

Process for accreditation of livestock contractors for footrot programs in NSW

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Background

Using accredited footrot contractors to assist sheep producers to complete an approved footrot eradication program increases the chance of a successful outcome.¹

Diagnosis of footrot is an act of veterinary science governed by the NSW Veterinary Practice Act 2003. Footrot contractors must be approved by the NSW Veterinary Practitioners Board to be legally allowed to undertake this work.

‘Accredited footrot contractor’ means a livestock contractor accredited by the Veterinary Practitioners Board of NSW to undertake footrot work in NSW. Accreditation awarded in other jurisdictions is not recognised in NSW.

[Local Land Services](#) may choose to charge contractors for the time taken for initial assessment or re-assessment as footrot contractors.

Footrot eradication programs

When virulent footrot is suspected or diagnosed in a sheep flock in NSW, the biosecurity risk must be managed with an Individual Biosecurity Direction issued under the Biosecurity Act 2015.

In accordance with the [NSW Procedure – Virulent Footrot](#) an approved disease eradication program must be implemented by the sheep owner. The disease eradication program must be approved and audited by a Local Land Services (LLS) District Veterinarian (DV). The flock cannot be released from the Biosecurity Direction until the eradication program has been successfully completed.

Sheep producers are expected to implement the approved disease eradication program in their flock. However, it is highly recommended that sheep producers engage the services of accredited footrot contractors to undertake most inspections of sheep undergoing approved disease eradication programs.

Where contractors are employed to assist with approved disease eradication programs, they must work cooperatively with the DV.

Role of the District Veterinarian in footrot management

The DV must:

- Make the initial diagnosis of footrot in the flock, or review and endorse the diagnosis if made by a private veterinarian.
- Approve a disease eradication program for the flock/property. The program must be developed in consultation with the flock owner. The flock owner may request their private veterinarian, or an accredited footrot contractor, to provide input to the program.
- Oversee the implementation of the approved disease eradication program. This includes monitoring the activities of authorised staff such as biosecurity officers or accredited footrot contractors who may be assisting with the implementation of the disease eradication plan.
- Make the final decision to release a flock/property from biosecurity restrictions once an approved disease eradication program has been completed to their satisfaction. This can be based on reports from an accredited footrot contractor.

Role of the accredited contractor in footrot management

Contractors accredited by the NSW Veterinary Practitioners Board to participate in approved disease eradication programs for footrot must:

- Work in conjunction with the registered veterinarian who is supervising the disease eradication program. This may be a private veterinary practitioner or DV.
- Make regular reports to the DV responsible for auditing the disease eradication program.
- Keep appropriate records of all activities undertaken as part of an approved disease eradication program, and make these available to the DV on request. Accurate records of all mobs on the property including the dates of and numbers of sheep/goats yarded at each inspection, the numbers treated and or culled, and records of treatments used are the minimum that must be kept.
- Promptly notify the DV of any issues or problems that arise during the implementation of the approved disease eradication program.
- Ensure that if antibiotic treatments are prescribed for use in the eradication program, that they are only administered according to the directions of the supervising veterinarian.
- Notify the NSW Sheep Health Coordinator if they wish to withdraw from accreditation.

Process for approval of contractors to undertake footrot eradication work

Contractors seeking re-accreditation for Footrot disease eradication program work

The most recent list of accredited contractors was published in September 2021 as [Primefact 59 Livestock Contractors Footrot Certification Scheme](#).

A contractor previously accredited may apply to their LLS DV for re-accreditation following the steps listed below:

1. The contractor approaches their DV with a request to be assessed for re-accreditation as a footrot contractor.
2. The contractor provides a list of clients for whom they have undertaken eradication programs in the previous 5 years, plus the name of the supervising veterinarian for each program.
3. The DV contacts the supervising veterinarians from the list and requests they supply a written report to verify whether interaction with the contractor (verbal and written reports) during the duration of the program has been satisfactory.

4. The DV visits the contractor in the field to observe their work and assesses their competency in the following areas:
 - a. Foot inspection technique
 - b. Record keeping system and
 - c. Physical organisation of the contractor's operation to segregate, identify and count sheep
5. The DV prepares a report detailing their assessment of the applicant's competency in the above areas and providing a recommendation for re-accreditation or otherwise in consultation with their Team Leader.
6. The DV provides the report with the recommendation for re-accreditation to the NSW Sheep Health Coordinator.
7. The NSW Sheep Health Coordinator advises the NSW Veterinary Practitioners Board of the outcome of successful applications and requests registration of the contractor.
8. The NSW Sheep Health Coordinator adds the name of the registered contractor to the list of accredited contractors on the Primefact and arranges for all relevant correspondence and reports to be filed in CM9.

Contractors seeking initial accreditation for footrot disease eradication program work

Inspecting the feet of sheep for footrot is a specialised skill learned under the supervision of an experienced person.

There is currently a very small pool of experienced footrot contractors in NSW. As experienced operators retire, it is necessary to have a process for new contractors to gain skills and be recognised as competent in footrot inspection techniques.

Contractors wishing to develop skills in footrot diagnosis should approach existing accredited contractors, as some have indicated they would be willing to help train new contractors.

There may also be opportunities to gain experience working under the direct supervision of an LLS veterinarian undertaking an approved footrot eradication plan.

Once a new applicant feels they have gathered enough experience to be competent at footrot inspection they may approach the local DV to apply for provisional accreditation following the steps listed below:

1. The contractor approaches the DV with a request to be assessed for accreditation as a footrot contractor.
2. The contractor provides details of the training and experience they have undertaken in footrot inspection. This must include property names and dates, and the name of the authorised person conducting each program, either an accredited contractor or DV.
3. The DV contacts the supervising contractors and veterinarians from the list and requests they supply a written report confirming the applicant has undergone training in footrot inspection under their supervision, and that they believe the applicant is competent to undertake inspection work unsupervised.
4. The applicant must advise the DV of their next footrot job. The DV visits the contractor in the field to observe their work and assess their competency in the following areas:
 - a) foot inspection technique;
 - b) record keeping system; and
 - c) physical organisation of the contractor's operation to segregate, identify and count sheep.

5. The DV prepares a report detailing their assessment of the applicant's competency in the above areas and providing a recommendation for provisional accreditation or otherwise. This is done in consultation with the Biosecurity Team Leader.
6. The DV provides the NSW Sheep Health Coordinator with
 - a. The report
 - b. A signed declaration recommending provisional accreditation
 - c. Proof of identify of the person applying for accreditation (to facilitate action 7)
7. The NSW Sheep Health Coordinator advises the NSW Veterinary Practitioners Board of the outcome of successful applications and requests provisional accreditation of the contractor, providing the NSW Veterinary Practitioners Board with
 - a. The signed declaration and
 - b. The proof of identity of the person applying for accreditation
8. The NSW Sheep Health Coordinator adds the name of the registered contractor to the list of accredited contractors (provisional) on the Primefact and arranges for all relevant correspondence and reports to be filed in CM9.
9. Two years after the granting of provisional accreditation, a contractor may apply for full accreditation as a footrot contractor by providing the DV with a report containing the details and outcomes of the footrot programs they have undertaken during the period of provisional accreditation. The DV will review this report and will make a recommendation for full accreditation or otherwise to the NSW Sheep Health Coordinator.
10. The NSW Sheep Health Coordinator advises the NSW Veterinary Practitioners Board of the outcome of successful applications and requests registration of the contractor.
11. The NSW Sheep Health Coordinator adds the name and number of the contractor to the list of accredited contractors on the Primefact and arranges for all relevant correspondence and reports to be filed in CM9.

Duration of accreditation

Accreditation of footrot contractors is for a period of 5 years. Contractors should apply to the DV for re-accreditation two months prior to the expiry date of their accreditation.

Revocation of accreditation

If it comes to the attention of a DV that a footrot contractor is not fulfilling their obligations as outlined on page 2 of this work instruction, the DV may recommend to the NSW Sheep Health Coordinator that the footrot contractor's accreditation is revoked. A report outlining the evidence on which the recommendation is based should be provided to the NSW Sheep Health Coordinator.

The NSW Sheep Health Coordinator will write to the contractor detailing the reasons for the proposed revocation and giving them the opportunity to show cause as to why their footrot accreditation should not be revoked by submitting a written response within 28 days of the date of the letter.

If the contractor provides a written response which satisfies the NSW Sheep Health Coordinator that their actions or omissions were reasonable in the circumstances or that the matter was beyond their control, no further action is taken other than advising the contractor of this outcome.

If the contractor provides a written response that does not satisfy the NSW Sheep Health Coordinator or does not respond in time (and has not requested and been granted a reasonable extension), the NSW Sheep Health Coordinator:

- a) advises the NSW Veterinary Practitioners Board of the recommendation to remove the contractor’s accreditation and requests that the registration of the contractor is revoked;
- b) deletes the name of the contractor from the list of accredited contractors on the Primefact;
- c) notifies the contractor in writing that their accreditation has been revoked; and
- d) arranges for all relevant correspondence and reports to be filed in CM9.

Definitions

Accredited Contractor: A livestock contractor who is approved by the NSW Veterinary Practitioners Board to undertake footrot diagnosis in an approved footrot eradication plan

DPI NSW Department of Primary Industries

DV Local Land Services District Veterinarian

Footrot Virulent footrot of sheep and goats

LLS Local Land Services

1. Mills K., McClenaghan P., Morton A., Alley D., Lievaart J., Windsor P. and Egerton J. 2012. Effect on time in quarantine of the choice of program for eradication of footrot from 196 sheep flocks in southern New South Wales. *Australian Veterinary Journal* 90: 14–19. doi: 10.1111/j.1751-0813.2011.00872.

Revision history

Version	Author	Comments	Date
2.0	Elsa Glanville (Veterinary Policy and Project Officer)	Revision of version 1.0 (INT17/188409)	21/02/2023

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