

SHEEP HEALTH AND WELFARE UPDATE

FUNDING FOR STATE FARMER ORGANISATIONS

An important focus of our discussions with our state farmer organisation members is their sustained funding and the support needed to ensure the continuation of the important national role played by WPA.

We acknowledge that the historical funding base of state farmer organisations' has been shrinking, which in turn affects national representation. We are committed to continuing to work collaboratively with our membership, the National Farmers' Federation and other national peak commodity councils.

Revised national ovine Johne's disease (OJD) plan

WPA and the Sheepmeat Council of Australia have been developing the revised five- year national OJD plan over the past year. The revised program will feature two areas: Protected and Control (note that the current three-area system will no longer exist after 31 December, 2012).

A key feature of this plan places the onus on wool producers to prove that they are actively managing the disease – moving away from just geographical location determining their status.

In order to achieve 'protected area' status, groups of producers will be required to submit a regional biosecurity plan demonstrating that OJD prevalence is rare, or very low, and that they are taking active steps to prevent an incursion.

A transition phase will start on 1 July 2012 for six months. During this time producer groups will be able to submit their regional biosecurity plans to achieve 'protected area' status. Those producers in the current low prevalence areas or exclusion areas will be well placed to achieve protected area status. While those producers who do not submit a regional biosecurity plan will automatically become a 'control area' after 31 December 2012.

From WPA President Geoff Power

WPA has been deeply involved with numerous issues affecting wool growers, including wild dogs, ovine Johne's disease, foot and mouth disease, sheep standards and guidelines, mulesing and other areas of concern.



WILD DOGS

I am afraid these dogs are posing one of the biggest threats to the growth and sustainability of the national sheep flock and wool production. We called on the Australian Government in May to lead a national approach to help control the menace of wild dogs, and for our concerns to be raised at the Council of Australian Governments to ensure the development of a greater and nationally strategic wild dog eradication program.

We asked the Government to confirm if the \$95.9 million allocated to the 'Caring for our Country' program can be used towards a greater effort to eradicate wild dogs.

Every state and territory is suffering, throughout the NSW Great Dividing Range, Victoria's high country, South Australia's northern Flinders and several areas of Queensland and Western Australia.

Sheep farmers who are forced to switch to cattle because of dog attacks quite often are forced to deal with calf predation.

INDUSTRY LIAISON OFFICER TRAINING

WPA and the Sheep Meat Council have conducted industry liaison officer (ILO) training in every sheep-producing state over the last 18 months, as part of the sheep industry's commitment to the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA).

The sheep industry now has adequate levels of trained ILOs in all states except one. WPA and the Sheep Meat Council will hold another ILO training course in the coming months for any interested producers who were unable to attend training when it was held in their state.

All costs are covered and a sitting fee is paid to producers who do the training. To register your interest, please email Jo Hall at jhall@nff.org.au

MULESING ACCREDITATION

WPA is working with other industry organisations to endorse a national mulesing standard to be included in the Agriculture, Horticulture and Conservation and Land Management Training Package. This work will ensure both the quality and availability of best practice training and accreditation in this procedure. Watch the WPA website for further advice, or contact Jane Brownbill at jbrownbill@nff.org.au



This newsletter seeks to highlight the health and welfare of sheep - a continuing priority for WoolProducers Australia. WPA has also been particularly active leading the debate on your behalf about concerns for the future of the Information Nucleus Flock (INF), rebuilding the national flock and WoolPoll. WoolProducers Australia is the peak national body for the wool producing industry in Australia. It provides the national voice 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. Some of these issues are discussed in this newsletter.

BIG APPLE WELCOMES WOOL FIBRE

I recently visited New York with Vice President Geoff Fiskien, along with wool growers and processors from around the world, to participate in the 81st International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO) Congress on 7-9 May. The principle organiser was the American Sheep Industry Association.

The event heralded a positive future for wool, calling it one of the world's most natural and renewable fibres. The leading edge of New York fashion and lifestyle paid generous tributes to wool as a natural and renewable component of the downstream industry's sustainable agenda.



left to right Harry Prinsloo National Chairman National Woolgrowers Association South Africa, Robert Ryan Chairman Federation Australian Wool Organisation's, Geoff Kingswill Deputy Chairman National woolgrowers Association of South Africa, Geoff Fiskien Vice President Woolproducers Australia Ltd., Geoff Power President Woolproducers Australia Ltd.

FOCUS ON FOOTROT

The national sheep industry has identified footrot as an animal health and welfare issue. There are several drivers behind the need to gather information on the current methods used to diagnose, treat and prevent footrot. These include:

- » Progression of research on control and prevention in recent years
- » The requirement for commercial vaccine to use in control programs
- » An increase in footrot cases due to the wetter seasons in recent years
- » Variation in the approach to diagnostics, control and eradication between jurisdictions
- » No nationally recognised definition to differentiate between foot scald, benign footrot or virulent footrot

On 2 March WPA and the Sheep Meat Council convened a National Footrot Workshop that saw industry, jurisdictions and researchers identify and prioritise issues surrounding footrot.

The main outcomes of the workshop were that there needed to be further work done on:

- » Modernising or developing a diagnostics test
- » Vaccination research
- » Consistency and clarification of the definition of footrot to universally define benign, virulent and foot scald
- » Understanding the current prevalence of the disease across the country.

To keep in touch with these issues I urge you to check our website www.woolproducers.com.au

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

WPA attended Health Australia's Foot and Mouth Movement Controls Workshop in December 2011 with other relevant livestock industry members, to initiate discussions into the further development of movement controls for sheep, cattle, goats and camelids, and their respective commodities.

Animal Health Australia manages the continued maintenance and improvement of the AUSVETPLAN (the guidance document for the use of avian influenza) on behalf of government and industry members. AUSVETPLAN is a comprehensive framework of manuals that sets out the various roles, responsibilities and policies to be followed by all agencies in an emergency animal disease response.

AUSVETPLAN disease strategies should provide clear, consistent and comprehensive guidance on quarantine and movement controls that all authorities can use in an emergency animal disease outbreak situation. Movement control controls that are planned ahead of the outbreak provide a logical and consistent format for presenting this information.

The associated relevant commodities discussed at the workshop included:

- » Meat, carcasses and offal for human consumption (fresh/frozen)
- » Semen and embryos
- » Offal (not for human consumption)
- » By-products, hides, skins and fibre (wool, fleece)
- » Waste products and effluent

This work will be incorporated into the updated FMD (foot and mouth disease) AUSVETPLAN.

REPRESENTING WOOL GROWERS

Since my election as president in November 2011 I have undertaken to meet with each of the state farming organisation wool representatives, presidents and staff. These meetings have focused on many diverse issues. The diversity of conversation underscores the important and role that WPA plays on behalf of the Australian wool industry and the great benefits we achieve for wool growers.

WPA sits on more than 50 national committees, boards, reference groups and policy roundtables, representing the national interests of woolgrowers and ensuring woolgrowers' needs are listened to.

These representations include, but are not limited to:

- » **Australian Government**
- » Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
- » Taskforce on Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) and National Livestock Identification System (NLIS)
- » Australian Animal Welfare Strategy
- » Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)
- » Industry advisory
- » Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
- » Industry advisory
- » **Animal Health Australia**
- » Sheep Industry Health and Welfare Trust
- » Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA) signatory for wool industry
- » Sheep standards and guidelines
- » National Biosecurity roundtables
- » **Woolgrower representative**
- » Australian Wool Innovation (Industry Consultative Committee, WoolPoll, Wool Carbon Alliance)
- » Australian Wool Exchange
- » Australian Wool Testing Authority
- » Federation of Australian Wool Organisations
- » International Wool and Textile Organisation
- » **National Farmers Federation**
- » Wool Commodity member
- » National representation from state farmer organisations
- » **Cooperative Research Centres**
- » Sheep CRC – participant
- » Invasive Animals CRC - participant

Geoff Power
WPA President