

Coonabarabran OJD Regional Biosecurity Area Annual report

1st July 2014- 30th June 2015

OJD Regional Biosecurity Area Committee Activities

The Coonabarabran OJD RBA Committee has held three meetings throughout the year, with several new members attending. The committee continues to be committed to maintaining the RBA status of the region and protecting the sheep of the region from infection with OJD.

A new handout was developed in conjunction with the LLS to educate sheep owners on the requirements and advantages of the Regional Biosecurity Plan. This was mailed to all properties with greater than 50 sheep, as listed on their annual land and stock return. It was also distributed at several field days, the Coonabarabran Show and has been available at the counter of the LLS office in Coonabarabran. It was also distributed to all the stock and station agents based within the RBA. One local agent chose to publish this information in the Coonabarabran Times.

Talks on the RBA were given at several field days to help to increase awareness of the requirements of the plan.

The committee is currently working on a proposal to erect signs along major roads when entering the RBA in order to increase awareness.

Monitoring Sheep Movements within the RBA

The entry requirements for the Coonabarabran RBA are documented in the Coonabarabran Regional OJD Biosecurity Plan 2013.

Throughout this period there were 363 sheep movements into the Coonabarabran region that did not meet the entry requirements of the RBA. A total of 52 Sheep Health Statements were submitted. Of these only 26 met the requirements of entry for the RBA.

Three sheep traders accounted for 233 of the non-compliant movements. Of these three, the first was unable to be contacted. The second has submitted some sheep health statements, none of which meet the requirements of entry into the RBA. After discussion of the ramifications of this with the District Veterinarian, they have elected not to follow the guidelines in the Regional Biosecurity Plan when

purchasing sheep. The third has been unable to acquire sheep health statements from agents at the sale yards and has continued to trade without consideration of the requirements of the Regional Biosecurity Plan. They have agreed not to trade their sheep as being from the Coonabarabran RBA as they have not followed the requirements of the plan.

Community response to the risk posed by high risk traders in the region has been to take precautions such as maintenance of good fences, shooting strays and fencing off waterways. Producers from the worst affected region were contacted with a proposal to shift the boundary of the RBA to exclude this high risk area. The affected producers were strongly opposed to being excluded and instead have opted to attempt to manage the risk of transmission to their flocks.

The remaining non-compliant movements were investigated and 57 movements posed at least a moderate risk of OJD introduction or we were unable to contact the property manager and the risk was unable to be assessed.

Several of these properties were deemed to be high risk after investigation by the District Veterinarian and flock testing was recommended. None of these properties elected to test their flocks for OJD.

Surveillance

Throughout the period, a total of 1021 sheep greater than 2 years of age or mixed ages were examined at slaughter for signs of OJD and were found to be negative. They were from 5 different PICs within the region.

The District Veterinarian conducted 18 property visits on properties with sheep within the RBA over the period and no cases of OJD were diagnosed. One property in the region had sheep with suspect lesions on post-mortem. Histopathology was performed and was found to be negative for OJD.

One infected property has completed a Property Disease Management Plan based on approved vaccines. It was recommended that they perform a Pooled Faecal Culture to gain a clear status but the property manager declined and has elected to continue to vaccinate the flock.

Conclusion

Flock prevalence in the region remains low and awareness of the new OJD system continues to increase amongst producers.

Despite a dedicated OJD RBA committee, there continue to be many producers that are not complying with the Regional Biosecurity Plan. Natural trading patterns due to the proximity of the Dubbo sale yards have led to a large amount of sheep trading across the borders of the Regional Biosecurity Area. Confusion over

interpretation of the Sheep Health Statement and its status as a non-compulsory document have further hindered compliance.