

OJD: The national Sheep Health Statement: the key to understanding OJD risk when trading sheep

Animal & Plant Biosecurity

Since it was found in Australia in 1980, ovine Johne's disease (OJD) has proven to be a costly disease. It spreads slowly, is difficult to detect early on, reduces weight gain and wool production and can kill about 10% of adult sheep each year if left unmanaged.

The national Sheep Health Statement (SHS) will replace the previous NSW SHS and animal health statements from 31 March 2008.

The new SHS provides information on the health status of restocker sheep. It is a valuable tool by which buyers can assess health risks when purchasing sheep. It will continue to help producers minimise the risk of introducing OJD onto their property.

What is a Sheep Health Statement?

The SHS is a formal document, signed by the seller, that accompanies a mob of sheep and provides a prospective buyer with relevant health information.

It gives sellers the opportunity to promote the health assurance level of their sheep.

It gives buyers the opportunity to buy wisely and reduce the risk of introducing OJD or other diseases into their flock and district.

Where has it come from?

The national SHS was produced at the request of the sheep industry, after consultation with a range of stakeholders. It will make the trading of sheep easier. The new SHS provides a nationally consistent declaration for sheep health and

encourages buyers of sheep to ask about the health status of the sheep before they buy.

What are ABC points?

The sheep industry and governments have agreed nationally to manage OJD through an assurance-based trading system.

The system uses Assurance Based Credit (ABC) points to provide information on OJD assurance or risk.

The SHS sets out the declarations that lead to these ABC points.

The SHS cannot provide a full history of the sheep that are being offered for sale. It is designed to help purchasers assess the risk of a consignment of sheep having OJD by highlighting both measures taken to reduce risk, such as vaccination; and possible sources of risk such as multiple or risky introductions to the home flock. If in doubt, ask before you buy.

What has changed?

All sections of the form are now mandatory in NSW, including the section on footrot, and a section on other health information.

Industry has requested this change to make the health statement more useful as a general biosecurity tool.

The point value for area prevalence on page 2 has been adjusted in line with the new nationally agreed prevalence areas. The other categories have stayed the same.

Producers selling restockers must photocopy the completed SHS to retain a copy for their records.



Note The national SHS **cannot** be used as a Transported Stock Statement or NLIS document.

Who has to use a Sheep Health Statement?

SHS were made mandatory in NSW from 17 January 2004 for the sale or agistment of restocker sheep, except exempt sheep. All sections must be completed accurately and signed. There are large penalties for false or misleading information.

What is an 'exempt sheep'?

- Sheep being moved to slaughter, directly or via a slaughter-only sale;
- lambs accompanied by a National Vendor Declaration on which section 7 has been filled in with the words "PRIME LAMBS FOR SLAUGHTER ONLY";
- sheep being sent or delivered to an approved Health Statement for Sheep exempt sale.

These exempt sheep do not need a SHS.

What does Section 1 tell me?

Section 1 contains information about the origin of the consignment and the description and identity details of the sheep.

What does Section 2 tell me?

In the new SHS the OJD information is summarised in section 2 of the form. The points table for calculating the ABC score is now on page two of the form, next to the explanatory notes. The points table is divided into four categories, A-D.

Section 2 also indicates the movement history of the consignment sheep. If the sheep are not home bred they may have come from a higher risk area. Ask the seller more questions before you buy.

Section 2 provides information about introductions into the flock from which the sheep have been consigned. Remember, in general, the more sheep introduced and the lower their ABC scores the higher the risk of introducing OJD.

Lastly Section 2 tells you whether or not the consigned sheep originate from an accredited Australian Johne's disease Market Assurance Program for Sheep (SheepMAP) flock. SheepMAP is designed to provide the highest possible level of OJD assurance.

How do the ABC points correlate to the risk of OJD?

Each point correlates approximately to a four fold differential in risk.

What does Category A tell me?

Category A gives information about the flock from which the sheep have been consigned. It allocates 'credits' for the sheep, based on the prevalence of infection in the area around the flock, and whether the flock is known, or suspected, of being infected.

Area prevalence indicates the likelihood that the sheep may have been exposed through neighbour contact or local movements. If the area has a high prevalence of infection the likelihood of exposure is high and no credits are allocated. As the area prevalence decreases, so does the likelihood of exposure through local contact, so the number of credits increases (up to 4 points for sheep from a low prevalence area).

Flocks that are known or suspected of being infected gain no credits under Category A, but can gain credits under Categories B, C, and D for activities undertaken to reduce risk and increase assurance.

How do I know what prevalence area my flock is in?

You can get the information from your local Rural Lands Protection Board, any NSW Department of Primary Industries office, or www.ojdinfo.nsw.gov.au

What does Category B tell me?

Category B offers information about flock testing.

Credits are allocated for different levels and types of testing, and for participation in the SheepMAP.

Tests that gain credits for negative results include pooled faecal culture, and abattoir inspection of 700 sheep or 200 adult sheep that are representative of the flock.

SheepMAP is a voluntary program designed to minimise the risk of participating flocks being, or becoming, infected with OJD. The program is based on a combination of vaccination, testing, and biosecurity. Credits increase according to the level gained in the program.

One credit point can also be allocated to an infected flock if the owner can demonstrate that the level of infection is very low in accordance with agreed National Guidelines.

What does Category C tell me?

Category C offers information about the level of vaccination in both the flock and the consignment sheep. Any flock in NSW can vaccinate against OJD. The vaccine is a killed vaccine that cannot

cause OJD infection. It is given as a single 1 mL dose for life.

The vaccine works by stimulating the animal's immune system, which means that if a vaccinated animal is exposed to infection, it is far less likely to get sick and die and most vaccinated animals will shed significantly fewer bacteria in the dung.

If sheep are vaccinated before 16 weeks of age or certified as being vaccinated before exposure to the OJD bacteria, they are classified as 'approved vaccinates', and approved vaccination is a very effective form of insurance against OJD.

Essentially, the more approved vaccinates in a flock the better, so additional points are allocated for whole flock vaccination and second generation vaccinates.

What does Category D tell me?

Category D refers specifically to consignment sheep that are sourced from an OJD infected or suspect flock. This category allocates one credit when an approved SheepMAP vet certifies that the consignment sheep are low risk. This certification is based on risk assessment and the implementation of an approved program in the flock to reduce the overall level of infection and risk.

What other questions should I ask the seller about OJD?

A SHS gives valuable information about the OJD situation in a flock, any measures undertaken to reduce risk or increase assurance, and whether there are other relevant questions you should ask, such as about introductions.

However, the SHS cannot give a full history. Further inquiries about flock history and OJD management are always going to be of value. Remember also that OJD readily spreads across boundary fences, so questions about the situation on neighbouring properties may be relevant.

If the consignment sheep were not bred on the property from which they were consigned, you need to check carefully on their history to understand any risk they may pose.

The more you know about the consignment sheep, the better you are able to determine whether or not they are a good investment, not just for you, but also for your neighbours and your local district.

What does Section 3 tell me?

Section 3 provides valuable information about footrot. You can help to protect your flock from footrot by only purchasing or agisting sheep from

vendors who have answered 'YES' to questions 7, 8 and 9 in this section.

What does section 4 tell me?

Section 4 is designed to provide general information about the health status of the consigned sheep. It includes information about:

- flock accreditation for freedom from ovine brucellosis,
- a declaration about evidence of lice in the flock of origin,
- recent treatments for external or internal parasites,
- recent vaccinations,
- any other relevant health information.

How do I know if my flock is infected with OJD?

Your flock is infected if, for example:

- it tests positive on the Pooled Faecal Culture (PFC) dung test, or
- animals in the flock are diagnosed as infected by post-mortem and laboratory tests of tissues or dung.

How do I know if my flock is suspected of being infected with OJD?

Your flock is suspected of being infected if, for example:

- it contains animals which came from an infected flock, or
- animals from the flock are found to be infected on another property within 12 months of moving there, or
- animals from the flock are found in the abattoir to be infected, or
- a veterinarian or a laboratory has reported that your flock is likely to be infected, or
- animals from the flock have been grazing on infected land, or
- there are animals over 12 months of age in the flock which have symptoms suggestive of OJD, such as scouring, ill-thrift and deaths, and no other cause has been identified.

Your flock could also be suspected of being infected if it is next door to an infected flock, especially if the neighbouring flock has been infected for some time. In this circumstance your flock is very much at risk of being exposed to infection, and veterinary advice should be sought.

What's in it for me?

The SHS provides a means for restocker sellers to promote the sheep with a high level of OJD assurance.

The Statement also provides a means for restocker buyers to minimise risk.

I'm selling sheep soon – where can I get a Sheep Health Statement to fill in?

- You can download the form electronically from: www.ojdinfo.nsw.gov.au, or
- ask your agent for a copy, or
- ask at your Rural Lands Protection Board office.

For more information go to www.ojdinfo.nsw.gov.au

© State of New South Wales through NSW Department of Primary Industries 2008. You may copy, distribute and otherwise freely deal with this publication for any purpose, provided that you attribute NSW Department of Primary Industries as the owner.

ISSN 1832-6668

Replaces OJD Information Sheets 5 and 8

Check for updates of this Primefact at:

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/primefacts

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.

Job number 8648

HOW TO CALCULATE YOUR ABC SCORE

OJD ASSURANCE BASED CREDIT (ABC) POINTS

Select only one line from each category that is applicable to your sheep, then add for total score

CATEGORY A: Flock of origin – Location / Description The Flock is located in:	Possible Credits	Credits for this consignment
A Low Prevalence Area and is not suspected or known to be infected	4	
A Medium Prevalence Area and is not suspected or known to be infected	2	
A High Prevalence Area and is not suspected or known to be infected	0	
Any Area and is suspected or known to be infected	0	

CATEGORY B: OJD Testing

The Flock is:

In the SheepMAP and has had 3 negative sample tests	SheepMAP Status	Possible Credits	Credits for this consignment
In the SheepMAP and has had 2 negative sample tests	MN: Expiry date: / /	3	
In the SheepMAP and has had 1 negative sample tests		2	
Not in the SheepMAP but has had a negative PFC 350 test in the last 12 months		2	
Not in the SheepMAP but is eligible for Abattoir 700 status		2	
Not in the SheepMAP but is eligible for Abattoir 200 status		1	
A test low level infected flock		1	
None of the above		0	

CATEGORY C: OJD Vaccination

The flock is a second generation approved vaccinate flock	Possible Credits	Credits for this consignment
The consignment sheep are approved vaccinates and were born when the whole flock were approved vaccinates	3	
The whole flock are approved vaccinates	2	
The consignment sheep are approved vaccinates	1	
None of the above	0	

CATEGORY D: Consignment Sheep – Risk Assessment

The consignment sheep are:

Sourced from a flock infected or suspected to be infected but are certified low-risk by a SheepMAP approved veterinarian	Possible Credits	Credits for this consignment
None of the above	0	

TOTAL ABC SCORE FOR THIS CONSIGNMENT OF SHEEP

(CATEGORY A + B + C + D)

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Flock of origin – flock from which sheep are being consigned.

Prevalence area – three prevalence areas are defined: Low, Medium and High. These have been agreed nationally and are reviewed annually. Details are available from Animal Health Australia or www.ojd.com.au

Infected flocks – flocks are no longer regarded as infected when either: (1) the whole flock consists of approved vaccinates and has undertaken a PFC 350 test, with negative results, at a minimum of 2 years after the last detected infected animal has been removed; OR (2) the whole flock is a second generation approved vaccinate flock which has undertaken a PFC 350 test, with negative results; OR (3) a destocking/ decontamination program approved by the CVO of the jurisdiction, has been completed.

Flock suspected to be infected – if the owner has reasonable grounds to believe the flock has been exposed to OJD infection based on: (1) trace back or trace forward contact with an infected flock; (2) contact with OJD contaminated land or facilities; (3) a positive Johne's disease screening test; (4) the flock neighbours an infected flock; (5) the flock has introduced sheep with an ABC score of 0; (6) clinical signs of OJD; OR (7) advice from the relevant state agricultural department AND the flock has not resolved suspicion.

SheepMAP flocks – the number of Sample Tests applies to the actual number of negative Sample Tests that contributed to attaining the current flock status.

Sample Test – test of a sample of a flock, in accordance with the Sheep Market Assurance Program (SheepMap) guidelines, which is undertaken within the flock's current SheepMAP program.


SheepMAP approved veterinarian – you can search for SheepMAP vets in your area at www.ojd.com.au

PFC 350 test – test of 350 representative sheep over 2 years of age (or all sheep over 2 years of age in small flocks) by Pooled Faecal Culture in pools of up to 50 sheep.

Eligible for Abattoir 700 status – 700 representative sheep over 2 years of age have been submitted to an abattoir in the past 24 months with at least 500 sheep, in 1 or more lots, being examined and found negative for OJD.


Eligible for Abattoir 200 status - 200 representative sheep over 2 years of age have been submitted to an abattoir in the past 12 months with at least 150 sheep, in 1 or more lots, being examined and found negative for OJD.

Tested low level Infected flock – an infected flock which has a history supporting a low level of infection, an approved Property Disease Management Plan (PDMP) in place, and a flock profile demonstrating a detection rate of not more than 1 in 7 pools by Pooled Faecal Culture (PFC) within the previous 2 years. Sheep mobs that contributed to the positive pool are not eligible for this point.

Approved vaccinates – sheep vaccinated by 16 weeks of age or sheep vaccinated after 16 weeks of age where, in the written opinion of a SheepMAP approved veterinarian, vaccination occurred when there was a low risk of previous exposure to OJD (and identified by an NLIS  tag).

Second generation approved vaccinate flock – a flock comprising entirely approved vaccinates which were born when the whole flock were approved vaccinates.

Certified low risk sheep – sheep which are sourced from a flock that is infected or suspected to be infected and which are certified in writing as low risk by a SheepMAP approved veterinarian on the basis of: (1) a risk assessment, and (2) an approved Property Disease Management Plan (PDMP) that includes profiling and strategic culling, being implemented in the flock. Other strategies such as vaccination of sheep which are unlikely to have been heavily exposed, may also be appropriate.

Terminal 'T' tag lambs – crossbred lambs to be slaughtered before they cut their first permanent teeth and identified by an NLIS .

Although vendors of non-slaughter sheep are encouraged to complete all sections of the Sheep Health