

Don't be fleeced: when you next buy sheep!



The National Sheep Health Statement is now available to make the trading of sheep even easier and will help you understand the health status of sheep you plan to buy.

When you **BUY** you should ask for the statement before you purchase.

When you **SELL** you should declare the status of your sheep.

Improving the health and productivity of sheep in Australia

There are a number of endemic diseases in Australia that impact the health of sheep, causing lost production for the sheep industries and significant losses to farmers. Conditions such as Johne's disease, footrot and ovine brucellosis are well established in some regions and can have a serious effect on your flock if you unintentionally purchase infected sheep.

These conditions have been in Australia for many years and they continue to spread as a result of purchases and sheep movements where owners and buyers can't get the right information to manage the risk.

Biosecurity tip:

Diseases are often spread through animal and people movements. Managing common farm diseases involves carefully managing who and what comes onto your property, and understanding the risks associated with each stock and vehicle movement.

To help you make better buying decisions, the sheep industries, governments and agents have agreed on a National Sheep Health Statement (SHS) that encourages potential buyers of sheep to ask about the health status of the sheep. The National SHS covers Johne's disease, footrot, ovine brucellosis and lice. For most diseases a simple yes or no answer is required, however for Johne's disease you will also need to work out your ABC score as well.

Protect your flock before you **BUY**

- Know the ABC score of your own flock as well as the sheep you intend to purchase. This enables you to assess the risk of introducing infected sheep onto your property.
- Ask for the information from the National SHS before you commit to a purchase. Poor purchasing decisions will cost you time in managing the disease and money spent on chemicals and vaccines and lower sale prices.
- Using the information contained on the National SHS is an important way of keeping disease off your farm.

When you **SELL**

- You should declare your animal health status on the National SHS to encourage prospective buyers to bid on your sheep. Surveys of sales results show buyers value animal health information.

Keep these points in mind:

- The combination of on-farm management and risk based trading is the best strategy identified by industry to minimise the impact of all these diseases nationally. Managing endemic conditions such as ovine brucellosis, footrot and OJD on-farm can lower the risk of these diseases spreading in a flock if the infection is present or inadvertently introduced.
- Endemic sheep diseases cost money through deaths and lost production as well as interfering with marketing restocker sheep.
- Vaccination is a valuable tool to help minimise disease and death.
- Producers shouldn't rely on Area Prevalence alone for determining risk. Even sheep from Low Prevalence Areas may be infected.
- Sheep from a SheepMAP flock represent a very low trading risk.

What information should I record on a Sheep Health Statement when selling sheep?

Make sure you fill in your name, property and other details and complete the sheep health declaration. The National SHS is also linked to the National Vendor Declaration (NVD) by recording the NVD serial number on the National SHS.

How do I know the Sheep Health Statement is reliable?

Under fair trading legislation every producer has a duty of care to make true declarations. False declarations could leave a seller liable to legal action. The National SHS is a legal document under state laws. They may be audited and there are penalties for false declarations.

What is the Assurance Based Credit (ABC) Score?

The Assurance Based Credit (ABC) Score continues to be the basis for determining whether the sheep offered for sale have Johne's disease or not.

The **ABC score** is determined by adding your scores for each of these categories:

- CATEGORY A.** Area and flock of Origin –
The known Johne's disease status of the flock or area in which the flock is located.
- CATEGORY B.** OJD testing history, including flock tests for the SheepMAP, as well as Abattoir 200 and Abattoir 700 testing.
- CATEGORY C.** Vaccination history.
- CATEGORY D.** Risk Assessment of consignment sheep.

The numbers of points assigned under each category is derived from a science based risk assessment. To determine your flock's ABC score add the points from the four categories.

REMEMBER, the **MORE** points a flock has, the **LOWER** the risk that these sheep will introduce OJD to your own farm.

By buying sheep with a high ABC score you can greatly reduce the risk of buying in OJD and therefore avoid the costs associated with lost production and vaccination.

Remember:

- A**sk for a National Sheep Health Statement and only consider buying the sheep if you're happy with it.
- B**uy sheep with an equal or higher ABC score than your own flock's score.
- C**heck the OJD vaccination and testing history of flocks from which you buy. Complacency costs dollars.

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