

## Virulent Footrot – your general biosecurity duty when disease is suspected or confirmed

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Animal Biosecurity and Welfare, NSW DPI

### Virulent footrot and the general biosecurity duty

#### What does 'general biosecurity duty' mean?

Community members are not expected to be biosecurity experts, but there is the responsibility for all of us to consider how our actions, or in some cases our lack of action could have a negative impact on another person, business enterprise, animal or the environment; and take all reasonable and practical measures to prevent, eliminate or minimise the impact.

People are expected to have a basic level of knowledge about risks they might encounter in their normal work and recreational activities. For example, sheep producers should know that lameness in sheep could be a sign of footrot and this should be reported to a Local Land Services (LLS) district veterinarian for investigation and advice. See the [Primefact 1527: The general biosecurity duty and sheep producers](#) for more information.

#### How is the general biosecurity duty enforced?

When a significant biosecurity risk is identified by an authorised officer under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* (the Act), they will contact you personally and:

- explain your general biosecurity duty in relation to this specific risk
- provide you with written advice.

A person who fails to discharge their general biosecurity duty is guilty of an offence under Section 23 of the Act. The maximum penalty for an individual is \$1,100,000. The maximum penalty for a corporation is \$2,200,000.

#### What is virulent footrot?

Footrot is an important disease of sheep which occurs world-wide. Under ideal conditions it can cause severe disease in sheep resulting in major welfare and productivity impacts. Footrot is easily spread between sheep when weather conditions are suitable.

Footrot is a notifiable disease and is regulated in NSW. Flocks infected with virulent footrot must complete an approved footrot eradication program under the supervision of a government veterinarian.

Detailed information about footrot can be found in the Primefact: [Footrot in Sheep and Goats](#)

#### How do I fulfil my general biosecurity duty for virulent footrot?

You have been given this leaflet because an authorised officer has a reasonable suspicion that your sheep or goats are infected with virulent footrot.

To discharge your general biosecurity duty, the owner/occupier can give a biosecurity undertaking to an authorised officer which will set out the details of your responsibilities with regard to virulent footrot. The biosecurity undertaking will specify the actions required to eradicate the disease infection and discharge your general biosecurity duty. This includes taking the following actions:

##### 1. Prevent any of your sheep and goats from straying off your land

Because footrot is easily spread between sheep and goats you must take all reasonable steps to ensure that your sheep and or goats do not stray from your property.

**2. Present sheep and goats for inspection as required by the authorised officer**

You must cooperate with the authorised officers by presenting sheep and goats for inspection as requested. Due to the nature of the disease, multiple inspections of each mob in the flock may be required to confirm the diagnosis of footrot. Sometimes inspection must be delayed until after warm, wet weather to be sure that virulent footrot is not present in your stock.

**3. Assist the authorised officer to investigate the source of the infection**

You must provide the authorised officer with movement and purchase records for your sheep and goats for the past two years or as requested by the authorised officer.

**4. Agree for the authorised officer to notify your neighbours due to the significant biosecurity risk to their stock**

Neighbours must be informed so they can check their own sheep and goats for lameness, and prevent their livestock from straying. They will be told by the authorised officer that they cannot share this information with other people – it is only being provided so that they can protect their own livestock.

**Other advice**

Many people are shocked when footrot is diagnosed in their livestock and it may take a few days for you to be able to think clearly about how this will impact your business and how to move forward.

Your LLS district veterinarian will be happy to answer any questions you have about the disease and how to approach eradicating it from your stock. [Contact your local LLS office](#) for advice.

Sometimes footrot is discovered at the same time that other stressful events are happening either at a personal level or within the wider community, such as floods, drought etc. LLS staff can arrange referral to rural support services if you would like to talk things over with somebody.

**More information**

For information on the *Biosecurity Act 2015* see the NSW DPI web page: [Biosecurity legislation: key terms and definitions](#) .

For more information on the general biosecurity duty, see the [Factsheet: General Biosecurity Duty](#)

For updates go to [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/factsheets](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/factsheets)

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