

Review of the Management of Ovine Johne's disease in NSW

RICHARD BULL

MARCH 2008



REVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT OF OVINE JOHNE'S DISEASE IN NSW

RICHARD BULL

MARCH 2008

**AN INDEPENDENT REPORT BY RICHARD
BULL TO THE MINISTER FOR PRIMARY
INDUSTRIES, THE HON. IAN MACDONALD**

Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (March 2008). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of New South Wales Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

© State of New South Wales 2008-03-19

ISBN 978 0 7347 1900 3

This publication is copyright. Except as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968 (Commonwealth), no part of the publication may be reproduced by any process, electronic or otherwise, without the specific written permission of the copyright owner. Neither may information be stored electronically in any form whatever without such permission.

20th March 2008

The Honourable Ian Macdonald MLC
Minister for Primary Industries
NSW Parliament
Macquarie Street
Sydney 2000 NSW

Dear Minister,

I have much pleasure in submitting my report to you on the Review of the NSW OJD Program. The Review has been conducted in a cooperative environment with both producers and Rural Lands Protection Boards participating fully. Other stakeholders such as the NSW Farmers Association, The Department of Primary Industries and Animal Health Australia have all provided positive and constructive advice as to the way forward in NSW.

I conducted meetings around the State to ensure that all sheep producing Rural Lands Protection Boards had the opportunity to discuss the current program and give feedback to the Terms of Reference as outlined by you. I also conducted two very good producer meetings at either end of the State. This provided me with good feedback from both the high prevalence areas and the exclusion areas.

The Review found that there was satisfactory acceptance of the current program and consequently the number of recommended changes has been kept to a minimum.

Underpinning the future Program for NSW will be the new National Plan which is due to commence at the end of March in 2008. The Plan delivers national protocols including National Sheep Health Statements, National Abattoir Surveillance and National Prevalence mapping and monitoring. With National funding now in place there will be some savings for the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

I would like to especially acknowledge the work of my Executive Officer, Dr Paul Forbes, Deputy Director General Department of Primary Industries, Dr Renata Brooks and Dr Regina Fogarty and many others in the Department who made the undertaking of this Review so much easier.

Yours sincerely

RICHARD BULL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Terms of Reference	7
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	8
Exclusion Areas	8
Transaction Based Contribution Scheme	8
The OJD Advisory Committee	9
Patterns of Disease Prevalence	9
Disease Management Issues	9
The National Plan	10
Abattoir Surveillance	10
Recommendations	11
The effectiveness of the Exclusion Areas	11
The need to maintain the Transaction based Contribution Scheme.	11
The patterns of disease prevalence	12
Disease management issues	13
In relation to the national plan:	13
The role of abattoir surveillance	13
History of OJD in NSW	15
Introduction and Spread	15
Initial Response	15
National Program	15
National program mid-term review	15
Changes in NSW	16
National program review	16
Program since adoption of Building Blocks and national Approach to OJD	16
Comments	17
Responses to the Terms of Reference (TOR)	18
What is the program for OJD	18
The effectiveness of the Exclusion Areas	19
The need to maintain the Transaction based Contribution Scheme	23
OJD Industry Advisory Committee	24
OJD Industry Fund	26
The patterns of disease prevalence	27
Disease management issues	27
In relation to the national plan:	30
The role of abattoir surveillance	30
RENEWING THE NSW OJD PROGRAM	33
The effectiveness of the Exclusion Areas	33
The Transaction based Contribution Scheme.	34
The OJD Industry Advisory Committee	35
The patterns of disease prevalence	35
Disease management issues	36
Gudair Vaccine	36
Sheep Health Statement	37
Stock Movements	37
The National Plan	37
Future Leadership	38
The role of abattoir surveillance	38
Acknowledgements	39
Attachments	41
Attachment 1 - Building Blocks for a New Approach	41
Attachment 2 - Bull Review of the NSW OJD Program – Issues paper	43
Attachment 3 – The National Plan 2007-2012	44
Attachment 4 - Sheep Health Statement	68
Attachment 5 – Map of positive and negative detections at surveillance	70

TERMS OF REFERENCE

To conduct a review of the management of ovine Johne's disease in New South Wales, with particular reference to:

- the effectiveness of the Exclusion Areas;
- the patterns of disease prevalence;
- disease management issues;
- the role of abattoir surveillance; and
- the need to maintain the Transaction based Contribution Scheme.

The review is to report by 1 March 2008."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Review was undertaken in a climate of stability and good support for the Program introduced in 2004 following the initial review in NSW. Unlike the first review when strong feelings and anti regulatory behaviour dominated the consultative process, this review has featured good, rational input and constructive comment.

A number of meetings were held around the State giving all sheep producing Rural Protection Boards and producers the opportunity to contribute to the review.

The findings of the Review are designed to incorporate the NSW program fully into the new National Plan which is due to commence on the 31st March 2008.

The Review's terms of reference requested feedback and advice on a number of issues which are summarized as follows.

Exclusion Areas

The Review found that the exclusion areas have been effective in maintaining disease freedom for their respective protected areas. The reasons appear to be the protocols that have been put in place by respective Rural Lands Protection Boards, together with the traditional trading patterns and buying behaviour of producers has been working.

Whatever the combination of reasons may be, the outcome is extremely pleasing and augers well for future management of the disease.

There are several recommendations that have been presented to improve the exclusion area concept. The initial change is the name of the Exclusion Areas to become Regional Risk Management Areas in keeping with the new National Plan's nomenclature. It is acknowledged that Boards may wish to continue with current literature and name whilst producers adapt to the change.

Changes to the requirements of Boards to be declared a protected area and maintaining that status include surveying a minimum of a third of their producers every three years and furnishing an annual report indicating levels of compliance and number of risk movements.

The National Plan has reduced the available points in the current exclusion areas from 5 to 4. Whilst this will be confusing and difficult for Boards and producers to adjust to, it is expected that Boards will recommend minimum entry levels after consultation.

Transaction Based Contribution Scheme

The Transaction Contribution Scheme was introduced to repay debt to producers that had been granted assistance during the early days of the initial program. The debt has now been fully paid out and the fund is now in surplus.

It is recommended that the Scheme be wound up and the funds remaining in the OJD Industry Fund be held and invested by the Rural Assistance Authority for future use for the OJD Program

The Review found that there was little support to maintain the scheme in case of future needs and this point was reinforced by the apparent undertakings given to the NSW Farmers Association at the time of its introduction.

There were sufficient undertakings given at the meetings held, to be confident that a demonstrated need for a new Transaction Based Levy would be supported in the future.

The OJD Advisory Committee

The Review canvassed the need to maintain a separate Advisory Committee in light of most of the decisions now being made at a national level. An option to have one sheep diseases committee in NSW gained good support, however after negotiation it was recommended that the Committee should continue with a further review in two years time.

It is recommended that the roles and responsibilities of the Committee should be redefined to enable it to provide industry views to the NSW representatives on the Industry Management Committee, which will be responsible for the facilitation of the new National Plan.

It is also recommended that the size and composition of the Committee be reviewed at the time of reappointment.

An additional role for the Committee will be approving expenditure from the OJD Industry Fund.

Patterns of Disease Prevalence

There is no doubt that the introduction of the vaccine “Gudair[®]” has made OJD a much easier disease to manage and

has contributed to a stabilization of prevalence areas throughout NSW. There has been a reduction in the number of flocks monitoring positive whilst the levels of prevalence within flocks has also reduced significantly.

There is also no doubt that the impact of the drought and poor wool prices has also contributed to this reduction with many Boards reporting flock reductions of about 60%. The big turn off of numbers would have targeted at risk age groups and higher prevalence sheep.

There have been some new outbreaks of the disease around the edges of the high to medium prevalence areas, although this should be expected as unvaccinated flocks become exposed and education and risk management procedures remain reactive rather than proactive.

The success of the exclusion areas as stated above should not be underestimated as influencing the disease prevalence.

Disease Management Issues

The Review found that the Market Assurance Program has been a good guide for confidence in the sheep market. This is particularly so in the seedstock flocks where additional assurance is very important.

The Review recommends that the cost of maintaining the Program should be borne by the participating flocks.

Despite the success of the vaccine “Gudair” for the management of the disease there still remains some important issues that should not be ignored. The vaccine has potential OH&S issues with its administration.

The Review recommends that research efforts be maintained to find a safer alternative and in the long term to find a vaccine that will rid the disease from the national flock.

It should be noted that there has been considerable commitments made to research from both the US and the EU to find solutions to Johne's disease and in Australia both MLA and AHA are committing resources.

Concurrently with the National Plan (Attachment 3) the national stakeholders have agreed on a new national sheep health statement (Attachment 4). Although this will introduce changes to the current NSW statement it will provide a nationally recognized document incorporating all of the major features that have been part of the NSW document.

The Review has also recommended that the new Livestock Production Assurance unit from within Meat and Livestock Australia be able to distribute the Sheep Health Statement as part of a distribution package with the National Vendor Declaration.

The Review believes that this will give greater exposure and take-up of the document with producers encouraged to attach one to the other.

The Review concluded that there was a gap in the program in NSW with at risk sheep travelling on public roads and stock routes. In order to have some scrutiny of these sheep the Review recommends that a Sheep Health Statement be required to be furnished so that information can be taken into account prior to the issuing of a permit.

The National Plan

The Review found little knowledge of the plan during the consultative stages of the review. The plan which was driven by the national producer organizations, Sheepmeat Council Australia and WoolProducers Australia, had little exposure at grass roots level or at the Industry Advisory Committee.

Despite this the Review recommends that the NSW Industry supports the new plan wholeheartedly. An effective awareness program will need to be conducted in conjunction with its introduction.

There will be an opportunity for the NSW Department of Primary Industries to withdraw some of its commitments with the Rural Lands Protection Boards ideally placed to take over the extension activities of OJD.

Abattoir Surveillance

The National Plan provides for a new national regime of abattoir monitoring with NSW receiving less testing than under the present scheme. The Review is confident that the new level of testing will enable the effective monitoring of existing and future prevalence areas with a satisfactory level of confidence.

The new National Plan will provide important negative results back to producers by the use of a web based facility. The Review believes that this information should be provided within four weeks of the surveillance. Random monitoring of other export works could benefit the surveillance program if conducted when seasonally opportune.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings listed below came from extensive consultation with producers, RLPB, Producer organisations as well as NSW Department of Primary Industries. An essential element of these recommendations is they are designed to incorporate the NSW program fully into the national Plan 2007-2012 which is due to commence 31 March 2008.

The effectiveness of the Exclusion Areas

Recommendation 1

Exclusion Areas be officially renamed Regional Risk Management Area, in order to fit to the national plan, but boards be permitted to continue to use their existing literature with the name Exclusion Area.

Recommendation 2

The current Exclusion Area orders be amended to include the following:

- A Rural Lands Protection Boards or divisions of boards wishing to be declared a protected area under the Stock Diseases Act in the first instance will be required to have a vote showing 50% support with at least 50% of eligible producers voting and must be of low prevalence status.
- B Boards wishing to maintain protected status will need to randomly survey a minimum of 33.3% of sheep producers every 3rd year with 50% of those surveyed supporting continuation.
- C Each participating board will be required to furnish an annual report

for delivery to their producers as well as a copy to the Director General that indicates the level of compliance with Sheep Health Statement returns, the number of risk movements identified from movements into the area and actions taken to resolve those risks.

- D It is recommended that DPI take samples of movements identified through Post Sale Summaries from major store sheep sales and provide these to boards so they may assess compliance with requirements for notification of introductions.
- E It is noted under the national plan that the area based points allocated to the current Regional Risk Management Areas/Low Prevalence Areas has been reduced from 5 to 4. Boards within Regional Risk Management Areas may wish to promote minimum entry points although these can not be supported by regulation.
- F As all ABC points have been awarded based on technical data only those Regional Risk Management Areas which wish to gain an additional ABC point will be required to prove the validity of their claim to the Animal Health Committee.

The need to maintain the Transaction based Contribution Scheme.

Recommendation 3

Given undertakings made to the NSW Farmers' Association and the weight of expectation from industry it is recommended the following measures

relating to the OJD Transaction Contribution Scheme be implemented:

- A As the scheme has collected sufficient funds to meet existing obligations under the OJD Industry Assistance Program it is recommended that the order for the OJD Transaction Contribution Scheme be revoked.
- B The funds remaining in the OJD Industry Fund be held and invested by the Rural Assistance Authority for future use of the OJD Program.
- C Surplus funds remaining in the OJD Industry Fund be allocated towards OJD research or other elements related to the OJD program in NSW
- D The OJD Industry Advisory Committee should approve expenditure from the OJD Industry Fund

Recommendation 4

- A Following the implementation of the national plan the NSW OJD Industry Advisory Committee have its role and responsibilities redefined.
- B The OJD Industry Advisory Committee should have oversight of the OJD Industry Fund
- C The OJD Industry Advisory Committee be given the responsibility promoting NSW industry's view to NSW DPI and the Industry Management Committee which is responsible for oversight of the national plan (track issues of single committee etc, NP no distinct role as past, discussions recommended

committee remain in place further time)

- D The Committee's continued role be examined after the 2 years.

Recommendation 5

The OJD Industry Advisory Committee approve expenditure from the OJD Industry Fund on behalf of industry.

The patterns of disease prevalence

Observations

- * Gudair has reduced the number of flocks being detected positive with abattoir surveillance as well as the prevalence within flocks. It is significant that the number of lesions being found in nearly all lines of sheep from high prevalence areas has decreased to below 2% positive within lines in nearly all instances. This demonstrates Gudair's ability to reduce and mitigate the impact of the disease.
- * OJD continues to gradually spread with the boundaries of the prevalence areas within districts such as those surrounding Wagga, Young, Forbes and Dubbo Boards. Whilst the spread is no longer as rapid as in the early years attention needs to be paid to this issue within those areas.
- * Whilst the success of the vaccine has virtually ended mortalities and reduced the level of lesions in sheep it needs to be noted that over the last seven years the number of flocks and number of sheep has declined dramatically. This will have had an

impact on the spread and development of the disease.

- * Incidences of risk have occurred in Exclusion Areas which have been dealt with. The apparent success of a number of boards in dealing with these risks supports the Exclusion Area protocols

Disease management issues

Recommendation 6

The Market Assurance Program be continued to be supported with costs of the program remaining at the expense of participating producers.

Observations

- * It is reported widely that the vaccine has potential OH&S issues. A new, safer vaccine to overcome OH&S issues is required as soon as possible. MLA and AHA are committing funds to research this problem. NSW DPI/industry may need to be active in this area as well.
- * NSW industry should support the new Sheep Health Statement as it will be nationally recognised and accommodates all major components of the current statement.

Recommendation 7

The new national Sheep Health Statement be distributed with the NVD book through the Livestock Production Assurance system with the same web based facility as is already available for the NVD.

Recommendation 8

When RLPB issue permits for sheep moving on TSR and public roads they

should require producers to supply a Sheep Health Statement in relation to the mob being moved and take that information into account when making a decision.

In relation to the national plan:

Observation

- * The Review found little knowledge about the national plan and a lack of consultation at grass roots level in its development. The review meetings held around the state were the first exposure many producers and RLPBs had to the plan. Once an effective awareness campaign has been conducted NSW producers should find much to support in the national plan.

Recommendation 9

RLPB should assume the role of lead agency in relation to extension activities for OJD.

Recommendation 10

In promoting awareness and raising the profile of the national OJD program Rural Lands Protection Boards should utilise Animal Health Australia's development of advisory materials.

The role of abattoir surveillance

Observation

- * Despite the reduction in the amount of testing which will be conducted in NSW under the national plan NSW should support this new level of surveillance.

Recommendation 11

NSW should insist negative feedback be available to producers within 4 weeks of slaughter date on a web based facility along with reports against the other conditions that are detected during surveillance.

Recommendation 12

The NSW delegate to the IMC put to the national program that it should investigate occasional testing on a seasonal basis at selected export works that are not currently included in the program.

HISTORY OF OJD IN NSW

Introduction and Spread

OJD was first confirmed in NSW in the central tablelands in 1980. It may have come from sheep introduced in the late 1950s or from 1975 in long wool sheep imported from New Zealand.

OJD spread slowly to other areas of NSW. It was subsequently identified in Victoria, on Flinders Island and on Kangaroo Island and the mainland of South Australia. Within NSW the disease largely travelled along the traditional trading routes extending south and south west from Bathurst.

Significant numbers of properties were identified as being infected or suspect prior to ending quarantines in 2004. The majority of NSW covering western and northern areas of the state remain as very low prevalence areas. Prevalence areas that operated from 2004 to 2008 are shown below.

Initial Response

Little official action was taken prior to 1995. In 1996 a Steering Committee implemented a plan for the control and potential eradication of OJD involving quarantine and tracing of stock. A Market Assurance Program based on testing protocols and general Biosecurity arrangements was implemented.

Victoria's financially crippling eradication program introduced in 1997 on known infected properties illustrated problems associated with such a strategy. This program led to extreme opposition from producers.

National Program

In mid-1997, discussions between government and industry stakeholders failed to agree on how to manage the disease so the Commonwealth commissioned the "Morris-Hussey" report. That report recommended controls be implemented while research and surveillance identified what to do. In early 1999, Animal Health Australia brokered a Deed of Agreement and the National Ovine Johne's Disease Control and Evaluation Program (NOJDP) which commenced somewhat retrospectively from 1998.

National program mid-term review

The mid-term review of NOJDP critically recognised that producers found affected by OJD suffered disproportionately to those, who for one reason or another, whose sheep had not been found to carry the disease. Considerable opposition not seen before in a program of this type arose. Rather than scrap the program it was agreed to continue with extra support being provided to affected producers by way of grants for planning and operational support which in NSW amounted to \$1,000 to support business planning to cope with and \$25,000 for control (e.g. vaccination) activities respectively.

Collection of funds for NSW producers to meet their obligations under the national program proved divisive as it was difficult to put in place an effective collection mechanism. Voluntary collections failed so a compulsory levied was adopted. A moratorium on industry levies was granted in 2001-2 due to the drought. This led to a deficit

including some \$4.2M owed to treasury and \$2.4M in grants to producers.

Changes in NSW

As the State suffering the most producer backlash, NSW reviewed the NOJDP in 2003, a year before the program's completion and introduced changes from 17 January 2004. This review consulted industry widely and reported industry's responses to the disease to the Minister.

Changes introduced were based on the review and were stated in the "Building Blocks" (Attachment 1). This agreed to the removal of quarantines and introduction of risk based trading using the Animal Health Statement to inform buyers. It included development of Exclusion Areas where producers accept responsibility for managing incidences of risk to OJD collectively; responsibility rested with buyers alone as all movement restrictions were removed.

Industry accepted responsibility for the management of the disease and clearly wished to see regulations end.

National program review

NOJDP concluded in July 2004. Future management was discussed from mid 2003 under the management of Animal Health Australia. This led to acceptance of a risk based model of trading as a non-regulatory approach was favoured. All agreed that the new National Approach should be producer-led and use risk-based trading – effectively "buyer beware".

Abattoir surveillance was considered necessary to establish regional prevalence and to identify infected flocks in low prevalence areas. An

Assurance Based Credit (ABC) scheme was designed to give producers an indication of the degree of risk associated with purchasing mobs of sheep from different prevalence areas and vaccination status. It was incorporated into a voluntary or mandatory vendor declaration (an Animal Health Statement now known as a Sheep Health Statement). NSW had already determined that the Animal Health Statement would be mandatory.

Program since adoption of Building Blocks and national Approach to OJD

Both the Building Blocks and National Approach to OJD shifted responsibility for the program from government to industry as a direct response to industry's stated desire. Surveillance is the only funded element in the program with Sheep Health Statements being the means to inform producers of the risks they face in the market. Health statements rely on data coming from post mortem surveillance at abattoirs as the means of giving a quantified measure of risk for sheep.

Uptake of Sheep Health Statements across NSW has been variable. The principle of both the Building Blocks and NOJDP was industry accepting responsibility for the management of OJD. Levels of uptake reflect producer attitude to OJD and the risks they perceive in the market place. With sales at 17 yards (2 yards have closed) in NSW being exempt and a perception there is little regulation of supplying forms to the market there has not been much in place to force the use of the statements.

In terms of the Building Blocks and National Approach, individual

producers and the industry as a whole have been responsible for

- the management of the risk of spread of OJD,
- funding abattoir surveillance,
- completing health statements accurately,
- complying with operational plans for exclusion areas, and
- managing the overall program, including the resourcing of emerging issues.

At the same time the NSW Department of Primary Industries was obliged to:

- conduct industry funded abattoir surveillance
- provide the regulatory and administrative framework for the establishment of exclusion areas and district vaccination areas
- provide a mandatory animal health statement incorporating a risk score based on origin of the sheep, their OJD status and their vaccination status
- conduct a review of the use of Animal Health Statements in the context of making them voluntary
- overview the implementation of prevalence areas and exclusion areas.

Testing for OJD started with blood Elisa tests. This provided a test for OJD but precluded vaccination prior to testing as infection could not be differentiated from vaccination. Pooled faecal culture (PFC) testing came along which improved accuracy as well as differentiated infection from

vaccination. This area is being developed with Direct PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) and real time PCR testing.

Few producers now undertake laboratory testing to determine where they stand with OJD. Sheep MAP producers similarly see little benefit in testing as they face few benefits from ongoing testing but potential penalties through loss of ABC points.

Post mortem surveillance at abattoirs became the means of identifying infected flocks in low prevalence areas as well as providing the statistics to assess how much disease was in any given area. Levels of surveillance have and will continue to focus detection work in low prevalence areas whilst providing sufficient in other areas to statistically monitor the level of infection present. Strategically the assumption was made that producers in areas of higher prevalence should assume their flocks were at risk and make decisions accordingly.

Comments

OJD control programs continue to be contentious and producers have often not engaged in the process until the disease actually impacted on their property. It is a disease for which we cannot accurately forecast losses, but it is assumed that it can maintain itself in most sheep raising areas of Australia.

The current control strategies are the result of exhaustive consultation and discussion. In most areas, they have resulted in an enormous amount of "heat" being taken out of the program.

RESPONSES TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)

The review developed an issues paper that posed questions designed to draw out responses to the TOR (see Attachment 2). This was used to guide submissions as well as orchestrate discussion during meetings held around the state. This included additional points additional to the TOR so as to identify how industry was approaching the management of OJD (What is the program for OJD) as well as get specific information on particular elements of the program (Sheep Health Statement).

What is the program for OJD

This was not one of the TOR for the review. It is critical, however, to understand producers' responses to this in order to understand why they responded to the issues paper in the manner they did. Responses in this area can be summarised as:

- There is a very real need to have OJD managed on a national level with all States working together to minimise the spread of the disease while maximising the trade opportunities available to producers
- The program uses risk based trading and will continue to give farmers tools to assess risk and manage the disease according to the circumstances they face – the aim is to lessen regulation as producers have tools to manage on farm and within region
- The plan is an advisory program that informs producers of the risks they face and the tools available to

minimise those risks – whilst it was contentious at the time and numbers of producers suffered because of the uneven means of detecting disease and imposing quarantines/trading restrictions the National Ovine Johne's Disease Control and Evaluation Program did provide knowledge of where the disease was in Australia, how it was behaving in Australian conditions and led to the a vaccine being registered for use to manage the disease that has enabled producers to deal with OJD using risk based trading alone - the changes introduced with registration of Gudair® showed vaccine was the route to manage OJD when it occurred

- It is difficult to generate interest amongst producers whose sheep are not touched by OJD, producers tend to pay attention only when an issue directly affects them
- A major aim for producers in areas where the disease has appeared is to reduce the incidence of OJD so it doesn't have a commercial impact – producers believe this always should have been the issue
- The real objective is to contain the disease whether we have a program or not, producers need to be able to get on with managing the disease in a business like manner rather than be spending time dealing with the vagaries of a program
- OJD is now an economic issue and should be treated in that light whereas once it was a matter of finding ways to identify it in a timely manner before mortalities occurred and then how to manage mortalities once the disease

entered a flock – the parallels to human health were, however, acknowledged with vigilance being required as to what is happening with OJD

- Given the management of OJD is now exclusively achieved through risk based trading that relies on knowledge of risk through abattoir surveillance there needs to be specific rewards for having managed OJD in place in the market otherwise there is little reason to control risk; if the market does not recognise that effort then producers are not serious about managing OJD
- There remains situations in which producers believe it is better to not know what may be happening than to know – this makes management of the disease problematical but one in which moving straight to a vaccine program is sensible
- Vaccine is efficacious in bringing OJD rapidly under control in terms of mortalities and providing accumulated benefit in terms of incidence within flocks; education is needed to ensure producers know how to address the disease as areas currently unaffected may not want to understand as there remains a lot of ignorance about the disease
- There is a degree of satisfaction with how OJD is being managed now, OJD is seen as yesterday's story as the clinical problems are not here while producers can afford the vaccine - the angst has gone out of OJD as risk based trading allowed transactions to anywhere
- General opinion was either have a program or don't and therefore

need to have checks and balances in place as well as consistency across the state

- There remains a great deal of variation between the states; South Australia is maintaining quarantines, Victoria is working on minimising all trade implications aiming at moving to management solely on an individual flock basis, Queensland continues to want to regulate risk of entry of OJD into that state
- The management of OJD post 2012 appears it will be purely a management program based on within flock assessment of risk in the absence of tools such as ABC points for prevalence areas – there will be 2 prevalence areas based on a strategic assumption that once the disease occurs producers will need to undertake a vaccination program if required by their business/flock structure

The effectiveness of the Exclusion Areas

- The incidences of OJD within Exclusion Areas have been minimal with those that have occurred were effectively dealt with (see Attachment 5)
- Producers within Exclusion Area supported that policy as a strategy to manage the disease whilst those outside the area questioned the efficacy of the approach and saw a need for Exclusion Area boards to be expected to demonstrate to the world the policy is continuing to be supported and is effective in managing risk

- Those areas apparently free of OJD remain of the opinion they wish to minimise the risk of the disease entering given the cost implications of managing the disease whilst those areas affected wished to freely and commercially manage the risk using vaccine
- There was little knowledge of the National Plan 2007-2012 or its requirements yet producers saw the value of a consistent approach across Australia – the plan includes Regional Risk Management areas as well as discussed use of strategies to manage OJD on a regional basis

Thought needs to be given to the relationship between the Exclusion Area policy and the National Plan. Fundamental elements of the management of OJD are being determined by national industry and funded by them.

- The evidence suggests that the current exclusion areas have been working effectively, especially in raising awareness of the disease, however the areas are only as effective as the participants' commitment to the policy, (if the landholders want them to work then they do manage the introduction of sheep and maintain good bio-security practices) - the Northern Exclusion Area is a good example, they are self funded, undertake extra abattoir surveillance, have strong landholder support and police the regulations of the area
- Producers suggested if they get a decent break in conditions and wool prices improve then sheep will go where they are wanted, producers are always looking at

grazing alternatives; Exclusion Area boards need to look at what is happening within their area to manage risks as they arise as sheep are entering their areas and will do so if there is demand for sheep

- Whilst vaccination reduces shedding by 90% overall and delays onset by 18 months the reduction can occur in 75% of a flock with many of the remainder shedding by the same amount as unvaccinated animals – reduction by a “fair bit” is regarded by members of the Northern OJD Exclusion Area as not being good as they believe if 1 sheds they are in trouble
- Many perceived that OJD in Exclusion Areas is not a problem (particularly outside the tablelands and slopes), if sheep out there have the disease it will die out therefore, in essence, why vaccinate if disease not in district
- There was strong sentiment that producers prefer to see high value flocks vaccinating irrespective of where they are, such a strategy was seen as being an appropriate Biosecurity measure to provide assurance to the market
- It was very clear that the proportion of entries to an Exclusion Area that are notified to a board is unknown and there is no current method to gauge this, this heavily questioned the legitimacy of Exclusion Areas as notification to boards is the means by which risks are identified
- The Northern OJD Exclusion Area has an active program of advice in place with producers being proactive in advising boards of

what is happening, this level of commitment demonstrates the value of Regional Risk

Management areas/Biosecurity Areas which are becoming key elements in the management of animal diseases - there is a need to see the policy beyond OJD as being part of a broader system to manage Biosecurity issues

- There is a need to for Exclusion Areas to be able to demonstrate to the world and their own producers what is happening in practice and what is being achieved, in the absence of this and given variable performance across Exclusion Area boards the policy can be seen as being a charade
 - NLIS requirements can assist Exclusion Areas identify where sheep are coming from and going to so boards can estimate the level of compliance with reporting requirements under the policy and hence demonstrate ongoing producer support
 - Many producers have not particularly got a problem with Exclusion Areas, if they want to send sheep to an Exclusion Area then have to have a score therefore it is an issue for buyers to solve
 - Number of boards admitted producer support is less than forthcoming as introductions aren't reported and they do not have the resources to be able to cope - at a particular board it was rare for producers to notify the board of introductions for footrot yet the same board claims high compliance for notification for entries against Exclusion Area policy yet the latter runs pretty
- much on the same protocols as footrot
- Success of the policy can be illustrated by case examples - a property in Wanaaring was detected as having OJD in imported sheep, the imports were slaughtered and after three years the disease was not found in home bred sheep yet all the imported sheep had the disease, other examples include cases in the Balranald-Wentworth area and Hay where sheep introduced from WA posed risks which were speedily resolved
 - A number of producers are wondering whether OJD is being controlled by epidemiology, Exclusion Area policy or movement controls; there maybe environmental controls in place which mitigate the development of OJD in flocks in Exclusion Areas but at face value the policy is succeeding - awareness and traditional trading patterns have heavily contributed to the policy's success
 - The policy has helped with the sale of sheep and was for an initial period a big boost supported by producers but it will need ongoing support that needs to be earned
 - Exclusion Area has become a fact of life that producers have accepted – if they pay their own many have no problems with the policy being in place, boards have the right to manage for footrot so they have right to manage for OJD
 - Worried whether the protocols are audited to see if they are doing the job or not rather than it just being a fiction achieving little in practice,

producers need confidence that what is claimed to be done is actually done otherwise become cynical – producers at large would accept Exclusion Area policy if it was a proper Biosecurity area not just seen as putting a label on OJD, the concept of regional populations protecting themselves is supported as long as it is within rules and is not used as a trade barrier

- The level of diligence in applying policy varies between boards with there being little indication directly to producers or outsiders how successful the policy is
- Many inside Exclusion Areas take level of comfort from the policy as producers are taking a more active role in minimising risk of entry which then helps assure those who buy from that area
- Variation in patterns of trade can put Exclusion Areas at risk
- Attitudes to Exclusion Areas was largely shaped by the perceived impact it had on the producers trade – those who believed they benefited wanted the policy to continue, those unaffected were largely indifferent, those whose trade might be impacted (either buyers in the area or sellers into the area) expressed an interest in the Exclusion Areas being able to demonstrate legitimacy of the policy in practice
- What will happen [with Exclusion Areas] at the end of 5 years? The sheep industry wont fund surveillance to the same level therefore how will these areas be able to assess risk in the absence of prevalence area data [nationally

the intent is to move to 2 prevalence areas without ABC points for areas]

- The incidence in Wanaaring is the logic driving a 2 prevalence area model; the disease may have entered but it did not spread to home bred sheep therefore such areas have natural barriers to the disease establishing and therefore such areas can be inherently managed differently
- South Australia adopted a similar policy area for BJD, NW SA Exclusion Area for BJD; require producers to be committed to containing the disease as see such a policy as making scientific sense
- Dry areas believe OJD wont prosper but hot areas are not automatically protected as there are incidences of the disease achieving limited spread in such situations – e.g. Jamestown (SA) dry but deer with BJD infected 8 neighbours with sheep, it didn't spread beyond those farms and despite dry conditions has not died out and was transmitted despite heat
- Many Exclusion Area producers believed their collective effort to manage OJD should be recognised via awarding an additional ABC point whilst those responsible for the program and producers inside and outside the area recognise ABC points have been awarded on technical merit alone (each ABC point represents a fourfold improvement in risk)
- The current Exclusion Area can be seen as wanting to delay the costs associated with managing OJD via vaccination, this was seen as being

legitimate provided Exclusion Area are transparent in what they are doing and can justify to the world their success

Thought needs to be given to the manner in which success of an Exclusion Area is demonstrated to producers within the area and to the world at large. This needs to show what is being achieved as well as levels of ongoing support. Lack of transparency can have a negative impact on support for such policies and hinder commitment to the management of OJD.

The need to maintain the Transaction based Contribution Scheme

- It was transparent industry does not want to continue the Transaction Contribution Scheme, the agreement with government and expectation of industry was the scheme was to pay off money owed to producers and then end the scheme – there needs to be a clear break with any new scheme being put forward on the basis of cost/benefit and funding decided at that time with producers saying yes or no and funding it or not have a program at all
- Typically producers expressed the opinion they don't see any point in keeping the scheme and believed the scheme had done its job of paying industry's liabilities therefore it should end as promised
- Sentiment was expressed that whatever scheme is put in place it will be criticised, however producers are not opposed to a scheme provided the benefits are transparent and it is under industry

control, it is crucial though a break is made with the current scheme – producers aren't seeing any creative ideas on how to manage OJD

- If there was a clearly defined and planned program that had reachable milestones and measurable benefits to producers then support would be forthcoming, there may need to be a funding stream for such a program however as Abattoir Surveillance is now funded through the peak bodies the level of funding and benefits from further funding would need to be closely examined
- Producers saw funding of research as a priority with priority given to finding a more effective vaccine that was safer to use as well as find a competitor to the current vaccine therefore leftover funds should be used to make the vaccine cheaper, make it safer as that issue inhibits the use of the vaccine – research for a better vaccine could include identification of a better adjuvant
- In research terms current knowledge on behaviour of OJD developed using sheep facing high levels of exposure to the disease; little is known of how OJD behaves at low levels of exposure or in flocks with a history of vaccination; these were seen as being areas for fruitful research
- If the Transaction Contribution Scheme continues then there is a need to make sure all contribute, the stated desire was to get rid of claim back facility however the reasons that capacity was put in place was acknowledged – if the scheme allowed producers to

reclaim contributions then allow a longer cut off period after the end of the financial year for claiming or have a set time, such as 3 months, after the date of transaction

- Producers believed there is no justification to subsidise the vaccine, it is up to individuals to pay their own flock health costs and any subsidy would be built into the price of the vaccine
- Deep concern was expressed that surplus funds from the OJD Industry Fund will disappear into Department of Primary Industries, coffers, it was therefore felt the Industry Fund should be under industry control
- Subsidisation of vaccine was not supported as it was believed price would increase rendering the subsidy ineffective and producers should be responsible for their own management of flock health
- Concerns were expressed that abattoir surveillance continue to be funded given its role in finding out what is happening with the disease; this has been overcome as national industry is funding surveillance which given its national significance is the appropriate source of money for that activity
- Funding of Exclusion Areas was seen as being the responsibility of local producers as agreed at the time they voted to adopt the policy
- The possibility of a general sheep fund to pay for control activities on a range of sheep issue, at the control of an industry committee, was raised as a possibility but the

idea was not picked up on by producers

- Producers involved in day to day operations not necessarily thinking about broader issues; producers in states that have access to a pool of their own funds have greater control of their industry's direction as well as the opportunity to use their pool of funds as leverage to attract further funding to initiate programs – the mechanism is therefore well worth preserving
- The decision on a scheme needs to be guided by a clear plan with measurable outcomes with consultation showing support for benefit from the scheme – there needs to be a careful process in place to do that
- It was recognised a major problem for Agriculture is its ability to raise funds to put in place programs producers want with an increasing understanding that if producers want a program then they have to pay for it – the Transaction Contribution Scheme is a mechanism that enables collection and use of funds to put in place programs industry wants

Recognition needs to be given to the firm belief the Transaction Contribution Scheme was established to achieve specified objectives and was therefore going to have a finite life. Thought also has to be given to ensuring industry perceives surplus funds gathered will be used according to industry's wishes.

OJD Industry Advisory Committee

- NSW Farmers' Association believe there needs to be some form of Industry Advisory Committee, the

major question is the funding of any Committee, as OJD is still a major issue that affects producers in a variety of ways

- Establishing a single committee covering sheep issues was seen as having merit by some but questioned by others on the basis of insufficient expertise to deal with issues as they arose - a response to this difficulty was to have a sub-committee structure supported by technical input from the Department or other groups as required
- The questions surrounding the establishment of a single committee were:
How effective a single committee would be advising on a number of sheep issues?
The representation on the Committees, where they come from and how many have knowledge of each specific issue (NLIS, OJD etc)
Whether a combined Committee would provide an acceptable level of advice to the Minister, especially as it may lower the producer representation on such committees giving less balanced advice
- The success of a single committee was seen as being very dependent on having the right people on the committee otherwise industry would be better off with separate committees for each issue – having members who had a passion for dealing with the issues faced was seen as an advantage
- Opinion was expressed that the nature of OJD meant an OJD Industry Advisory Committee should remain in place so as to concentrate on OJD alone
- Opinion was also very clear all committees should be reviewed periodically in order to ensure they continue to have a useful role to fill with those committees that are no longer contributing effectively ceasing - if an Industry Advisory Committee has no clear purpose/objective of providing good advice then there is less reason for it to exist
- Of concern was whether committees, including the Industry Management Committee responsible for the National Plan, have an ethos of talking the theory of risk management not the application/implementation of risk management on property
- RLPB were seen as being well placed to identify what producers need/want in disease management but are diverted to managing the board against due diligence and are micro managed – Boards tend to get bogged down as a result on detail rather than policy directions as to what is wanted
- An issue is the sheep industry has never got together as a group and it is important for the Minister to know the variations in operational conditions and intent
- Interstate Industry Advisory Committees saw a need for NSW opinion to be expressed through a NSW OJD Industry Advisory Committee on the future management of OJD – in other states input to the national Industry Management Committee responsible for the national plan was led by the Industry Advisory Committee rather than by the opinion of the Department whose

representative sat on that committee

- Increasingly focus will be on Biosecurity across the board rather than taking an issue by issue approach
- At this time majority ended up seeing a need for an ongoing OJD Industry Advisory Committee so as to deal with:
what is happening with introduction of the national plan,
the intent to begin negotiating the replacement plan for 2012,
having NSW industry's view put to the Industry Management Committee through that channel
- It was also clear industry wished to have the industry committee have control of surplus money in the OJD Industry Fund not the Department
- The OJD Industry Advisory Committee was appointed to provide strategic advice to the Minister on industry's intent with OJD, that advice is still needed as NSW views put to the Industry Management Committee must reflect industry views not Departmental ones – that function had been overshadowed by the problems associated with resolving liabilities under the OJD Industry Assistance Program which has now been achieved
- Given the concept for the plan to replace the national plan being introduced on 31 March has been decided and the intention to start debate on that within 2 years as well as the parallels with human health an OJD Industry Advisory Committee needs to be in place to express NSW industry's strategic

intent with the disease as advice to the Minister and as input to the national debate

Management of OJD is now firmly controlled by industry therefore consideration needs to be given as to the means by which NSW industry views are put through Department of Primary Industries to the OJD Industry Management Committee.

OJD Industry Fund

- Clear opinion was industry should both be in charge and be seen to be in charge of the industry fund as funds were collected on behalf of industry to carry out industry wishes
- Subsidies of the vaccine were not supported given the level of demand for vaccine in NSW and the potential for any subsidy to be built into the price of the vaccine
- As stated it was believed those responsible for approving expenditure of funds should address research into a more efficacious vaccine that was safer to use and to look at encouraging an alternative vaccine to enter the market
- Victorian producers' have the advantage of being able to leverage funds against government money and therefore have an effective process to obtain further funds whereas NSW producers are seen as though they approach government with a wish list – mechanisms such as the Transaction Contribution Scheme provide NSW producers with a pool of funds to do this

- Whatever funds are used they must demonstrate cost/benefit and be directed by industry
- NSW funds should not be spent in a manner that lessens funding provided to OJD by other sources, NSW funds are not a substitute for national money

Given management of OJD is controlled by industry consideration needs to be given as to how surplus money in the OJD Industry Fund are controlled.

The patterns of disease prevalence

- Due to lead times [in terms of the disease entering and then being expressed] judgements about the disease are impaired; this impedes the ability to assess changes in the disease in terms of spread and level of incidence
- Given the parallels between *Mycobacterium avium* paratuberculosis and human health ignorance on what is happening with the spread and severity of OJD is unacceptable – we need to keep on top of what is happening with the disease with a systematic process of assessing developments with the disease remaining in place
- NLIS and its relationship to OJD/disease management is a change that can help with managing OJD
- Some areas have shown an ability to manage risks when they arose, such as Wanaaring and Balranald/Wentworth, whilst others have improved their situation and

been recognised as having lowered the prevalence in their area, such as Cooma – collective action to manage risks have therefore been shown to have value in those situations

- Risks across an area are not uniform, within an area some parts may be static, others increasing whilst other decreasing – being aware of this should improve management decisions particularly where incidence is increasing – it was of concern that areas facing an increased incidence need to be aware of what is happening and what is implied

It is useful to reflect on what is being achieved with the management tools available as well as continue to be aware changes in prevalence across the state and within areas differ in magnitude and direction.

Disease management issues

- The Sheep MAP program enables producers to buy stock from sellers with a maximum of confidence that the sheep they are buying carry minimum risk for OJD, this is especially beneficial for studs who need to be able to sell into all areas of the State
- Some producers see a price advantage by being in the program and some buyers are willing to pay more for MAP sheep
- Opinion clearly supported Sheep MAP being self funded as producers either valued the program as such or it should cease – the opportunity exists to continue to use MAP as a means of assuring clients and generating a

trading advantage, both of which should be the drivers for MAP

- MAP flocks have the ability to promote their status as a selling advantage – given these flocks are primarily studs they are in the best position to take advantage of this and should therefore manage the program themselves
- If it is worthwhile to go into MAP then it is worthwhile using vaccine as MAP doesn't protect, there is a role for MAP to provide broad principles of Biosecurity but vaccination is crucial

Some thought needs to be given to promotion of tools to minimise risk as well as who is responsible for that promotion.

- There are undoubtedly genetic factors in susceptibility to OJD – we have just about got the sheep genome mapped and are on the brink of really understanding the dynamics of OJD
- The opportunity for market advantage to NSW [through the Sheep Health Statement] needs to be considered – the ability to become a preferred supplier of sheep and develop a QA program for use as a trading tool is an opportunity for industry to take hold of
- Industry at large was fully supportive of the Sheep Health Statement and NVD being merged in order to simplify paperwork and improve uptake – having multiple forms to complete was seen as lowering willingness to do any and decreasing accuracy

- There is confusion over Assurance Based Credit points used on the Sheep Health Statement as to what points are available and how they can be obtained
- Given both NVD and Sheep Health Statement are parts of national plans for industry the move to bring the forms into a national process was seen as being sensible – the focus needs to be on the national plan rather than on individual states delivering separate messages or otherwise it is not a national plan
- A large number of producers are not paying attention to Sheep Health Statement or understand the ABC points that drive the statement – attention is paid when it impacts on trade or the disease occurs on the property and not until then
- Livestock Product Assurance program has a national process for producers ordering NVD allowing for permutations in material delivered and personalisation by way of laser printing of Property Identification Codes – this is a single national channel for delivering a single national program element that has the potential to deliver Sheep Health Statement to users using a simple ordering process – an issue to resolve will be how the forms are paid for
- Merger of the forms into a single booklet has significant production problems – but an explicit link to the NVD would simplify the Sheep Health Statement as there is duplicate information on both forms, given the national Sheep Health Statement is no longer a

valid movement document having movement details is superfluous

- Producers can use an electronic version of the NVD to complete the form, a similar process could be used for the Sheep Health Statement with LPA having the expertise in this field
- Requirements under LPA rules for an NVD to be supplied with all movement of sheep between producers will be increasingly enforced – the explicit link between NVD and Sheep Health Statement may reinforce usage rates for Sheep Health Statement if they are clearly linked in the producers perception
- As a general rule producers do not value or seek information on sheep health issues, a full QA system for sheep may create a better uptake of health information for management decisions rather than by the current piecemeal approach working disease by disease
- Sheep Health Statements are a market tool which, in the absence of public policy drivers, should be driven by the market not by regulation – if the market does not value it then allow the statement to die
- The statement needs to be viewed in terms of managing risk to the disease not in terms of meeting regulations – what the ABC points mean is more important than format or design or the form or how it is delivered
- Critically there are few economic drivers in place for managing the disease now that the vaccine has been seen to rapidly deal with

mortalities, sub-clinical cases are difficult to identify and have little impact on sales – at the moment go with the flow until something settles

- The allocation of ABC points for cattle and sheep differ – if possible a common methodology for allocating ABC points would improve utilisation of such statements
- It does not matter what strain of mycobacterium is used for the vaccine, the organism is highly immunogenic

It needs to be remembered that safety has a major impact on use of various management tools such as vaccine as well as consider ways to make use of efficient market channels to provide management tools such as the Sheep Health Statement.

- The issue of sheep affected by OJD being free to travel past unaffected properties without anyone being aware or considering the ramifications of such movements was a concern to a number of producers – movement on stock routes and Travelling Stock Reserves is controlled therefore attention should be paid to OJD when granting permits
- Lack of knowledge of what is happening on neighbouring properties is a weakness in determining risks faced by any producer, spread of infection between properties has played a significant role in the development of the disease

Consideration needs to be given to ways in which unknown risks, such as those

posed by travelling stock, can be dealt with.

In relation to the national plan:

- The National Plan had been agreed to before the review commenced limiting the review's ability to comment – in similar fashion very few producers were aware the national plan was being developed let alone what was in the plan
- A representative organisation of representative organisations is not automatically well placed to ensure those affected by decisions are either consulted or aware of the implications of decisions being made – this process must be deliberately managed as those who are affected by decisions should have a hand in making the decisions
- Either producers want a program and are willing to pay for it or abandon the effort – there are currently no other tools available than surveillance and vaccine when risks arise alongside well informed risk based trades so either decide what is needed to do that job properly or do not embark on the program
- There is a need to achieve an accommodation over what messages to deliver to industry as well as have a set of achievable aims with key organisations involved in that process - in order to achieve success in extending that message need Rural Lands Protection Boards to understand what is being delivered as they are usually the first point of contact

- All organisations need to be active players in the program in order to ensure broad based support, whilst a single agency may lead they must not be on their own
- All agencies need to agree level of resources to provide to support the program, whilst national industry may agree programs and an Industry Management Committee be in place neither grouping can deliver programs – that has to happen at state level
- Need a common voice on OJD and move to management of the disease on the basis of Biosecurity – this is a model for managing other diseases

Success in promoting the National Plan needs to take account of who drives delivery of information as industry wishes to own the disease. Given the management of OJD will now be from a national perspective what is communicated needs to be viewed from the same vantage point.

The role of abattoir surveillance

- Producers are generally happy with the current program and support continuation of surveillance as the means of finding out what is happening and where - surveillance is seen as being the only means to do this, it is apparent little is known of where the disease is spreading to
- A number of producers believed surveillance in high prevalence areas was not cost effective although those affected did see feedback on level of incidence as well as the capacity to earn ABC points via negative results as being

vital to maintaining producer commitment to the program – in essence if there is no way to know what is happening and no reward for effort why maintain the effort

- Alternative views included questioning the need for ongoing surveillance if all that came of the results was an assessment of prevalence within an area – the potential for periodic surveillance (provided it was statistically and scientifically defensible) was put forward as providing sufficient data to achieve that outcome, this would be consistent with an industry strategy of accepting once OJD entered an area producers needed to vaccinate and expecting risk averse buyers to look for vaccination status as the principal tool to assess risk of any particular trade – it was acknowledged level of understanding of incidence in particular flocks would be minimal
- Surveillance needs to be continuous as stop/start systems do not develop the expertise needed to complete the task adequately; whilst inspectors can be trained their technique would fade during a break and those trained would not necessarily be available at subsequent rounds of surveillance
- There needs to be a system established to ensure new incursions are dealt with and followed up by the local RLPBs in which the property lies - in the past there has been some concern that there were no remedial measures put into place once an incursion is established through surveillance
- The question is should OJD be controlled at all, if industry doesn't care where it goes or what it does many questioned why fund surveillance and whether there is support for a program for OJD – the direct benefits of surveillance need to be made clear as the lack of feedback of negative results in particular has left many ignorant of what can be achieved
- It was clearly believed that without surveillance the Sheep Health Statement and risk based trading will fall in a heap – it was therefore assumed that the management of risks to OJD will be by prejudice alone with some areas being regarded as irredeemably affected
- Given a lack of routine follow up of results following detection during surveillance and flocks affected aren't identified then questions were raised as to what is being achieved – it was widely believed individuals need to know the risks they face as well as the risks neighbours pose as spread between neighbouring properties is an accepted phenomena
- Producer organisations are not walking away from programs in OJD as the disease is seen as continuing to be a serious issue for the industry to face – those groups, however, wish to have targeted programs put forward that are clearly identified as to outcomes they will achieve with benefits stated and then figure out how to pay for it
- Producers would like an investigation on ways to obtain better feedback on the state of their stock over a range of health and production issues; this would have greater general support and be of benefit to the whole industry as the

more information producers receive the better they are able to manage all aspects of production

- Post mortem surveillance at works is central to developing a QA system for the sheep industry – surveillance for OJD and other conditions needs to be viewed in that light, the industry needs to consider whether a QA approach to managing delivery of product to market stretching back through the market chain to initial production is needed
- There was opinion that splitting lines and diverting to works not included in surveillance was affecting the ability of the program to accurately reflect what was happening with the disease
- There was general opinion that surveillance results and hence prevalence areas should be based on a rolling average rather than being assessed every 2 years
- If results from surveillance are to be of value to producers then they should be made available to them close to the time of slaughter – receiving results a year plus after the event means the information and potential points from negative results are meaningless reducing the value of statements in producers' minds
- Surveillance is run to a strict budget – it was believed the budget was set then the amount of surveillance undertaken was shaped to that, the logic behind designing surveillance on this basis was questioned as it was felt it was better to define what was needed then design the program to that

- Estimates of prevalence in any area was based solely on the technical analysis of data, surveillance levels are set to the number of flocks not the number of sheep
- Improvements in NLIS for sheep, in the usage and accuracy of NVD will improve results provided from surveillance as tracing of sheep improves
- There is no perceived benefit in broader surveillance of sheep from High Prevalence Areas as know the disease is present – by inference all flocks within that area must act as though they are infected and gain ABC points through management measures put in place rather than rely on improvements in area points (which will cease anyway in 5 years)

Given the National Plan relies on developing an informed market consideration needs to be given to what is communicated in relation to detections or otherwise of the disease as well as the timing of that communication.

RENEWING THE NSW OJD PROGRAM

The review found that whilst there was little knowledge of the new National Plan, it became obvious that full integration with that plan was going to be in the best interests of both producers and the NSW jurisdiction.

The National Plan was driven by the two national sheep producer bodies, the Sheepmeat Council of Australia and WoolProducers Australia in conjunction with the State Departments of Primary Industries and Animal Health Australia. Regrettably there was little or no understanding of the plan evident during the taking of evidence amongst the NSW Rural Lands Protection Boards and individual producers. The OJD Industry Advisory Committee was not formally engaged in the process.

Despite this, the plan offers a very strong step forward for the control and management of the disease across Australia.

The findings listed below are designed to incorporate the NSW program fully into the new national program which is due to commence on the 31st of March 2008.

The effectiveness of the Exclusion Areas

The exclusion areas have been a very successful initiative of the current program with good support and compliance from their producers. At risk sheep introductions have been kept to a minimum and the protocols have gained respect of agents from within the areas.

The Review concluded that the name regional risk management areas as provided for in the national plan should be used for the existing exclusion areas. In order to maintain the current protocols the current exclusion areas are declared a protected area under the Stock Diseases Act.

Recommendation

- 1 Exclusion Areas be officially renamed *Regional Risk Management Areas* in order to fit to the national plan, but Boards be permitted to continue to use their existing literature with the name *Exclusion Area*.

In order to assist those Boards that have already obtained majority producer support for their protected areas it is recommended that a random survey of their producers be undertaken to maintain that status.

A further requirement will be placed on Boards to furnish reports to indicate the level of compliance and provide any information regarding risk movements.

It will greatly assist Boards if post sale summaries are provided from major store sales to enable some check on introductions.

The reduction in the number of points available to stock emanating from the new low prevalence areas under the National Plan may cause some difficulties for Boards managing risk. This may be alleviated by recommending minimum entry points for introduced sheep.

Recommendation

- 2 The current Exclusion Area orders be amended to include the following:

- A Rural Lands Protection Boards or divisions of boards wishing to be declared a protected area under the Stock Diseases Act in the first instance will be required to have a vote showing 50% support with at least 50% of eligible producers voting and must be of low prevalence status.
- B Boards wishing to maintain protected status will need to randomly survey a minimum of 33.3% of sheep producers every 3rd year with 50% of those surveyed supporting continuation.
- C Each participating board will be required to furnish an annual report for delivery to their producers as well as a copy to the Director General that indicates the level of compliance with Sheep Health Statement returns, the number of risk movements identified from movements into the area and actions taken to resolve those risks.
- D It is recommended that DPI take samples of movements identified through Post Sale Summaries from major store sheep sales and provide these to boards so they may assess compliance with requirements for notification of introductions.
- E It is noted under the national plan that the area based points allocated to the current Regional Risk Management Areas/Low Prevalence Areas has been reduced from 5 to 4. Boards within Regional Risk Management Areas may wish to promote minimum entry points although these can not be supported by regulation.

F As all ABC points have been awarded based on technical data only those Regional Risk Management Areas which wish to gain an additional ABC point will be required to prove the validity of their claim to the Animal Health Committee.

The Transaction based Contribution Scheme.

The weight of evidence from submissions and hearings was clearly against any extension of the Transaction Contribution Scheme. This was particularly so from discussions with the NSW Farmers Association.

There is, however, Industry acceptance for such future contribution schemes if the necessity can be demonstrated.

The Review also canvassed the option of leaving the Transaction Scheme in place at a nil collection rate, in case funds were required from Industry for some future contribution. This also did not register any support. There was reluctance from producers to give the Government that opportunity.

The Review is recommending that the surplus funds be invested by the RAA for future use of the OJD program and be overseen by the OJD Industry Advisory Committee.

Recommendation

- 3 Given undertakings made to the NSW Farmers' Association and the weight of expectation from industry it is recommended the following measures relating to the OJD Transaction Contribution Scheme be implemented:

A As the scheme has collected sufficient funds to meet existing

obligations under the OJD Industry Assistance Program it is recommended that the order for the OJD Transaction Contribution Scheme be revoked.

- B The funds remaining in the OJD Industry Fund be held and invested by the Rural Assistance Authority for future use of the OJD Program.
- C Surplus funds remaining in the OJD Industry Fund be allocated towards OJD research or other elements related to the OJD program in NSW
- D The OJD Industry Advisory Committee should approve expenditure from the OJD Industry Fund

The OJD Industry Advisory Committee

The Review examined the future role for the OJD Advisory Committee in some detail. With the impending National Program there was a strong case that the NSW Committee would not have a significant role in the future.

The evidence collected from meetings and submissions was inconclusive with many producers unaware of the Committees existence and role. There was strong support for a combined Committee amalgamating the footrot and ecto-parasite advisory committees with the OJD Committee forming one Ministerial Advisory Committee.

With other States maintaining their OJD Advisory Committees it was eventually concluded that the NSW Committee should remain as constituted, but with a review after a further two years of operation.

Recommendation 4

- A Following the implementation of the national plan the NSW OJD Industry Advisory Committee have its role and responsibilities redefined.
- B The OJD Industry Advisory Committee should have oversight of the OJD Industry Fund
- C The OJD Industry Advisory Committee be given the responsibility promoting NSW industry's view to NSW DPI and the Industry Management Committee which is responsible for oversight of the national plan (track issues of single committee etc, NP no distinct role as past, discussions recommended committee remain in place further time)
- D The Committee's continued role be examined after the 2 years.

Recommendation

- 5 The OJD Industry Advisory Committee approve expenditure from the OJD Industry Fund on behalf of industry.

The patterns of disease prevalence

As the evidence demonstrates in the earlier sections of the report, the Review has found that disease has largely been contained in its boundaries set after the implementation of the first OJD program in 2004.

The prime agent for this consistent result has been the strong uptake of the Gudair vaccine and the success of the Exclusion Areas.

Most pleasing has been the reduction in in-flock prevalence in the high prevalence areas.

Observations

- * *Gudair* has reduced the number of flocks being detected positive with abattoir surveillance as well as the prevalence within flocks. It is significant that the number of lesions being found in nearly all lines of sheep from high prevalence areas has decreased to below 2% positive within lines in nearly all instances. This demonstrates *Gudair's* ability to reduce and mitigate the impact of the disease.
- * OJD continues to gradually spread with the boundaries of the prevalence areas within districts such as those surrounding Wagga, Young, Forbes and Dubbo Boards. Whilst the spread is no longer as rapid as in the early years attention needs to be paid to this issue within those areas.
- * Whilst the success of the vaccine has virtually ended mortalities and reduced the level of lesions in sheep it needs to be noted that over the last seven years the number of flocks and number of sheep has declined dramatically. This will have had an impact on the spread and development of the disease.
- * Incidences of risk have occurred in Exclusion Areas which have been dealt with. The apparent success of a number of boards in dealing with these risks supports the Exclusion Area protocols

Disease management issues

The weight of evidence collected during the Review supported the retention of the Market Assurance Program. Many producers acknowledged that the assurance was of considerable benefit when buying replacement rams.

The Program is mainly used by stud producers to gain access for their sheep into low prevalence areas of both NSW and beyond.

The cost of maintaining the Program is not exorbitant and should be covered by the producers.

Recommendation

- 6 The Market Assurance Program be continued to be supported with costs of the program remaining at the expense of participating producers.

Gudair Vaccine

Despite the success of the *Gudair* vaccine in controlling the OJD disease it does have some major issues that cannot be ignored.

In an ideal world we would now have a vaccine that could extinguish the disease from the Australian flock. Despite massive amounts attributed to research around the world to find a breakthrough there still only remains a vaccine that can contain the spread of OJD.

As observed below that vaccine does have some problems that should not be conveniently ignored.

Observation

- * It is reported widely that the vaccine has potential OH&S issues. A new,

safer vaccine to overcome OH&S issues is required as soon as possible. MLA and AHA are committing funds to research this problem. NSW DPI/industry may need to be active in this area as well.

Sheep Health Statement

The Sheep Health Statement has been developed by the National stakeholders and has incorporated all of the reasonable requirements of each of the jurisdictions. For once we now have a new truly national statement for all sheep movements within Australia.

The new statement will not have a travelling stock statement section as has been the case in the past NSW forms. That function will remain available in the National Vendor Declaration forms.

To assist in the take-up of the Sheep Health Statement the Review has held discussions with Meat and Livestock Australia and the new division of Livestock Production Assurance to get support for simultaneous distribution of the Sheep Health Statement with the National Vendor declaration books. This appears to have good support and needs to be followed through by the National Program managers.

Observation

- * NSW industry should support the new Sheep Health Statement as it will be nationally recognised and accommodates all major components of the current statement.

Recommendation

- 7 The new national Sheep Health Statement be distributed with the NVD

book through the Livestock Production Assurance system with the same web based facility as is already available for the NVD.

Stock Movements

A potential problem was brought to the Review's attention during the taking of evidence with regard to sheep travelling on public roads and the resultant health issues involved. It was decided to make a deliberative recommendation that would place some requirement on travelling sheep to declare their health through the presentation of a statement.

Recommendation

- 8 When RLPB issue permits for sheep moving on TSR and public roads they should require producers to supply a Sheep Health Statement in relation to the mob being moved and take that information into account when making a decision.

The National Plan

As stated earlier there was little knowledge of the National Plan amongst NSW stakeholders; however, the Review found great benefits for NSW and the other states.

Observation

- * The Review found little knowledge about the national plan and a lack of consultation at grass roots level in its development. The review meetings held around the state were the first exposure many producers and RLPBs had to the plan. Once An Effective awareness campaign has been conducted NSW producers should

find much to support in the national plan.

Future Leadership

It became apparent during the review that the role of the Department of Primary Industries will be somewhat lessened with the advent of the National Plan. The Review believes that the Rural Lands Protection Boards should assume a leadership role in the delivery of extension services for OJD.

The advent of the National Plan presents a further opportunity for NSW agencies and Rural Lands Protection Boards to make use of the national information and publications.

Recommendations

- 9 RLPB should assume the role of lead agency in relation to extension activities for OJD.
- 10 In promoting awareness and raising the profile of the national OJD program Rural Lands Protection Boards should utilise Animal Health Australia's development of advisory materials.

The role of abattoir surveillance

Abattoir surveillance will be changed under the National Plan to spread the testing across all sheep producing States. Whilst this is welcome some concerns have been raised that this will lead to a reduction in testing in NSW.

Whilst this will remain a concern for some, the Review found no evidence that the changes will weaken the specific role of surveillance, which is to monitor prevalence changes. The testing will be targeted heavily towards low prevalence areas in each

jurisdiction and will be sufficiently widespread to capture any shift in prevalence.

One of the great advantages from abattoir surveillance is the provision of valuable feedback to producers. This is specifically so with negative results, which in most cases can lead to extra trading points for their flocks.

A failure of the old program has been the time delay in providing the negative results back to producers. This would appear to be overcome with the new National Plan providing a web based facility for producers to access in a short time frame.

The Review found sufficient concern from producers that the number of testing abattoirs was low and that there should be some random sampling at other export works when seasonal numbers warrant.

Observation

- * Despite the reduction in the amount of testing which will be conducted in NSW under the national plan NSW should support this new level of surveillance.

Recommendations

- 11 NSW should insist negative feedback be available to producers within 4 weeks of slaughter date on a web based facility along with reports against the other conditions that are detected during surveillance.
- 12 The NSW delegate to the IMC put to the national program that it should investigate occasional testing on a seasonal basis at selected export works that are not currently included in the program.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Review is very appreciative of the organisations, Rural Lands Protection Boards, groups and individuals that have met with the review and forwarded submissions and letters to the Inquiry.

Acknowledgement is given to the following that made time available to attend meetings:

Staff of the following organisations:

Animal Health Australia
Australian Livestock & Property Agents Association
Department of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia
Meat and Livestock Australia
NSW Department of Primary Industries
NSW Farmers' Association
NSW OJD Industry Advisory Committee
Rural Assistance Authority
Sheepmeat Council of Australia
State Council RLPB
Victorian Department of Primary Industries
Victorian OJD Industry Advisory Committee
WoolProducers Australia
Northern NSW OJD Exclusion Area Advisory Committee

Directors and staff of the following RLPB kindly made time available to meet with the review:

Armidale
Balranald-Wentworth
Bourke
Braidwood
Brewarrina
Broken Hill
Central Tablelands
Cobar
Condobolin
Cooma
Dubbo
Forbes

Goulburn
Gundagai
Hay
Hillston
Hume
Molong
Moree
Mudgee-Merriwa
Murray
Narrabri
Narrabri
Narrabri
Narrandera
Northern New England
Northern Slopes
Riverina
Tamworth
Wagga Wagga
Wilcannia
Yass
Young

Producers from the following districts as met with the review well as a number of producers who attended meetings with RLPB

Central Tablelands
Yass
Armidale

Acknowledgement is also given to those who made written submissions:

Animal Health Australia
Armidale RLPB
Balranald-Wentworth RLPB
Mr Colin Ferguson
Mr Des Campbell
Mr Don Pratley
Dr John Evers
Dubbo RLPB
Forbes Action Group
Hillston RLPB
Hume RLPB
Mr Gerard Keogh
Mr Reg Larkin
Mr Richard McIntosh
Mudgee- Merriwa RLPB
Northern NSW OJD Exclusion Area
Advisory Committee
NSW Department of Primary Industries
sheep Livestock Officers
NSW Farmers' Association
NSW Stud Merino Breeders
Association – notes of meeting
Queensland Department of Primary
Industries and Fisheries
Riverina RLPB
SE Regional Animal Health Committee
RLPB
Sheepmeat Council of Australia

This document is part of a larger publication and is subject to the disclaimers and copyright of the full version from which it was extracted.

The remaining parts and full version of the publication, as well as copyright and other legal information, can be found at:

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/health/specific/sheep/ojd/about/bull-report-march-2008>