

## OJD MANAGEMENT PLAN 2012 – 2017

The current OJD Management Plan is a five year program that finishes this year. An extensive review of the plan has been undertaken and has identified changes that will be made to assist producers in improving their control and prevention strategies for OJD.

There are challenging aspects of OJD that distinguish it from many other infections. Sheep may look healthy, but be shedding high numbers of bacteria and spreading the infection. In infected flocks, OJD has a serious welfare and financial impact, as it affects growth and production. Infected sheep can waste away and die.

Infected flocks are a risk for the whole sheep industry. The bacteria causing OJD can be brought onto a property either by purchasing infected sheep, from straying sheep or spread from neighbouring infected properties. Under the right conditions the bacteria can survive in the environment for long periods.

Sound animal health and biosecurity practices have provided commercial benefits to producers in areas that have to date successfully controlled the disease. The revised arrangements will build on and recognise the achievements of these producers.

### *OBJECTIVES OF THE REVISED MANAGEMENT PLAN*

- a) To minimise the risk of infection by *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis* (Mptb) spreading to properties and regions that currently appear disease free.
- b) To reduce the financial impact and adverse animal health and welfare effects of the disease on individual flocks, and on the sheep industry as a whole.

### *TIMELINE*

The revised plan will take effect from 1 January 2013. The current arrangements including prevalence areas and the ABC scheme will be in place until then. Regional biosecurity plans can be submitted from 1 July 2012. Details on the submission process will be made available soon.

## *OPERATIONAL ASPECTS*

The program will no longer use the existing High, Medium and Low Prevalence Areas. All areas will default to Control Areas unless local and regional groups successfully apply for Protected Area status. Those regions that are currently Low Prevalence Areas and managing their OJD risk are well placed to attain protected status under the revised arrangements.

Evidence from research and past experience shows that to effectively control OJD there will be some disruption to trading patterns but the program changes are designed to minimise these and will mean better long term outcomes.

### *How the new areas will work*

All areas will default to Control Areas unless local and regional groups successfully apply for Protected Area status. Those regions that are currently in low prevalence areas and manage their OJD risk are well placed to attain protected status under the revised arrangements.

### *Protected Area*

To earn the classification of 'Protected Area' areas must demonstrate that the prevalence of OJD is low and they are actively preventing and controlling the ongoing risk of infection, either by regulatory control or by producers establishing an audited regional biosecurity plan. As a general guide, protected areas should have a 95% confidence limit for true prevalence of about 1% or less and have an effective process to deal with any new infections.

Protected area status will be based on the above guide and a regional biosecurity plan that has met the following minimum criteria:

- demonstrable producer and industry commitment to protect the OJD status of the region
- formal regional industry-government partnership to provide the regulatory framework necessary for industry to successfully manage the regional biosecurity plan
- surveillance is undertaken to detect OJD early
- incentives are implemented to encourage cooperation with surveillance and control
- minimum entry requirements to the region which align with the National Guidelines
- technical assistance is provided to suspect and infected flocks
- suspect cases are investigated
- control/eradication programs are implemented on infected properties
- high risk neighbouring flocks are investigated
- mechanism to enable tracing of high risk movements backward and forward
- Sheep Health Statement is mandated
- technical information and operational aspects of the regional biosecurity plan are actively communicated to producers, agents and advisers
- compliance is audited and performance is reported annually.

### ***Regional biosecurity plan***

A regional biosecurity plan documents the agreed actions of the farmers/producers/growers in a region to achieve and maintain Protected Area status. It will outline measures like conditions on sheep movements into the area, vaccination policy and response to disease detection.

### ***Control Area:***

A Control Area is one where the disease is well established or where there is no regional approach to preventing OJD.

Disease control and prevention in these areas will be the responsibility of individual producers, and extension messages will encourage producers to:

- undertake vaccination (when sheep are 16 weeks or younger) of all sheep which will be kept past 12 months of age
- enter into the SheepMAP as a means of demonstrating individual farm biosecurity and high assurance
- develop Property Disease Management Plans (PDMP) for infected flocks
- use abattoir surveillance information to evaluate the effectiveness of control programs
- provide a Sheep Health Statement with each lot sold and seek a Sheep Health Statement for each lot purchased as evidence of the level of risk that is being purchased (noting that industry will seek national mandating of the SHS)
- access advice on management options, including flock testing, flock profiling and grazing management.

### ***Movement controls***

Movement requirements between and within regions will be developed by a technical advisory group comprising state OJD Coordinators and national industry representatives for consideration by the relevant state Chief Veterinary Officer. Movement requirements between states have a regulatory basis and can only be determined by jurisdictions. However the national sheep industries will strongly advocate for uniform entry requirements for all Protected Areas nationally.

## ***CONTROL TOOLS***

The existing management tools available for producers to control and prevent OJD will still be available under the revised program. These tools will enable producers to monitor their disease status, and help prevent the disease becoming established or control it if it does infect their flock.

- Vaccination  
Vaccination is a useful tool to reduce the spread of the disease but is not 100% effective in reducing shedding. Critically, research shows that vaccinated sheep from infected flocks can still spread OJD. Vaccination cannot be the only tool used for OJD control.
- Abattoir monitoring for OJD  
Monitoring will occur at a number of abattoirs nationally identified to ensure broad coverage, and to ensure there is adequate sampling geographically.

There is a requirement to monitor both direct and boxed lines. Mechanisms to provide feedback to producers more effectively are being investigated.

- Individual flock testing  
Pooled faecal testing is available to provide a higher level of assurance that a flock is low risk for OJD infection.
- SheepMAP  
The SheepMAP is a valid tool for individual producers to demonstrate their flock level of assurance and represent a minimal risk of having OJD.
- Sheep Health Statement (SHS) and Assurance Based Credit (ABC) Scheme  
The current SHS and ABC Scheme are under review. Feedback has indicated they need to be simplified and made easier for buyers and sellers to understand. This process will be completed in time for the commencement of the transition period on 1 July 2012.
- Biosecurity planning  
All properties should have individual property biosecurity plan for OJD and other animal and plant diseases. Further information is available at [www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au)

Further information and outcomes from the SHS and ABC Scheme review will be provided on the OJD website ([www.ojd.com.au](http://www.ojd.com.au)) as it becomes available.

#### *PRINCIPLES OF THE REVISED MANAGEMENT PLAN*

- The national program must be robust and technically sound to be effective and to provide assurance to trading partners.
- The control and prevention of OJD is a collective responsibility that will be managed by individual producers, local, regional and state bodies and coordinated at a national level.
- State and regional OJD programs will be consistent with the national program objectives, principles, rules and guidelines.
- OJD control will necessitate some changes and restrictions to sheep movements.
- Regional and individual biosecurity plans that engage producer communities are valuable disease control tools that will be incorporated into the management of OJD wherever possible.
- Owners of infected flocks and those in contact with infected flocks have a responsibility to reduce the risk of the disease spread.
- Producers, with flocks of either unknown status or recently tested negative, whether in a Control or Protected area, must still be aware of their responsibility to control and prevent OJD spreading especially when trading sheep.
- Program activities need to be evaluated and performance measured against agreed program targets / benchmarks which must be reported periodically (at least annually).

### **Key Features of the Management Plan**

Information gathered during the review process has re-enforced the need for an ongoing management plan. To achieve the program objectives the amended national plan will:

- Ensure that there are tools available to provide information for producers to both manage the disease and to minimise the risk of disease spread.
- Develop and use National Rules and Guidelines as the agreed procedures and definitions. (These will include any changes to the ABC Scheme, Sheep Health Statement or other tools.)
- Develop and deliver a comprehensive communication strategy that identifies key messages, audiences and the responsibilities of all parties for the dissemination of accurate and timely information about the disease and progress towards objectives in each region.
- Work with research organisations to gain a better understanding of the disease, reduce knowledge gaps, improve diagnostics and improve vaccine safety, while maintaining cost-effectiveness.

**Sheepmeat Council of Australia**  
**WoolProducers Australia**

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