

WINTER 2009

# SHEEP HEALTH AND WELFARE UPDATE

WOOLPRODUCERS  
AUSTRALIA

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the autumn edition of the WoolProducers Australia (WPA) Sheep Health and Welfare Update. We hope you enjoy receiving our publication and catching up on the latest national sheep health and welfare news.



WPA is the peak national body for the wool producing industry in Australia. We are the national voice on behalf of producers, advocating their interests to the Commonwealth and industry stakeholders in Australia and abroad.

WPA develops and advocates policy, and represents the industry on issues as diverse as trade, animal health and welfare, research and development, marketing, accountability of grower funds, taxation and compulsory levies, climate change and industrial relations.

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## LIVESTOCK MOVEMENT CONTROL WORKSHOP

WoolProducers recently attended a workshop to discuss livestock movement controls in the event of an emergency animal disease outbreak. During a disease outbreak, restrictions are imposed on the movements of animals, animal products and equipment, to help prevent the spread of disease. Many will remember the movement restrictions imposed on horses and horse floats during the successful campaign to eradicate equine influenza. The impacts on those movement restrictions on horse owners, the racing and equestrian fraternities, government resources and associated businesses have been well-publicised.

Topics discussed at the workshop included:

- the effectiveness of movement controls in controlling disease
- how to minimise the impacts of movement controls on businesses, without compromising the disease eradication campaign
- the use of permits and zones to allow business to continue as much as possible during the disease control program.

At the workshop, participants considered existing emergency response plans known as the Australian Veterinary Response Plans (AUSVETPLAN) for Foot and Mouth Disease, Avian Influenza, Bluetongue and Aujeszky's disease (a disease of pigs). By working together, government and industry representatives were able to identify areas where improvements could be made to AUSVETPLAN to minimise impacts of movement restrictions while still eradicating the disease outbreak. The group generated a number of recommendations, including seeking support from Animal Health Australia for ongoing development of nationally consistent movement control plans.

The workshop was organised by the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries, Primary Industries of South Australia and the Victorian Department of Primary Industries. The workshop emphasised the importance and value of government and industry working together to find solutions to agricultural issues.

## FARM BIOSECURITY AWARDS

In 2009, a Farm Biosecurity Award, rewarding exemplary biosecurity practices in rural Australia will feature as part of the inaugural Australian Outback and Rural Awards.

The Farm Biosecurity Award is a key element of the Farm Biosecurity program, a joint initiative of Animal Health Australia (AHA) and Plant Health Australia (PHA). The program is a national communications campaign which aims to encourage producers to reduce the risk of diseases, pests and weeds on-farm.

Farm biosecurity is critical to the health and safety of Australian livestock and produce, and the Farm Biosecurity Award seeks to acknowledge good practice. The Farm Biosecurity Award will recognise people who have implemented farm biosecurity measures, have helped others to do so or who are generally recognised to be farm biosecurity champions.

The criteria are quite broad, with a strong focus on promoting interest and rewarding good practice at any level, so anyone is eligible to enter and will have a chance to win. The winner will receive \$2,000 and a trophy for their efforts in implementing or supporting effective farm biosecurity measures.

Nominations are now open and can be submitted online at [www.awardsaustralia.com](http://www.awardsaustralia.com) or you can phone 1300 735 445 for further information. The closing date for nominations is 10 July 2009.

For more information about the Farm Biosecurity program, visit [www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au).

## WILD DOG UPDATE

The National Wild Dog Management Advisory Group (NWD MAG) met in Canberra on the 25 and 26 May at the National Farmers' Federation. Canberra was the selected location for this meeting given the focus of the group and the need to have greater access to government, agency and industry leaders.

National coverage of wild dog issues has increased in recent months, including extensive coverage in rural press and a series of articles in *The Australian Farm Journal*, as well as through other media channels.

Significant developments in wild dog management have occurred in Queensland with the release of the Kenny report into Wild Dog Mitigation, with 22 recommendations including the appointment of three dedicated departmental staff.

In NSW there has been much action concerning the reduction in bait rates of 1080. Brent Finlay, chair of NWD MAG and WPA Vice President, Greg Mifsud, National Wild Dog Facilitator and representatives from NSW Farmers' Association met with Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) to discuss the possibility of reviewing the bait rate and in the interim, extending the permit for the use of increased rates of 40 baits per kilometre.

In Victoria the announcement of the possible reintroduction of pure bred dingoes caused much debate and concern amongst the livestock industry.

Recent research combined with on ground experience, reaffirms the NWD MAG's views that effective management campaigns must comprise of both individual property owners linking with neighbouring public and private landholders in a coordinated manner to combat wild dog predation. This grass roots cooperation must then be replicated at a regional and state level, with the culmination of having a coordinated national plan.

For further information please call the National Wild Dog Facilitator Greg Mifsud on 07 4688 1333

## ANTI-FLYSTRIKE CLIPS

Anti-Flystrike Clips are now commercially available from Leader Products. The clips will be supplied through trained contractors to ensure that they are applied correctly to lambs.

There are two types of clips, one designed for the tail and one for the breech. A set of four clips will cost 80 cents per head. For more information contact Leader products enquiries@leaderproducts.com.au or 03 9308 2355.

## SPOTTED ANYTHING UNUSUAL?

Australia is renowned for its robust national quarantine system, however unwanted pests and diseases can - and do - get through even the toughest systems. There is also the existing diseases and pests that cost huge amounts to control. That is why farm biosecurity is so important as it provides the next level of protection for your farm.

Enclosed with this newsletter is a quick reference, farm biosecurity information card. It includes the five key risk areas to look out for as well as the Emergency Disease Watch Hotline if you spot anything unusual on your farm. Keep the information card in a handy place; you never know when you might need to it.



## SHEEP STANDARDS

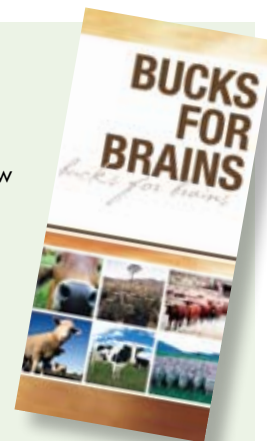
The review of the *Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – the Sheep* (the Code) is progressing well. The Standards Writing Group (the committee responsible for drafting the new standards and guidelines) met face to face on 30 April and 1 May prior to the draft going for wider consultation with industry organisations, welfare and animal rights groups as well as government at the Standards Reference Group at the end of June.

WPA plans on consulting widely with industry on the proposed standards and guidelines. For more information on the Code contact Alex at WPA on amaclennan@nff.org.au

## BUCKS FOR BRAINS!

To help Australia maintain market access for our livestock products we have a Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (also known as mad cow disease or scrapie in sheep) Freedom Assurance Program (TSEFAP).

Every year eligible sheep and cattle brains are submitted for testing for TSEs and producers receive an incentive payment of \$50 for sheep brains and \$300 for cattle. Included with this newsletter is an information flyer on the program and the signs to look out for.



## SHEEP LICE FACT SHEET

Lice is one of the top 3 endemic conditions affecting sheep in Australia. Lice cost the national sheep industry in excess of \$123 million annually through reduced wool quality and production as well as chemical usage and other preventative strategies (Holmes & Sackett, 2005).

WPA is currently preparing a lice fact sheet for district wool managers/wool brokers to distribute to wool growers before shearing. The fact sheet will focus on monitoring and treatment and most importantly, practicing good farm biosecurity to prevent a lice infestation occurring.

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

**INDUSTRY FORUM:** the Animal Health Australia Industry Forum will be held at the end of May. The Forum, which is held twice a year, brings together all the livestock members of AHA from ducks and pigs through to sheep and cattle. The meeting provides an excellent opportunity to discuss across sectoral health and welfare issues and work out ways where we can all work together for a better outcome for livestock industries.

**NATIONAL ANIMAL HEALTH INFORMATION SYSTEM:** a WPA representative will be attending the annual meeting of the National Animal Health Information System (NAHIS) Coordination Committee in June. NAHIS is a system which collects data from a wide range of government and non government programs. It provides an overview of Australia's animal health status and summary of disease surveillance and control activities. The information collected by NAHIS is essential for supporting trade in animal commodities and meeting Australia's international reporting obligations.

**SHEEP WELFARE CODE REVIEW:** the Standards Reference Group for the review of the *Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals – the Sheep* will meet in early July to discuss the first draft of the new *Australian Standards and Guidelines for the Welfare of Animals – Sheep*. This will provide an opportunity for industry representative organisations, welfare groups and government to comment on the draft.