

OJD: The national Sheep Health Statement

July 2013 Primefact 940 Second edition
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The national Sheep Health Statement is the key to understanding OJD risk when trading sheep.

Since it was first diagnosed 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 up to 10% of adult sheep each year if left unmanaged.

What is the national Sheep Health Statement (SHS)?

The SHS is a formal document, signed by the seller. It accompanies a mob of sheep and provides a prospective buyer with relevant health information on OJD, footrot, ovine brucellosis, lice and information about treatments that the sheep may have received, e.g. drenches and vaccinations.

It is a valuable biosecurity tool which:

- gives sellers the opportunity to promote the health assurance of their sheep, and
- allows buyers to assess health risks and buy wisely so that they can minimise the risk of introducing OJD or other diseases into their flock and district.

The SHS cannot provide a full history of the sheep that are being offered for sale. The SHS can help purchasers assess the risk of a consignment of sheep having OJD by highlighting:

- measures taken to reduce risk (such as vaccination),
- measures taken to assess risk (such as testing), and
- possible sources of risk such as multiple or risky introductions to the home flock.

If in doubt, ask for more information before you buy.

Where has it come from?

The national SHS was produced at the request of the sheep industry. Its purpose is to make sheep trading easier and less risky by providing a nationally consistent declaration for sheep health. It was developed after consultation with a range of stakeholders.

The SHS Form

The use of the SHS for sheep movements within NSW is voluntary from 1 July 2013.

The SHS is an approved vendor declaration for footrot in NSW and must accompany all sheep entering NSW.

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

Under fair trading legislation producers have a duty of care to complete statements accurately. False declarations could leave a seller liable to legal action. There are also heavy penalties under stock diseases legislation for providing false or misleading information.

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

Your flock is infected if, for example:

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

Detailed information can be found in the Standard Definitions Guidelines and Rules document available at www.ojd.com.au

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 does Section A tell me?

Section A provides biosecurity information about the property the consigned sheep have come from, including whether the consigned sheep were bred on the consignment property, does the property have a biosecurity plan and how sheep are introduced to the consignment property.

What does Section B tell me?

Section B contains information about the footrot, lice and ovine brucellosis status of the flock of origin of the consigned sheep.

What does Section C tell me?

Section C offers information about the OJD risk of the consignment sheep.

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 biosecurity, testing, and vaccination. Assurance increases according to the level gained in the program.

Tests that gain credits for negative results include Faecal 350, and abattoir inspection of 500 sheep or 150 adult sheep that are representative of the flock. The results of these tests are valid for a period of 24 months for assurance purposes.

OJD vaccination works by stimulating the animal's immune system, which means that if a vaccinated animal is exposed to OJD 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'. This provides good protection against OJD.

Essentially, the more approved vaccinates in a flock the better, so greater assurance is provided by ongoing whole flock vaccination.

What does Section D tell me?

Section D allows recording of any treatments given to the consignment sheep. This includes drenches, vaccines and fly/lice treatments.

What does Section E tell me?

Section E allows the vendor to record additional information about the consignment sheep not covered in the previous sections. This could include

- Historical test results or previous prevalence area for OJD prior to 1 July 2013.
- Worm resistance test results
- Sources of introduced sheep
- Blood line, micron etc

What other questions should I ask the seller about OJD?

As the SHS cannot give a full history it is valuable to make further inquiries about flock history and OJD management.

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.

Section F

Section F is the declaration that the information provided on the statement is true and correct.

Persons completing a sheep health statement should ensure that they hold all documentation required to support any assurance claims made on the statement.

Making a false declaration may render you liable to legal action.

What's in it for me?

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

The Statement provides a means for prospective buyers of restocker sheep to assess the biosecurity risk a line of sheep represents to their own flock.

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

- You can download the form electronically from: www.ojd.com.au or
- ask your agent for a copy, or
- ask your [Local Land Services](#)

Further information

For more information go to www.ojd.com.au

Acknowledgments

Primefact 940 First Edition

For updates go to www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/factsheets

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Published by the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

TRIM INT13/9079