



BIOSECURITY ACT 2015

Discussion Paper: Footrot in Sheep and Goats

December 2015



Photo: © NSW Department of Primary Industries

Submissions on this Paper close on 12 February 2016

Email your submission to: submissions.biosecuritylegislation@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Post your submission to:
Biosecurity Bill 2015
NSW Department of Primary Industries
Locked Bag 21
Orange NSW 2800

Published December 2015

For more information

See: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurityact

Email: submissions.biosecuritylegislation@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Ref: INT15/110886

© State of New South Wales through the Department of Industry, Skills and Regional Development, 2015. You may copy, distribute and otherwise freely deal with this publication for any purpose, provided that you attribute the NSW Department of Primary Industries as the owner.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (December 2015). 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 the Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

Summary

The *Biosecurity Act 2015* will repeal the *Stock Diseases Act 1923*, which currently includes various regulatory controls and powers with respect to footrot in sheep and goats.

Having considered existing management arrangements and risks associated with footrot, it is proposed to implement similar management arrangements under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* (the Act). Specifically it is proposed that footrot will be managed under the **General Biosecurity Duty (GBD)**, with supporting **mandatory measures** that will be prescribed in the regulations.

Background Information

What is the problem?

Footrot may be benign or virulent. It is caused by bacteria and spreads readily amongst sheep and goats in moist conditions. During dry times infected sheep and goats can remain carriers of infection.

With full expression, virulent footrot is a severe, debilitating disease with significant economic loss from reduced wool growth and quality, poor ewe fertility, poor growth rates, losses from blowfly strike, and reduced stock value.

NSW is currently declared a Protected Area for footrot in sheep and goats, with less than 1% of flocks infected with virulent footrot. Surveillance data and the Protected Area status provide a high level of assurance to purchasers of NSW sheep and goats that they are footrot free.

However, footrot is still a significant problem in other jurisdictions. Changes in the way sheep and goats are sold (for example, increasing online sales) and the regular movement of sheep and goats into NSW brings the constant risk that footrot may be inadvertently introduced.

Why is it important?

Virulent footrot is one of the most economically significant diseases of sheep and goats worldwide, affecting productivity and market access. It has major impacts on the animal's health, as well as serious welfare impacts.

What is the outcome we are seeking?

The desired outcome is to maintain the prevalence of virulent footrot in NSW below 1% by maintaining management arrangements that respond quickly to detections of footrot and support effective surveillance activities.

Current management arrangements

Footrot is declared to be a disease for the purposes of the *Stock Diseases Act 1923*. This places a legal obligation on occupiers of land, owners of stock, persons in charge of travelling stock, veterinarians and other persons consulted about stock, to notify an inspector within 48 hours of first becoming aware that any sheep or goats are infected or suspected to be infected with virulent footrot.

The *Stock Diseases Act 1923* also includes various offences for the sale and movement of footrot infected stock and for the wilful communication of footrot to stock.

Other specific regulatory controls and powers for footrot include prohibitions on:

- vaccination for footrot unless approved by Chief Veterinary Officer; and
- movement of sheep and goats into NSW if they are from or have moved through Victoria or Tasmania unless they are:

- declared flock free of virulent footrot and a completed signed National Sheep or Goat Health Statement has been given to the NSW recipient,
- to be transported in a vehicle directly to an abattoir for slaughter or to a slaughter only sale, or
- to be transported in a vehicle directly to an approved feedlot ¹.

When footrot is suspected or detected in a flock, it is the policy of DPI/LLS to work co-operatively with affected landholders. In most cases an inspector (on behalf of the Minister) will accept a voluntary 'undertaking' from the owner or occupier of the relevant land that includes various conditions that must be followed to eradicate footrot. Other regulatory measures can be used if a voluntary undertaking is not given or where there is non-compliance with an eradication plan.

When moving, buying or agisting sheep and goats in NSW, producers are strongly encouraged to ask for a National Sheep/Goat Health Statement. This statement is voluntary for movements within NSW, but once completed and signed it is a legal vendor declaration and can be the subject of civil action between parties to the transaction, for example if it contains misleading and deceptive information.

Proposed Management under the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015

The Biosecurity Act introduces the concept of shared responsibility via the inclusion of a **General Biosecurity Duty (GBD)**. The GBD requires any person dealing with biosecurity matter or a carrier of biosecurity matter and who knows or ought to know of the biosecurity risks associated with that activity to take measures to prevent, minimise or eliminate the risk as far as is reasonably practicable.

It is proposed that the risk of footrot in NSW will be managed under the **General Biosecurity Duty (GBD)** with supporting **mandatory measures** that will be prescribed in the regulations.

The proposed mandatory measures, akin to current arrangements, are:

- require persons to notify suspected or known footrot in sheep or goats;
- prohibit sheep and goat movements within NSW if they are suspected or known to be infected with footrot;
- prohibit the vaccination of sheep or goats for footrot unless authorised by the Chief Veterinary Officer; and
- prohibit sheep and goat movements into NSW if they are from or have moved through Victoria or Tasmania unless they are:
 - declared flock free of virulent footrot and a completed signed National Sheep or Goat Health Statement has been given to the NSW recipient;
 - to be transported in a vehicle directly to an abattoir for slaughter or a slaughter only sale; or
 - to be transported in a vehicle directly to an approved feedlot.

Once notified of the presence or suspected presence of footrot, an Authorised Officer will be able to use their powers under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* to work with the landholder to eradicate footrot from their stock. As is the current approach, in most cases the Authorised Officer will accept a Biosecurity Undertaking from the landholder that will include a footrot eradication plan.

¹ See *Footrot Proclamation dated 6 September 2000* http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/38771/Proclamation-Footrot.pdf

Alternatively, the Authorised Officer may issue a Biosecurity Direction setting out the requirements that must be followed by the landholder.

Other regulatory measures may also be used as required, e.g. issue a permit to allow footrot infected stock to be transported from an infected property directly to an abattoir for slaughter.

In addition to the proposed mandatory measures specified above, the GBD requires that anyone who deals with sheep or goats and who knows, or ought to know, of the biosecurity risks associated with that dealing, must take measures to prevent, minimise or eliminate those risks as far as is reasonably practicable. For example, if a person suspects that their stock is infected with footrot they must take steps to minimise the risk of spread of the disease from their land. Using a National Health Statement when purchasing or agisting sheep or goats within NSW to assess the risk introducing footrot is another example of how to prevent infection.

How you can discharge your GBD may be outlined in Industry Standards, Codes of Practice, guidelines or through other advisory or education material.

What do you think?

We value your comments on how we can improve our biosecurity system and look forward to receiving your input into this important process.

Please complete the following survey on 'footrot' at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/footrot>.

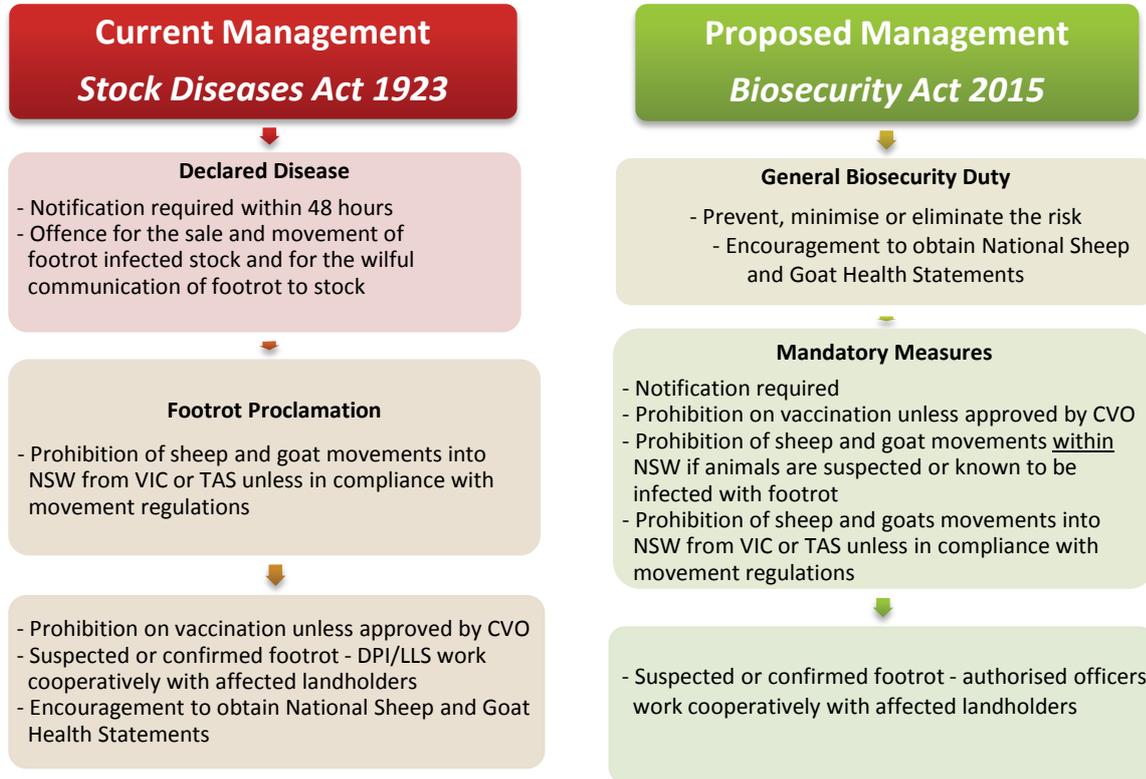
Alternatively, submit your feedback **by Friday, 12 February 2016** via [email](#) or post to:

Biosecurity Act 2015
NSW Department of Primary Industries
Locked Bag 21
Orange NSW 2800

For more information about the *Biosecurity Act 2015* and regulatory framework, please visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurityact.

Appendix 1

Summary of current and proposed management of footrot in sheep and goats



Appendix 2

NOTE: This is a *hypothetical scenario* of how an outbreak of footrot in sheep *might* be managed under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*. This scenario is provided for consultation purposes only.

