resources are required
- ✓ Develop a written RBP (with input from all stakeholders) and distribute to all members of the group

d) Surveillance appropriate to the disease(s) of concern is undertaken to detect disease early

OBJECTIVE: Surveillance is undertaken by all members of the group to maintain the regional status and to ensure early detection.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ The group, in consultation with their technical adviser(s), determines appropriate surveillance and monitoring strategies for each of the diseases of concern, including methods, frequency and reporting/documentation requirements
- ✓ Surveillance and monitoring maybe by on-farm screening or by use of abattoir monitoring, depending on the disease and the agreed approach
- ✓ All members of the group implement the agreed surveillance/monitoring activities and report outcomes as agreed in the RBP
- ✓ Positive detections of disease are dealt with as agreed in the plan

e) Entry requirements for sheep moving into the area are set and followed

OBJECTIVE: Minimum entry requirements that have been developed in line with the level of risk that is acceptable to the group are in place.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ All sheep movements into the area covered by the RBP should be accompanied by a National Vendor Declaration (NVD) and a Sheep Health Statement (SHS)
- ✓ The entry requirements for the area will be determined by the group and should consider the level of risk that is acceptable to the group
- ✓ In order to trade into another state/region with an RBP, it is the group's responsibility to ensure that their RBP satisfies the standards of the state/region that you are trading into, this includes entry requirements
- ✓ Conversely, to allow flocks from another state/region with an RBP to trade into your area, it is the group's responsibility to ensure that their RBP satisfies the standards of the state/region that you are trading into, this includes entry requirements specific to that state/region

f) Technical assistance is provided to flocks that are suspected or infected with disease

OBJECTIVE: Technical assistance is available and is provided to suspect and infected flocks.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ Nominate one or more veterinary adviser(s) (either government or private practitioners) who are familiar with the group's RBP and the epidemiology of the disease(s) being covered
- ✓ Example responsibilities of the technical advisors could include:
 - Understand the RBP aims, objectives and requirements
 - Comply with the relevant acts and regulations
 - Provide advice, to help producers develop their understanding of the disease(s), the risks involved, its management and control
 - Assist in the development of the RBP and policies to resolve cases of suspicion, depending on the specific disease, and in property disease control plans
 - Assist with implementation of agreed surveillance and monitoring activities, as appropriate
 - Assist with the investigation and testing of any suspect flocks
 - Conduct risk assessments with individual producers as required
 - Carry out testing on high risk introductions and high risk neighbouring flocks
 - Assist to undertake tracing backward and forward of animal movements if required. This would most efficiently be done by tracing movements through the NLIS database, which is a government role
 - Report to the group as required

g) Suspect cases are investigated and reported

OBJECTIVE: Any suspect case is investigated by the nominated technical advisor

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ In consultation with the nominated technical advisor, develop a policy to resolve cases of suspicion, depending on the specific disease

- ✓ Any suspect case is investigated by the nominated technical advisor as soon as possible
- ✓ The group's strategy for dealing with suspect and confirmed infection should be implemented
- ✓ This process should include a risk assessment and may include a range of strategies

h) Control or eradication programs (as appropriate) are implemented on infected properties

OBJECTIVE: Effective control/eradication programs are implemented on infected properties as soon as the disease is suspected.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ In consultation with the nominated technical advisor, develop a strategy for dealing with infected flocks
- ✓ The strategy for dealing with confirmed infection should be implemented whenever an infected flock is detected
- ✓ Immediate neighbours of the infected property should be notified of the confirmed infection and all individual producers of the regional biosecurity group should ensure that their biosecurity procedures are implemented. For example, boundary fences should be checked to ensure that sheep cannot stray onto neighbouring properties

i) High risk neighbouring flocks are investigated

OBJECTIVE: High risk neighbouring flocks are investigated to determine whether the infection has spread with a view to minimise the potential for spread.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ High risk neighbouring flocks are investigated by the nominated technical advisor and depending on the level of risk, procedures put in place to minimise risk of infection and to facilitate early detection
- ✓ Boundary fences are checked and maintained to keep them in a condition that prevents neighbouring sheep straying between properties
- ✓ A risk assessment of shared facilities, waterways and flood zones is carried out
- ✓ Management options such as vaccination, grazing management and flock profiling should be considered to control disease spread

j) Tracing of high risk movements backward and forward is undertaken promptly

OBJECTIVE: High risk movements backward and forward are traced to determine whether the infection has spread and minimise the potential for spread.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ Owners of infected flocks are encouraged to notify owners of flocks from which they have introduced high-risk animals or to which they have sold high-risk animals
- ✓ Request government assistance in tracing high risk movements are traced both backwards and forwards using NLIS and the Sheep Health Statements
- ✓ This can only be done by government veterinary advisors
- ✓ High risk movements are identified and investigated further

k) A Sheep Health Statement (SHS) is required for all stock purchased or on agistment

OBJECTIVE: The use of the SHS is required for all movements into the area.

HOW (example Actions):

- ✓ Only purchase sheep that come with a signed SHS which meet the minimum entry requirements set out in the RBP. Introductions of stock which are higher than the minimum entry requirements are encouraged
- ✓ Always provide a SHS when selling sheep not for slaughter
- ✓ Ensure that records are maintained

STEP 3. COMMUNICATIONS

l) Technical information and operational aspects of the RBP are actively communicated to producers, agents and advisers

OBJECTIVE: Technical information and operational aspects of the RBP are actively communicated to producers, agents and advisers.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ The group should identify the key aspects of the plan that need to be communicated and how they will achieve the communication goals to ensure producers are aware of the requirements
- ✓ The group should consider whether signs into the area are required
- ✓ The group should also determine opportunities for the area that may provide trading advantages for them
- ✓ All flock owners in the group should be provided with a copy of the RBP and business rules

STEP 4. AUDITING AND REPORTING

m) Compliance is audited and performance is reported at an agreed frequency

OBJECTIVE: Compliance with the RBP should be audited by an independent auditor and performance of the group is reported at an agreed frequency to relevant personnel, which may include your state CVO.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ The group should be audited on a regular basis by an independent auditor of their choice or the department of primary industries
- ✓ The frequency of auditing should reflect the level of robustness expected by the group
- ✓ The audit should ensure the group adequately meets the criteria set out in the RBP
- ✓ Outcomes of the audit including any corrective actions should be followed up and implemented as soon as possible
- ✓ The group should meet to prepare for the RBP audit and to review the RBP Business Plan. The Plan should be assessed for its level of support by the producers, the effectiveness of the plan, benefits and costs, both past and future

OJD specific guidelines for the development of a regional biosecurity plan

AIM

Provide guidelines for producers groups to set up and maintain a regional biosecurity plan (RBP) specifically relating to OJD.

BACKGROUND

Under the National OJD Management Plan 2013-18, groups of producers are encouraged to develop an RBP to maintain their current area flock prevalence of OJD. Refer to the National OJD Standards Definitions Rules and Guidelines (SDR&Gs) for area flock prevalence calculations.

While the overall premise of an RBP is to prevent the incursion of any number of endemic sheep diseases into an area, there are some specific, more stringent activities required to restrict disease spread into OJD sensitive areas.

The following guidelines outline the additional activities that may be required to satisfy entry requirements of other regional biosecurity areas which have a historical low prevalence of OJD.

EXAMPLES OF THE REGIONAL BIOSECURITY PLAN FRAMEWORK AND CHECKLIST FOR RBPS CONTAINING OJD

NOTE: Below are some examples of how the regional biosecurity plan framework and checklists may look specifically relating to OJD – these are ADDITIONAL to the guidelines for regional biosecurity plans outlined in the base document.

STEP 1. FORMATION OF THE GROUP

- The group may already be established and could include current OJD Exclusion Areas
- Groups of producers in historic low prevalence areas may be well placed to develop an RBP that would satisfy entry into areas that are sensitive to OJD

STEP 2. ACCOUNTABILITY/RESPONSIBILITY

The group should determine responsibilities for each member of the group and identify the activities required to develop and maintain an RBP.

Example responsibilities of producers may include:

- ✓ Develop a Property Disease Management Plan (PDMP) with animal health staff and carry out management practices under the PDMP, covering costs of management practices as required

a) Demonstrable producer commitment from all producers within the regional biosecurity group to protect the disease status of the region, including agreed aims and objectives of the group and disease(s) covered by the RBP.

OBJECTIVE: Producers within the regional biosecurity group are able to demonstrate that they are committed to protecting and maintaining the OJD status of the region.

HOW (example actions): The group needs to decide on the following principles and record these:

- ✓ An RBP should be developed which outlines a clear strategy for suspect and confirmed infection with OJD which includes a process for high risk neighbours

b) Members of the RBP have a property biosecurity plan in place

Refer to base document.

c) (If possible) Formal regional industry-government partnership to provide the recognition necessary for industry to successfully implement and manage the regional biosecurity plan

Refer to base document.

d) Surveillance appropriate to the disease(s) of concern is undertaken to detect disease early

OBJECTIVE: Surveillance is undertaken by all members of the group to maintain the regional status and to ensure early detection of OJD.

All members of the group:

- ✓ Test sufficient lines of sheep via abattoir monitoring or on farm flock testing to be able to calculate the area prevalence estimates (refer to National OJD SDR&G)
- ✓ Determine the goal prevalence that the group wishes to maintain
- ✓ Determine the percentage of flocks that should be monitored through abattoir monitoring or on-farm testing within a 2-year period
- ✓ Access abattoir surveillance monitoring reports
- ✓ Prevalence estimates for the group should be reported on an annual basis
- ✓ Cases of unexplained ill-thrift, wasting and death in adult sheep should be investigated to rule out OJD

e) Entry requirements for sheep moving into the area are set and followed

OBJECTIVE: Minimum entry requirements that have been developed in line with the level of risk that is acceptable to the group are in place.

Note: Minimum entry requirements are about agreeing what the group will accept in relation to purchasing decisions – the idea is to maintain or reduce the current level of OJD prevalence, but allow enough flexibility to continue to buy in sheep if need be.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ Set a minimum entry requirement standard agreed to by the group –for example this could be based on accepting sheep from an area with an estimated prevalence of 1%
- ✓ Considering traditional trading patterns is a good way to determine entry requirements. Negotiation of biosecurity requirements of other areas should be considered

f) Technical assistance is provided to flocks that are suspected or infected with disease

OBJECTIVE: Technical assistance is available and is provided to OJD suspect and infected flocks.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ The nominated advisor(s) for a plan should be MAP approved
- ✓ Example responsibilities of the technical advisors could include:
 - Comply with the relevant acts and regulations relating to OJD
 - Assist with implementation of agreed surveillance and monitoring activities, as appropriate
 - Develop Property Disease Management Plans with infected or suspected of being infected properties

g) Suspect cases are investigated and reported

OBJECTIVE: Any OJD suspect case is investigated by the nominated technical advisor.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ Suspect cases should be resolved in accordance with the SDRGs

h) Control/eradication programs are implemented on infected properties

OBJECTIVE: Effective control/eradication programs are implemented on OJD infected properties as soon as the disease is suspected.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ A Property Disease Management Plan should be implemented on the infected property

i) High risk neighbouring flocks are investigated

OBJECTIVE: High risk neighbouring flocks are investigated to determine whether the infection has spread with a view to minimise the potential for spread.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ Vaccination policies should be considered such as ring vaccination for high risk neighbouring properties.

j) Tracing of high risk movements backward and forward is undertaken promptly

Refer to base document.

k) A Sheep Health Statement is required for all stock purchased or on agistment

Refer to base document.

l) Technical information and operational aspects of the regional biosecurity plan are actively communicated to producers, agents and advisers

Refer to base document.

m) Compliance is audited and performance is reported at an agreed frequency.

Refer to base document.