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FOOTROT NOTIFICATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The attached document is a **WRITTEN INSTRUMENT** issued with the concurrence of the Director-General of NSW Agriculture under Clause 8.3 of Memorandum of understanding between the Director-General of NSW Agriculture and State Council of Rural Lands Protection Boards.

APPROVED

for R F SHELDRAKE
DIRECTOR-GENERAL
NSW AGRICULTURE

Date: 27/8/03

APPROVED

S ORR
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
STATE COUNCIL
RURAL LANDS PROTECTION BOARDS

Date: 27/8/03



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FOOTROT NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE

This circular should be read in conjunction with the Footrot Notification Policy and be included in section 4.6 of the NSW Footrot Eradication Manual.

The Footrot Notification policy outlines the obligations and actions required concerning the notification of footrot. These procedures set out the follow-up action to be taken where footrot is detected and the relevant person has failed to notify of the suspected presence of the disease.

An owner who reports lameness in his sheep and requests an investigation to determine its cause has initiated the inspection and can be deemed to have notified. If, on the other hand, an Inspector arranges to inspect sheep on a randomly selected property as part of a survey and after being contacted the owner says that he thinks they may have footrot, the subsequent detection of footrot would not have been initiated by the producer. A similar situation applies to footrot detection in saleyards or other public places or to the owner of straying sheep. Evidence of underrunning in a dry environment and/or palliative treatment should be regarded as suspicious of footrot and requires further investigation.

Action

If footrot is detected in a flock without prior notification, the person responsible for the stock must be interviewed to obtain evidence with a view to further action.

A written investigation report must be created. This report must include circumstances of the detection, a summary of the inspection of the sheep, and notes of the conversation with the alleged offender. **Where it is evident in the initial stages of the investigation that there has been a significant failure to notify, an interview process must be followed and if prosecution action is considered to be an appropriate response, a breach report must be prepared for further consideration.**

Once relevant evidence has been obtained, the District Veterinarian determines appropriate follow-up action after considering a number of factors (see below). The action taken may vary from a warning letter (of varying severity), through penalty notices, to prosecution. It is recommended the action taken be first discussed with the Senior Field Veterinary Officer (SFVO), as appropriate.

Factors to consider when recommending for further action:

- Whether the flock is in a Protected or a Control area. Protected Areas have a lower prevalence of disease and finding undetected infection is more important than it is in Control Areas
- The number of infected sheep and the severity of the footrot lesions.

Note: As the prevalence of footrot decreases, the program will be increasingly directed towards low-expression strains. The difficulty in detecting flocks infected with these strains makes notification even more important. Follow up action is still required when low-expression strains are detected without notification. The action needs to be appropriate to the circumstance.

- Evidence of recent palliative treatment (such as paring and footbathing).
- Whether it is a first or repeat offence. Repeat offenders should be targeted for prosecution.
- Other relevant factors which are agreed in consultation with the SFVO or Program Leader (Flock Health).

The factors that are taken into consideration in deciding on the action to be taken must be recorded on the investigation/breach report. Generally the finding of obvious clinical footrot (with >10% Score 4 lesions) should lead to recommending a more severe regulatory action (penalty notice or prosecution). Similarly, evidence in a flock of ongoing palliative treatments (footbathing, foot paring) to control a disease problem should lead to a more severe penalty when not notified. Recommendations departing from this guide should be agreed with the SFVO.

Boards must ensure that Inspectors are capable of undertaking regulatory interviews and can prepare breach reports to an appropriate standard. NSW Agriculture provides Legal Training to inspectors on request by Boards to enable inspectors to develop appropriate interview skills.

Note: Given that the period within which prosecution action can be taken is 6 months after the date of the offence, a report should be made within a reasonable time, sufficient to allow 6-8 weeks for the processing of any recommendation for prosecution and commencement of any approved prosecution.

Reporting

A summary of new footrot detections is to be reported to the Footrot Steering Committee through the SFVO on a six monthly basis and the reason for detection stated. The report must also state what follow-up action was taken for the failure to notify.

SFVOs will be invited to check a sample of investigation/breach reports on at least an annual basis and report findings to the Board. These reports, amongst other things, will form part of the submission to the Steering Committee for its determination of the appropriate footrot status of the Board Areas, and provide credibility that the status is appropriate.

Publicity

Implementation of this procedure will be a significant change from the purely advisory approach in some Boards. The change should be accompanied by appropriate

communication (eg. Board newsletters or press releases), to reiterate producer obligations, to explain in advance what is expected from them, and the possible consequences of any non-compliance. Publicity at the local level should emphasise the considerable progress that has been made with footrot control throughout New South Wales and the responsibility of industry to continue eradication when footrot is found. Boards play an important role in assisting with eradication programs.



**RENATA BROOKS
CHIEF
DIVISION OF ANIMAL INDUSTRIES**