

Riverina Sheep Biosecurity Group

Regional Biosecurity Plan (RBP)

INTRODUCTION

The Riverina Sheep Biosecurity Group comprises the sheep producers within an area the boundaries of which are:

A line starting at the eastern boundary of the Murray Shire and running from the Murray River to the Tuppal Creek, the Tuppal Creek and Edward River to Deniliquin, the Deniliquin to Conargo Road to the Lindifferon Lane, along the Lindifferon Lane to the eastern boundary of Lauriston, along the eastern boundaries of Lauriston, Tibora and Warriston to the Deniliquin to Conargo Road then along the Deniliquin to Conargo Road to Conargo, the Billabong Creek to the western boundary of Bowen Station, along the western and southern boundaries of Bowne Station then the southern and eastern boundaries of One Oak to the Billabong Creek; along the Billabong Creek to Jerilderie, south along the Newell Highway to Wunnamurra, along the western, southern and eastern boundaries of Wunnamurra then along the Wunnamurra Lane to the Old Corowa Road, along the Old Corowa Road to Telephone Gate Road, along Telephone Gate Road to the Jerilderie to Oaklands Road, along the Jerilderie to Oaklands Road to the Back Berrigan Road, along the Back Berrigan Road and the Jerilderie to Urana Road to Urana, along the Urana to Morundah Road to Morundah, along Yamma Road to the Coleambally Irrigation area, along the eastern, southern and western boundaries of the Coleambally Irrigation area to South Boundary Road, along South Boundary Road and the eastern boundary of Gundaline station to the Murrumbidgee River then Bringagee Road, Shaw's Rd, Tabbita Lane and the Kidman Way to Hillston, the Lachlan River and Murrumbidgee River to the western boundary of the Murray Local Land Services region, along that boundary to the Wakool River then along the Wakool River to junction of the Wakool and Murray Rivers then Murray River back to the eastern boundary of the Murray Shire.

The area is within the Riverina plain with an average annual rainfall of between 300 and 450mm. Sheep production is a significant part of the agricultural enterprise in the area with production systems ranging from specialist rangeland merino breeders through mixed dryland and irrigation farming systems with more emphasis on meat production.

There are approximately 450 producers within the area who run more than 50 sheep.

DISEASE HISTORY

The area is in a Footrot Protected Area. Footrot was relatively common during the 1980s with up to 50% of flocks in some parts of the area infected. An eradication program commenced in 1988 with a voluntary program until the flock prevalence was lower than 0.5% when the protected area was progressively declared.

In the 1990s a voluntary ovine Brucellosis eradication program was conducted. There was 100% voluntary participation at the owners' expense. 30% of ram flocks were found to be infected and the disease eliminated by test and cull. This program is being extended to other parts of the Riverina.

There are no known or suspected OJD infected flocks within the area.

The area was very low and then low prevalence for OJD.

That part of the area within the Hay Rural Lands Protection District was an OJD exclusion area until July 2012.

There have been several incidents where OJD has been introduced into the area but there has never been a case diagnosed in home-bred sheep. Clinical OJD has been diagnosed on two properties which were subsequently destocked. Abattoir tracing has implicated two other flocks. The traces were not backed up by clinical disease but the flocks were destocked anyway because of drought conditions.

Every flock where OJD has been diagnosed has been destocked voluntarily by the producer.

Abattoir surveillance through Victorian and South Australian abattoirs has continued despite the lack of surveillance from NSW abattoirs. Significant numbers of sheep which have been bred in the area and moved into high-prevalence areas have subsequently killed at monitoring abattoirs without any tracebacks being received.

Rural Lands Protection Boards, Livestock Health and Pest Authority and Local Land Services District Veterinarians have conducted many autopsies of sheep within the area over past decades without any suspicion of OJD being identified.

TRADING PATTERNS

Traditionally sheep have been bred and sourced from within the area and sold to markets further south and east.

Movement surveys and interrogation of the NLIS database have confirmed this pattern.

ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN

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

The group has a history of cooperative biosecurity programs.

The members of the group participated in a successful footrot eradication program and have maintained Protected Area status for over a decade.

The group is part of an ongoing voluntary ovine Brucellosis eradication program where all ram flocks are tested and enter a test and cull program where the disease is detected.

Part of the group (the old Hay Rural Lands Protection District) was an OJD exclusion area.

The members of the original group were polled during October and November of 2012 and a majority of the members responded to the poll and a majority of those who responded to the poll indicated a desire to be within an Ovine Johne's Disease (OJD) Protected Area and a willingness to comply with the requirements of such an area. Further polls in June 2013 led to an extension of the area in September 2013. A meeting where some 70% of the sheep producers in an area between the Wakool/Edward Rivers and the Murray River and west of the Moulamein to Barham road unanimously voted to support their inclusion in the group.

Members of the RBP have a property biosecurity plan in place.

The group is subject to the regulation of a footrot protected area and there is a history of limited trade into the area. There is a close relationship between the members of the group and the livestock health service of the Murray Local Land Services (MLLS).

The guidelines for the group will be the basis of each individual biosecurity plan with the option of further refining it for individual enterprises.

Formal regional industry-government partnership to provide the recognition necessary for industry to successfully implement and manage the regional biosecurity plan.

The plan will not be enforced by regulation but the MLLS will provide a robust advisory component to the plan.

Surveillance appropriate to the diseases of concern is undertaken to detect disease early.

The MLLS has a significant livestock health service with a close relationship to all producers in the group and which extends a significant passive surveillance program and encourages the investigation of livestock disease.

There are regular inspections of sheep saleyards to detect footrot.

Abattoir surveillance for OJD continues despite the lack of surveillance in NSW abattoirs because most sheep from the area are slaughtered in Victorian and South Australian abattoirs where OJD surveillance continues. For the first quarter of 2013 82% of the mutton sheep sold at the Deniliquin saleyards went to Victorian or South Australian abattoirs.

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

The entry of sheep from footrot residual areas is regulated under the Stock Diseases Act 1923.

During the consultation process the entry requirements for OJD were agreed as per Appendix 1.

The introduction of rams only from ovine Brucellosis accredited free flocks is encouraged.

The MLLS will interrogate the National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS) database at least quarterly to monitor movements into the area.

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

The MLLS will provide technical assistance.

Suspect cases are investigated and reported.

The MLLS will investigate, record and report on any suspect cases of footrot, OJD or ovine Brucellosis.

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

The MLLS will help the management of infected flocks to develop and implement a control or eradication program on infected properties which is appropriate to the particular enterprise and the risk to neighbours.

The fact that these programs will be voluntary for all disease other than footrot is not envisaged to become an issue: the vast majority of footrot infections, ovine Brucellosis and the few incursions of OJD in the past have all been eradicated by voluntary programs.

High risk neighbouring flocks are investigated.

The MLLS will assess the risks associated with any disease incident and investigate any high risk enterprises.

Tracing of high risk movements backward and forward is undertaken promptly.

The MLLS will assess the risk and trace high risk movements.

A Sheep Health Statement is required for all sheep purchased or on agistment.

The Sheep Health Statement is not compulsory in NSW. It is compulsory for the movement of sheep into NSW from Victoria. As part of this plan it is required for all movements of sheep into the area except to exempt sales which are fat sheep sales.

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

The MLLS and the Riverina Biosecurity Group committee will manage communication to all stakeholders. The MLLS has a long history of effective communication to stakeholders.

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

The MLLS will audit the performance of the group annually and report the outcomes to all stakeholders.

Review

Annual review by the regional biosecurity committee will consider:

- Compliance with the requirements for sheep to enter an OJD protected area.
- Surveillance activity and outcomes.
- Attitude of members of the biosecurity group.
- Prevalence of OJD.

The committee will reconsider the viability of the group if:

- More than 2 flocks of sheep are confirmed to be infected with OJD.
- More than 1 flock is found with OJD in home-bred sheep.
- More than 24 high-risk sheep movements are identified in any 12-month period.
- More than 2 high-risk sheep movements are assessed as being sufficiently risky to justify flock testing for OJD within any 12-month period.
- More than one producer with confirmed or likely OJD infection refuses to develop an appropriate management plan.
- More than 10% of sheep movements into the area are not accompanied by a completed Sheep Health Statement.

Appendix 1: Movement requirements for sheep to enter the Riverina Sheep Biosecurity Area.

1. Adult sheep and lambs from:

- Another sheep biosecurity group which has similar disease prevalence and biosecurity arrangements to the Riverina Sheep Biosecurity Group (other than from flocks infected or suspected of being infected with footrot, ovine Brucellosis and ovine Johne's disease);
- This or another comparable sheep biosecurity group, and have attended a show or breeding centre at which they have been housed, fed and watered in accordance with the requirements of Appendix 2 of the Australian Johne's Disease Market Assurance Program for Sheep (Appendix 2 of this document).
- This or another comparable sheep biosecurity group, and have been sent to a sale where they have not had access to pasture or feed on the ground and have moved to the group area within 72 hours.
- SheepMAP flocks;
- Flocks that have had a negative PFC 350¹ or Abattoir 500² test within the last two years and the flock is a closed flock (no introduced sheep, including rams);
- Flocks that have had a negative PFC 350 or Abattoir 500 test within the last two years and all sheep introduced¹ within the preceding 5 years were from;
 - Flocks located in the Protected Area; OR
 - SheepMAP flocks OR
 - (prior to 1 January 2013) flocks that met the requirements for moving into NSW Exclusion Areas (i.e. ABC Score 4 or higher under the superseded ABC scheme), OR
 - (after January 2013) flocks that had a negative test²

¹Faecal samples from 350 adult sheep selected at random and subjected in pools of no more than 50 for faecal culture for OJD

²500 adult sheep slaughtered at an abattoir where their digestive tracts are examined for evidence of OJD

³All introduced sheep must have been accompanied by a Sheep Health Statement that has been retained as evidence of the sheep status.

⁴PFC350 or Abattoir500 test within the preceding two years.

2. Terminal 'T' tag lambs

Lambs which are no more than 50% merino and which have not cut any permanent incisors and which are identified by NLIS "T" tags and which are slaughtered before they cut any permanent incisors.

Appendix 2: Guidelines for Shows, Sales and Exhibitions

These guidelines are designed to encourage flock managers of SheepMAP flocks to participate in shows, sales and exhibitions by minimising the risk of Johne's disease spreading between sheep in these situations.

They have been revised in consultation with the Federal Council of Agricultural Societies. They should be read in conjunction with Element 3 Movement of Assessed Animals.

1. FOR ORGANISERS

Reducing the risk of the spread of Johne's disease among animals at a show or sale and protection of the negative status of sheep from flocks assessed under the Market Assurance Program depends on:

- **good hygiene** combined with some **separation** of assessed sheep from other sheep to prevent the ingestion of faeces or contaminated feed or water
- **entry requirements** that reduce the risk of infected animals coming to the show or sale.

The table below sets out some of the risks that participating in a show, sale or exhibition could present for SheepMAP flocks and ways that organisers of these events can minimise those risks.

Risk	Ways to minimise risks
Spread of Johne's disease when sheep from different sources are mixed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • entry requirements (e.g for sheep from NA or SU flocks). • separation of sheep from different sources.
The bacteria causing Johne's disease being present at the venue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thorough cleaning of the venue between events. • sweeping show and judging rings between classes.
Animals from MN flocks ingesting material (including water) contaminated by the faeces of infected animals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non-edible material on pen floors eg straw. • above floor water and feed containers. • no grazing of grassed areas surrounding judging rings, pavilions etc. • no watering at communal troughs. • all stock being led by a responsible person when not penned.

Venue Audit

The Federal Council of Agricultural Societies has endorsed a Venue Audit procedure and the issuing of Compliance Certificates to assist show, sale and exhibition venues to comply with standards that minimise the risk of the spread of Johne's disease. Venue audits are not compulsory. However participating in the audit process has benefits to both show and sale organisers and to exhibitors.

The process involves the Chief Steward (or his or her representative) and an Approved Veterinarian completing the following tasks:

- preparing a venue management plan at least 14 days before animals enter the venue, and
- the Approved Veterinarian auditing the venue for compliance immediately before animals are brought to the venue and (subject to a satisfactory outcome) issuing a certificate of compliance which is displayed for exhibitors at the event.

2. FOR OWNERS AND APPROVED VETERINARIANS

While organisers are encouraged to implement a high level of hygiene management and appropriate entry requirements, the flock owner is responsible for ensuring that the MAP status of their animals is not compromised at the event.

To help them make the decision about participating flock owners need to:

- seek the advice of their Approved Veterinarians as to whether the status of the flock will be maintained or downgraded to a lower status if they return sheep to the assessed flock,
- or send sheep to another assessed flock after the show or sale assess the risk of contact with sheep or other eligible species from non-assessed or lower status flocks
- consider the level of hygiene management at the show, sale or exhibition.

3. STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS

3.1. Entry Requirements

Bearing in mind their responsibility in regard to the spread of disease at an event under their supervision, show and sale organisers can determine what entry standard they will impose for the event.

As long as a venue audit is conducted as described above other entry requirements for Johne's disease are optional except for sheep with a zero ABC Score. Where an organiser wants to apply **other** entry tests for Johne's disease, tests should only be conducted on animals over 24 months of age, and within six months of the event.

If sheep are tested, allow sufficient time for follow-up investigation and resolving positive screening tests.

Any other entry requirements by the show society will depend on the standards of separation and hygiene that can be implemented at the venue, what exhibitors they wish to attract and on what eventual destination and movement requirements the organisers wish to meet in advance.

The Federal Council of Agricultural Societies has also endorsed a standard Sheep Flock Health Declaration for Shows and Sales which outlines the requirements that may be considered.

3.2 Separation

Primary segregation at shows should take into account ABC scores and MAP status.

As a minimum standard, sheep should be segregated as follows:

1. *Medium-High Assurance*: sheep from SheepMAP flocks or with ABC score of three or more.
2. *Low Assurance*: sheep with ABC score of one and two from flocks not in the SheepMAP.

3. *ABC 0*: sheep with ABC score of zero where a high standard of risk management can be applied at the show to protect higher assurance sheep.

Depending on the local need and risk situation, show organisers may segregate within a group (eg within the Medium-High group) and/or pen sheep according to their ABC score or MAP status within segregated groups.

The responsibilities of organisers, owners and Approved Veterinarians with regard to segregation are set out below:

- Separation capable of preventing movement of faeces or contaminated food, water or bedding in transit and at the show or sale may be achieved by physical means and/or by managing the time or order in which sheep use facilities.
- Owners will ensure that sheep from assessed flocks are transported to the show or sale in compliance with Element 3.
- There will be a space of at least two metres or a solid wall between sheep from Medium/High Assurance and Low Assurance and ABC Score 0 flocks housed or stalled in the one facility at the same time. Separate buildings are not essential and MAP sheep may be separated from other sheep within lines of each breed.
- All sheep need to be adequately supervised at the venue.
- All sheep will be restricted to their designated area by tethering or some other means of restraint or penning when not being led.
- MAP sheep will not share watering troughs, washing areas, tie-up points or isolation areas with other sheep.

3.3 Hygiene Management

- Sheep will be fed and watered above ground level.
- The floors of the sheds and stalls housing assessed sheep will be cleaned and washed of faecal material or covered before assessed sheep enter the facility.

Note: If sheep from an MN flock are to be housed in areas that cannot be cleaned or covered, and where non-assessed sheep or other susceptible species have been previously, then the rules for Movement of Assessed Animals in Element 3 apply.

- Faecal material will be collected regularly and removed to a place where stock have no access. This is particularly important in laneways and judging areas.
- Equipment used for mucking out stalls, sheds, etc will be cleaned regularly to prevent build-up of faeces.
- Special attention should be paid when cleaning out pens so that sheep do not have access to areas, fixtures, bedding, etc, that are contaminated by other flocks.
- Sick sheep will be isolated if Johne's disease is considered a possibility.

3.4 Showing low assurance sheep

In October 2002, Chief Veterinary Officers agreed that additional measures would have to be taken where low assurance sheep were to be exhibited. These guidelines should also be considered for managing risks of spreading Johne's disease venue management at all shows (see also section 7):

- Thorough cleaning of all venues between shows
- Segregation of sections by pens or walkways at least two metres wide
- Provision of non-edible material on pen floor eg straw
- Above floor water and feed containers
- No grazing of grassed areas surrounding judging rings, pavilions etc
- No watering at communal troughs

- All stock to be led by a responsible person when not penned
- Sweeping of show and judging rings between classes
- Cleaning of feet of exhibited stock following use of common areas and prior to penning.

Sheep with a Zero ABC score

In August 2004, it was agreed that sheep with no points under the ABC Scheme may be exhibited but they **must** satisfy the conditions below. These are sheep from flocks that are known or suspected to be infected or from High Prevalence Areas, but in which no ABC points have been acquired through testing or vaccination ABC Score 0 .

The application to enter Score 0 sheep **must** be accompanied by certification from an Approved Veterinarian that:

- a) the flock is being managed under a Property Disease Eradication Plan
- b) the sheep to be exhibited have been tested with negative results by individual faecal culture or pooled faecal culture (pools of 50 or less) within the past six months or by serology within the past three months.

States may restrict entry of show sheep to manage the risk of ovine Johne's disease transmission consistent with the aims of their ovine Johne's disease control program but may consider more liberal entry requirements for *exhibition only* at shows with a high standard of biosecurity.

Other requirements by the show society will depend on the standards of separation and hygiene that can be implemented at the venue, what exhibitors they wish to attract and on what eventual destination and movement requirements the organisers wish to meet in advance.

The Federal Council of Agricultural Societies has also endorsed a standard Sheep Flock Health Declaration for Shows and Sales which outlines the requirements that may be considered. Individual show societies may have additional requirements.

Appendix 3. The Riverina Sheep Biosecurity Committee

Geoff Allan, Glenavon, Moama 2731

Ken Crossley, Kapunda, Deniliquin 2710

Peter McCrabb, North Bundy, Booroorban 2710

John Sutherland, Pooginook, Jerilderie 2716.

Ross Headon, Elders, Hay 2711

Dan Salmon, Murray Local Land Services, Deniliquin 2710.