

OJD – do you buy or sell restocker sheep?

Animal Biosecurity Unit

Since ovine Johne's disease (OJD) was found in Australia in 1980, it has proven to be a costly disease. It spreads slowly, is difficult to detect early on, reduces weight gain and wool production and can kill about 10% of adult sheep each year if left unmanaged.

OJD often spreads through trade of infected sheep.

If you buy in sheep, don't buy OJD in with them. If you do buy it in, you not only infect your own flock, you also put your neighbours and district at risk because the disease can cross fences.

You need a lot more than a casual assurance to protect your flock.

You need written information about OJD assurance or risk in the animals you're considering buying – you'll find it on the Sheep Health Statement. (See Primefact 664 for an explanation of the Statement and a guide to understanding the information that will be provided to you on a statement the next time you purchase or agist sheep.)

How do I provide OJD information about the sheep I'm selling?

You do this by filling out a Sheep Health Statement (see Primefact 664 for an explanation). The Statement allows you to provide information about your flock and to declare, in writing, that you have undertaken positive actions such as vaccinating or testing.

The Statement outlines how to accrue Assurance Based Credit (ABC) points for each declaration up to a maximum of 10 points.

More credit points mean safer sheep.

Where do I find a Sheep Health Statement (SHS)?

- You can download the [Sheep Health Statement](http://www.ojdinfo.nsw.gov.au) form from the web or follow the links from <http://www.ojdinfo.nsw.gov.au>
- Ask your agent for a copy, or
- Ask at your Rural Lands Protection Board office.

What should I, as a buyer, do to protect my flock and my neighbours' flocks?

Always insist on a completed Sheep Health Statement before you buy.

In NSW the Statement became compulsory from 17 January 2004 for all sales and agistment of restocker sheep, except 'exempt' sheep.

Use the Assurance Based Credit (ABC) points on the Statement to assess the level of assurance for the sheep you're considering buying or agisting.

What should buyers look for on the Sheep Health Statement?

Look for sheep that have credits for some, or all, of the following:

- vaccinated as lambs or vaccinated before being exposed to the disease,
- from a flock in the Market Assurance Program (SheepMAP),
- from a flock with a good vaccination history,
- from a flock with a good testing history,
- from a flock with minimal introductions,
- from a flock in a low prevalence area.

Remember, the more ABC points the sheep have, the safer they are.

The Statement also provides important information on the history of the consigned sheep and any introduction into their flock over the past two years.



How can the Sheep Health Statement help to protect trade?

The Sheep Health Statement provides a means for sellers to promote the sheep with the best OJD assurance. It will also be the most valuable tool by which buyers can minimise risk.

See Primefact 664 *OJD – the sheep health statement* for a guide to understanding the information that you will need to provide on a Sheep Health Statement the next time you offer sheep for sale or agistment. For more information go to www.ojdinfo.nsw.gov.au

How do I know if there is much disease in my area?

The declaration in category A of section 2 of the SHS is about the prevalence of OJD in flocks in your area.

You can get this information from your local Rural Lands Protection Board, any NSW DPI office, or www.ojdinfo.nsw.gov.au

How important is vaccination with Gudair® vaccine?

Gudair® vaccine is the key tool for managing OJD. By vaccinating at lamb marking all the lambs you plan to sell as restockers, you are taking the best possible action to protect your sheep, maximise your market, and protect your clients.

Gudair also works well in older sheep as long as they are vaccinated before being exposed to OJD bacteria.

What is an 'approved vaccinate'?

An 'approved vaccinate' is:

- A lamb vaccinated before 16 weeks, or
- older sheep certified in writing by an approved SheepMAP veterinarian as being vaccinated before being exposed to the OJD bacteria.

An approved vaccinate must be identified by an NLIS V-tag.

- A list of [approved SheepMAP vets](#) is available from Animal Health Australia.

What about testing for OJD?

Testing is of most value if it is done under the Sheep Market Assurance Program (SheepMAP).

This means you have an agreement with an approved SheepMAP veterinarian to manage your flock according to the rules of the SheepMAP quality assurance program. The program is designed to help you to minimise the risk of OJD entering your flock.

You can also get a veterinarian to do a Pooled Faecal Culture test (PFC), called the dung test. This means taking dung samples from 350 sheep and having them tested at a laboratory. A negative result means it is unlikely that your flock is infected, but it is not a guarantee.

A negative abattoir inspection result also provides valuable management information. Again it means your flock is less likely to be infected, but it is not an absolute guarantee of freedom.

Further information

For more information go to www.ojdinfo.nsw.gov.au or for information on the [Sheep Health Statement](#) see Primefact no 664.

The information in this Primefact was adapted from the previous *OJD Information sheets 3 & 4* by Therese Wright, Policy Officer, Animal Biosecurity Unit.

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (May 2008). 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 New South Wales Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.

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