



Ovine Brucellosis Accreditation Scheme Administration Procedures

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Purpose

The purpose of this Procedure is to describe the processes for administering the Ovine Brucellosis Accreditation Scheme in NSW, consistent with the Guidelines for the Scheme approved by the NSW Chief Veterinary Officer

Procedure

This Procedure is relevant to all DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety staff involved in the management, administration and support of the Ovine Brucellosis Accreditation Scheme or who are advising producers and veterinary practitioners about the Scheme. It is also relevant to the Local Land Services District Veterinarians (DV) who may provide advice on the Scheme

Work Health and Safety

The Work Health and Safety Act 2011 places an obligation on the agency (NSW DPI) as a person conducting a business or undertaking and workers to provide a safe and healthy workplace. Safe Work Method Statements that support activities included in this procedure must be used in identifying, assessing and controlling risks. Users are reminded of the need to follow safe work practice when applying any techniques described in this procedure. This includes identifying, assessing and managing any occupational health and safety risks. Safe Work Method Statements that refer to activities included in this procedure must be used in assessing and managing risks.

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1. Introduction and Responsibilities

The Ovine Brucellosis Accreditation Scheme is a biosecurity and market assurance program administered on behalf of the sheep industries and veterinary profession by DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety.

The technical rules for obtaining and maintaining ovine brucellosis (OB) accreditation status are detailed in the *NSW Ovine Brucellosis Accreditation Scheme Guidelines* as approved from time to time by the NSW Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) and published on the DPI website (see *Further information*).

The flock owner or manager has primary responsibility for maintaining biosecurity and ensuring that sheep are not exposed to ovine brucellosis. Flocks enrolled in the Scheme are under the supervision of an approved private veterinary practitioner. The approved veterinarian is primarily responsible for on-farm risk assessment and examination and testing of rams as these are key factors in assessing the infection risk associated with a flock.

The approved veterinarian is the key link between the flock manager (their client) and the CVO and has significant responsibilities to both parties. DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety respects the veterinarian/client relationship and generally will only communicate with and through an approved veterinarian, and will only receive information relevant to the OB status of a flock from an approved or official veterinarian. It is therefore very important that the approved veterinarian communicates in a timely and open manner with both their client and DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety. DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety is not responsible for communications between approved veterinarians and their clients and, if contacted by a producer, will refer issues back to their approved veterinarian to resolve.

DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety has a supporting role in administration of the scheme as detailed in this Procedure. The Department also has a quality assessment role and may decline a veterinarian's recommendation or impose a lower status if the testing and veterinary report is not provided in time or if the information provided is incomplete or indicates a breach of the Guidelines.

1.1 MAP Administrator

The Market Assurance Program (MAP) Administrator is responsible for the administration of the Scheme by:

- Assessing applications and veterinary reports for initial and reaccreditation to ensure that all information has been provided and confirms that the flock is eligible for accreditation, clarifying information with the approved veterinarian as required.
- Processing applications, maintaining the database and other records, providing administrative advice to approved veterinarians, and generating reminder notices, correspondence, accreditation certificates and reports.
- Determining changes of status according to the Guidelines and in consultation with the approved veterinarian, referring more technical and complex issues to the State Coordinator for advice or determination.
- Maintaining lists of approved veterinarians and accredited flocks on the DPI website.

1.2 State Coordinator

The State Coordinator is the DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety veterinarian with technical responsibility for the Scheme. The State Coordinator:

- Develops and maintains the Guidelines in consultation with industry and the veterinary profession for the CVO's approval.
- Provides technical support to the MAP administrator and approved veterinarians.

2. Administrative Rules and Processes

The following rules and processes support the administration of the Scheme and are consistent with the *NSW Ovine Brucellosis Accreditation Scheme Guidelines*.

2.1 Approved veterinarians

Each flock enrolled in the OB Scheme must be supervised by an 'approved veterinarian' who is registered as a veterinary practitioner and approved by the State Coordinator to undertake MAP work. Approved veterinarians are also encouraged to attain and maintain accreditation under the Accreditation Program for Australian Veterinarians (APAV). A list of approved veterinarians is maintained on the DPI website (see *Further information*).

Veterinarians employed by DPI and LLS are not approved veterinarians and should not undertake OB accreditation work.

A veterinary report and recommendation for accreditation or a status certificate is not valid unless it is signed by an approved veterinarian. Reports and recommendations from non-approved veterinarians, even if they work in the same practice, cannot be accepted.

A veterinarian's approval may be revoked in certain circumstances following the procedures specified in the Guidelines.

2.2 Scheme entry

A flock may enter the Scheme provided all conditions have been met and all documentation is provided as specified in the Guidelines.

Provided all documentation is complete and confirms the flock's eligibility, the MAP Administrator enters the details in the state database *BYTE*, assigns the flock an initial accreditation (OB-INT) status, and generates a status certificate for the approved veterinarian's signature. A flock is not deemed to be in the Scheme until its accreditation status is recorded in *BYTE* and a certificate has been signed by the approved veterinarian.

2.3 Reaccreditation and progression of status

After initial accreditation, the flock status progresses in accordance with the Guidelines:

- Initial Accreditation (OB-INT) for 1 year (i.e. test/assessment for one year)
- Annual reaccreditation (OB-AR) for 1 years (i.e. test/assessment for one year).
- Biennial reaccreditation (OB-BR) for 6 years (i.e. test/assessment every second year for three years)
- Triennial reaccreditation (OB-TR), based on testing/assessment every third year.

2.4 Anniversary/expiry date

The anniversary date is the date on which a flock first becomes eligible for accreditation, being the last day of the month in which the second negative blood test was performed. The anniversary date does not change unless specifically requested by the approved veterinarian and approved by the MAP Administrator.

The expiry date of each status certificate corresponds with the anniversary date and remains the same irrespective of any approved extension, late veterinary report or suspended status.

For example, a flock is first accredited on 30 June 2008 and attains triennial accreditation in 2016. The expiry date for the certificate issued in that year is 30 June 2019.

2.4.1 Extensions

The approved veterinarian may apply to the MAP Administrator for an extension to complete testing. An application will be considered in the following circumstances:

- the flock has been tested by the expiry date, the accreditation fee of \$176.00 has been paid, and the veterinarian is still waiting on the test results, or
- there are unforeseen extenuating circumstances, such as a flood, fire or accident, which preclude mustering or testing the stock in time.

An extension will not be granted simply because the veterinarian or flock manager are away, or have failed for any reason to arrange review and testing in time.

An application for extension must:

- be received before the expiry date (applications for extension received after this time will not be considered or granted), and
- be in writing (email or mail), and
- provide the reason for requesting an extension, and
- state the length of time that an extension is required.

An application for a further extension may be made and considered in the following circumstances:

- there has been a provisional reactor and further testing is underway to clarify the test result, or
- an additional unforeseen extenuating circumstance has arisen.

An extension of up to 3 months may be granted by the MAP Administrator for any reasonable reason which should provide sufficient time to complete the testing and veterinary report in almost all circumstances. Any further request for an extension is referred to the State Coordinator for consideration, but longer extensions are unlikely to be granted except in the most exceptional circumstances.

Requests for extensions are normally processed within 5 working days. The approved extension is recorded in *BYTE* as an OB-EXT status by the MAP Administrator and the approved veterinarian advised of the outcome of their application for extension as soon as possible. An extension does not alter the anniversary date. If an extension is not approved, the flock status expires in accordance with these Procedures. See section 2.4.4.

2.4.2 Early testing

Testing may be carried out up to 3 months early without affecting the expiry date.

If testing is carried out more than 3 months early, the anniversary date is adjusted to reflect this new date. For example, a flock on triennial reaccreditation has an expiry date of 1 July 2015. It is tested in December 2014. The next expiry and test due date is December 2017.

2.4.3 Variation of anniversary date

A one-off application may be made by the approved veterinarian for a variation of the expiry date to allow ongoing testing to better coincide with flock management practices or other veterinary procedures. A variation of up to 3 months late or 9 months early may be approved by the MAP Administrator. The expiry date may either be brought forward or put back by the approved period of time. Once a new date is approved, all future certificates will expire on the anniversary of that date.

2.4.4 Extenuating Circumstances

Extension of up to 3 months beyond the anniversary date may be granted routinely, and in exceptional circumstances up to 12 months, being maximum time that the OB rules allow the State Coordinator to extend a status. Circumstances may include severe drought or other natural disasters.

This will only be granted if management has not changed and biosecurity as outlined in the property management plan has been maintained to the satisfaction of the approved veterinarian.

2.5 Veterinary report and recommendation

The approved veterinarian is responsible for keeping track of expiry dates and for ensuring that all testing and risk assessment is carried out in time.

The approved veterinarian must report the outcome of testing and risk assessment before the expiry date of the current status certificate, or apply for an extension.

If this is not done, the status expires in accordance with these Procedures.

Testing and risk assessment must be undertaken by the approved veterinarian every one, two or three years depending on the flock's current accreditation status. The veterinary report and recommendation for reaccreditation must be sent in writing (mail or email) to the MAP Administrator in the approved form (see *Further information*).

The MAP Administrator checks the information for completeness and consistency with the rules and contacts the approved veterinarian if necessary for clarification or additional information. Once the MAP Administrator is satisfied that the information is valid, the flock status and other information is updated on the *BYTE* database and a new certificate generated for the approved veterinarian's signature. This process should be completed within 10 working days of receipt of all paperwork including payment by the MAP Administrator. Requests for more urgent processing (e.g. for an impending sale or show) may be considered but cannot be guaranteed to be met.

Testing must be completed, the results available and the veterinary report and recommendation for reaccreditation submitted before the current certificate's expiry date. Provided this is done, the current flock status is retained for up to a month to allow time for the report to be assessed, the database updated, a new status certificate issued, and the website updated. The flock's status is suspended one month after the expiry date.

2.6 Suspended status

The status of a flock is suspended on the recommendation of the approved veterinarian or the MAP Administrator in the circumstances detailed in the Guidelines.

The MAP Administrator may change the flock's status to suspended (OB-SP) on the *BYTE* database. The flock will not appear on the web list of accredited flocks when it is next published if the flock has a suspended status.

A person cannot promote or sell sheep as ovine brucellosis accredited while the status is suspended)

2.7 Cancelled status

The status of a flock is cancelled on the recommendation of the approved veterinarian or the MAP Administrator in the circumstances detailed in the Guidelines.

The MAP Administrator amends the flock's status to cancelled (OB-CAN) on the *BYTE* database and (except in the case of voluntary withdrawal) sends a letter to the approved veterinarian for the flock owner/manager advising that the flock's accreditation has been cancelled and the reason why. The flock will not appear on the web list of accredited flocks when it is next published if the flock has a cancelled status.

A person cannot promote or sell sheep as ovine brucellosis accredited if the accreditation has been cancelled

One of the grounds for cancellation is that a valid veterinary report and recommendation for reaccreditation with payment is not received within 2 months of the expiry date, without prior arrangements having been made for an extension. If the report is subsequently received between 2 and 12 months after the expiry date, the flock may re-enter the scheme with a reaccreditation status one level lower, i.e. Triennial as Biennial, Biennial as Annual, and Annual as Initial. The initial accreditation fee may be charged. The flock may then progress as for any other flock of this status. The anniversary date remains unchanged.

For example:

- If a flock drops from Triennial to Biennial, then in two years' time it may progress back to Triennial.
- If it drops from Biennial to Annual, then in one year's time it may progress back to Biennial, then in 6 years' time to Triennial.
- If it drops from Annual to Initial accreditation, then in one year's time it may progress to Annual, then in another year to Biennial, then in 6 years to Triennial.
- If a flock is still on Initial accreditation, then it stays on Initial for another year (as though it had to re-join), then to Annual, Biennial and Triennial as above.

If a veterinary report/recommendation is received more than 12 months after the expiry date, the flock may only re-join the scheme on payment of the initial accreditation fee and with an initial accreditation (OB-INT) status. The flock may progress from OB-INT status in the same manner and timeframe as any other new flock. The anniversary date will be the date on which the flock became eligible for the new accreditation.

2.8 Infected status

The approved veterinarian, District Veterinarian or State Coordinator must promptly inform the MAP Administrator as soon as they become aware that OB is confirmed in an accredited flock.

On receiving this advice, the MAP Administrator promptly:

- Changes the flock status to cancelled (OB-CAN) on the *BYTE* database.
- Sends a standard letter to the producer and approved veterinarian, advising them that their OB accreditation has been cancelled.
- Removes the flock from the list of accredited flocks and updates the list on the DPI website.

2.9 Certificates

Status certificates are provided by DPI Biosecurity and Food Safety based on the information provided by the approved veterinarian. Providing a status certificate does not infer that DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety endorses the veterinarian's actions or recommendations regarding flock status.

Status certificates are automatically generated and mailed to the approved veterinarian for their verification and signature. If any details are incorrect, the veterinarian advises the MAP Administrator who makes the changes and sends a revised certificate. The veterinarian sends the signed copy to their client and retains a copy for their records.

Only certificates generated by DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety are considered to be valid status certificates. Veterinarians must not modify a certificate or make up their own certificates.

Each flock in the scheme will receive a certificate number, generated by *BYTE*. The certificate number remains the same each year for the duration of the flock's accreditation.

2.10 Laboratory reports

Copies of laboratory reports for testing carried out at the DPI laboratory are routinely provided to District Veterinarians (so they can maintain an overview of OB in their district for surveillance purposes) and to the MAP Administrator.

The approved veterinarian is responsible for interpreting test results and determining OB status accordingly. The receipt of a laboratory report alone does not authorise the MAP Administrator or other staff to determine OB status or provide an extension, nor absolve the veterinarian of their responsibility to provide a veterinary report and recommendation in a timely manner.

2.11 Change of ownership, property or veterinarian

If a property is sold with an OB accredited flock, or an accredited flock is moved to a different property (whether in the same or different ownership) and the owners wish to maintain OB accreditation, they must enter into a new agreement with an approved veterinarian who conducts a risk assessment and review. If the veterinarian is satisfied that the flock and owner continue to meet all of the requirements of the accreditation scheme, the veterinarian sends a copy of the new owner agreement and veterinary report and recommendation for accreditation to the MAP Administrator.

If a flock owner/manager changes approved veterinarian, the parties must enter into a new owner agreement and provide a copy to the MAP Administrator.

The MAP Administrator updates the flock, owner/manager and/or approved veterinarian details on the *BYTE* database.

2.12 Fees

DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety charges an administration fee for initial accreditation and reaccreditation to cover the reasonable costs of assessing applications and reports, data entry, correspondence, provision of technical and administrative advice, and records, database and website maintenance. The current fees are approved from time to time by Director Compliance and Integrity Systems and shown on the remittance advice and DPI website. DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety may amend the fees at any time and without prior notice.

3. ADMINISTRATION

3.1 Correspondence

The following routine correspondence is sent by the MAP Administrator. The wording of this correspondence is determined by the MAP Administrator and their manager.

Nature of correspondence	Sent to
Routine reminder of expiry within the next 2 months	Approved veterinarian + flock owner/manager
Acknowledgement of notification and new status certificate	Veterinarian to sign & send to owner
Final reminder of expired status (if no response within 2 months, status is cancelled)	Approved veterinarian + flock owner/manager
Cancelled status letter	Approved veterinarian + flock owner/manager

3.2 Records

DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety maintains a database called *BYTE* with comprehensive details of all OB accredited flocks and approved veterinarians. *BYTE* is accessible to approved DPI staff state-wide through the Department's network.

The data in *BYTE* is largely dependent on data provided by approved veterinarians. Information will only be changed on request or advice from the approved veterinarian or otherwise in accordance with these Procedures, not on request from the flock owner/manager. Comments and correspondence are recorded on all key events in relation to a flock.

Hard copies of reports and other correspondence sent by or to approved veterinarians and flock owners/managers are filed by month by the MAP Administrator and retained for 7 years.

3.3 Lists of accredited flocks and veterinarians

DPI's website (see *Further information*) provides publically available lists of accredited flocks and approved veterinarians which are updated monthly. A flock is only included in the list if its current accreditation has not expired or been suspended or cancelled.

3.4 Procedural and technical advice

Information about ovine brucellosis, the accreditation scheme, guidelines, forms and other information is available from the DPI website (see *Further information*).

Requests from livestock producers to DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety for advice in relation to the OB accreditation scheme are referred to their approved veterinarian.

Approved veterinarians may contact the MAP Administrator or the State Coordinator for advice about scheme administration, rules and guidelines and resolution of status. They may also contact for reports on the current status, expiry date and other information held by DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety for any or all flocks under their supervision. The MAP Administrator should be the first point of contact for all inquiries. More complex and technical issues are referred to the State Coordinator.

3.5 Appeals

A flock owner or manager who is not satisfied with the determination of or advice provided by DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety must discuss any concerns with their approved veterinarian in the first instance, who may request a review or ruling on their behalf.

An approved veterinarian, on behalf of their client or who is otherwise not satisfied with the determination of or advice provided by DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety, may write to the State Coordinator detailing the situation and requesting a review or ruling. The State Coordinator will review the situation and make a recommendation to the CVO. The final decision on the matter is made by the CVO.

3.6 Privacy and disclosure

DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety maintains a database of personal information about people, properties and flocks which are or have been accredited under the NSW Ovine Brucellosis Accreditation Scheme. To comply with the requirements of section 10 of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*, the following privacy statement or similar is included on reminder letters and status certificates:

The NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) collects and holds personal information about livestock producers and veterinarians for the purposes of administration of the NSW Ovine Brucellosis Accreditation Scheme. The supply of information is voluntary, however without it NSW DPI may not be able to accept the participation of a person in the Scheme. NSW DPI may provide the information to Local Land Services to facilitate disease control, and publishes lists of accredited flocks and approved veterinarians on its website to promote the Scheme and facilitate trade in accredited stock. A producer or their veterinarian may access and correct their personal information by contacting the NSW DPI MAP Administrator.

An approved veterinarian may at any time request and obtain from the MAP Administrator a report summarising the current status of all flocks under their supervision, or detailing the information held and status history for a specified flock.

The owner or manager of a flock currently or previously enrolled in the Scheme may request at any time from the MAP Administrator a copy of the information held in the database about their flock, property and themselves.

Any person may look up the status and relevant contact details for any OB accredited flock or approved veterinarian on the DPI website.

DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

APAV	Accreditation Program for Australian Veterinarians
Approved veterinarian	A registered veterinary practitioner who is approved by the NSW CVO to undertake OB accreditation work
CVO	The person appointed as the NSW Chief Veterinary Officer, a Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer, or a delegate of the CVO
LLS	Local Land Services
OB-INT	Initial accreditation status
OB-AR	Annual reaccreditation status
OB-BR	Biennial reaccreditation status
OB-TR	Triennial reaccreditation status
OB-EXT	Extended status
OB-SP	Suspended status
OB-CAN	Cancelled status

DELEGATIONS AND APPROVALS

- The CVO's authority may be exercised by a Deputy CVO.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- NSW Ovine Brucellosis Accreditation Scheme Guidelines (PUB19/300)
- Lists of accredited flocks and approved veterinarians, accreditation forms and fees
www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/sheep/health/ovine-brucellosis/ovine-brucellosis-scheme

CONTACT

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Revision history

Version	Date issued	Notes	By
2.0	14/02/2020	Review and update of Version 1.0	Catherine Fraser and Julie Rose
2.1	16/03/2022	Minor amendments with change of contact details, replace StockMAP with BYTE and changes to certificate numbering process.	Amanda Walker