

SHEEP HEALTH AND WELFARE UPDATE

WOOLPRODUCERS
AUSTRALIA

Welcome to the spring summer edition of the WoolProducers Australia (WPA) sheep health and welfare update. We hope you enjoy receiving our publication and please feel free to contact the WPA office if you have any questions on any of the stories in this edition of the newsletter.

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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EASY CARE SHEEP IN THE WARRIGO

Up until 2002, John and Mirella O'Sullivan's Merino flock had an average wrinkle score of 4.5 and mulesing and chemical use were essential for flystrike control. John felt like he had spent his life "on the end of a jetting wand" and wanted to make a significant change to produce easy care sheep.

The O'Sullivan's retained their current wrinkly ewe flock and sought Rambouillet, Merino cross rams to plain up their flock – only sheep that had been struck on the body were culled. Rambouillet rams were used for one generation then rams were sourced from Karbullah Poll Merino Stud. By the third generation the O'Sullivan's were able to cease mulesing.

When asked if there has been any major challenges since they have stopped mulesing, John replied, "not really, its been pretty easy. I focused on the long term and purchased the rams that would take me there."

"If a wool grower asked me for advice on ceasing mulesing I would advise them not to be concerned about breeding a plain bodied sheep. The key is breeding a sheep with a thin nourished skin opposed to a flat skin. By achieving this, wool production will not be compromised."

Managing flystrike has not been a major issue since the decision was made to stop mulesing lambs. The O'Sullivan's shear early February and apply Klik® to the crutch area only in early July. Lambing occurs in July/August and during marking in September/October lambs are jetted with Vetrazin® around the crutch. At the end of November all ewes are crutched and lambs are weaned. Anything with body strike is culled, which is minimal – in a wet year only four sheep were culled.

Not only do John and Mirella now have easy care sheep but wool quality and maiden ewe lambing percentage has increased. "Initially we saw a decrease in fleece weight but this has now reversed and there has been an increase on previous weights," John said. "Our ewes are cutting 6.5-7kg of wool averaging 20.5um and length is 100-110mm. The fleece is whiter and brighter and we are working towards shearing three times every two years."

"We have always had fertile ewes but our maidens lambing average was only 85%. This has now increased to 115% which we are very happy about."

The O'Sullivan's Merino ewes now average between wrinkle score 1-2 and they are now seeing bare breeched ewes (see photo). They use the National Wool Declaration when selling their wool and for the past two years have sold through The Merino Company.

The O'Sullivan's 10 000 acre property Littleton, is in the Eastern Warrigo 200km west of Goondiwindi. They run 1700 Merino ewes on improved pasture with the balance of the farm used for cropping.



Above: One of the O'Sullivan's 3 1/2 year old bare breeched ewes that successfully raised 4 lambs this year.

NEW REQUIREMENTS: NLIS MOB-BASED MOVEMENT RECORDING

The introduction of mob-based movement recording of sheep on the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) database is occurring progressively from 1 July 2010 on a state-by-state basis.

NLIS plays an important role in the identification and tracing of sheep for biosecurity, food safety, product integrity and market access purposes.

Your are responsible – know your obligations

Under NLIS (Sheep and Goats), producers are already required to know where the sheep under their management have come from and where they are going when they leave their property.

This involves:

- Approved NLIS ear tags for sheep to show where they have come from; and
- accurate transport documentation, generally a Livestock Production Assurance National Vendor Declaration and Waybill (LPA NVD/Waybill), to show where they are going.

With mob-based movement recording there is the additional requirement for producers to record movements of sheep on the NLIS database whenever sheep are moved to a property with a different Property Identification Code (PIC).

Continued overleaf

**NEW REQUIREMENTS:
NLIS MOB-BASED MOVEMENT
RECORDING**
Continued

To record a mob-based movement, the person responsible for the sheep at the property the animals are being moved to, needs to access their existing NLIS database account and record the movement within seven days of the movement taking place (in Queensland this is 48 hours).

If a producer does not already have an NLIS account they can set up a free account for each PIC. These are the same accounts as those used for cattle and producers access the NLIS database by visiting www.nlis.mla.com.au

The following information is then recorded on the database:

- The PIC the sheep came from
- The PIC the sheep were moved to
- The date of the movement
- The number of sheep
- The LPA NVD/Waybill or movement document number
- PICs from original ear tags for any non-vendor bred sheep and goats (in Western Australia, record the seller's brand on the last tag applied).

Sheep do not have to be individually scanned as is the case with cattle; rather the mob movement is recorded based on the PIC. A mob can be as few as one sheep.

Producers are urged to familiarise themselves with the mob-based movement recording process and their state's requirements. Further information can be found at www.mla.com.au/NLISSheepAndGoats



OVINE JOHNE'S DISEASE PREVALENCE AREA CHANGES FROM 1 JANUARY 2011

As of 1 January 2011 there will be changes to ovine Johne's disease (OJD) Prevalence Areas in Western Australia, Victoria and some regions of NSW.

Changes are the consequence of an increasing prevalence of OJD over the past two years in some regions, which has pushed these areas above their allocated prevalence area cut-off under the OJD Management Plan 2007 – 2012.

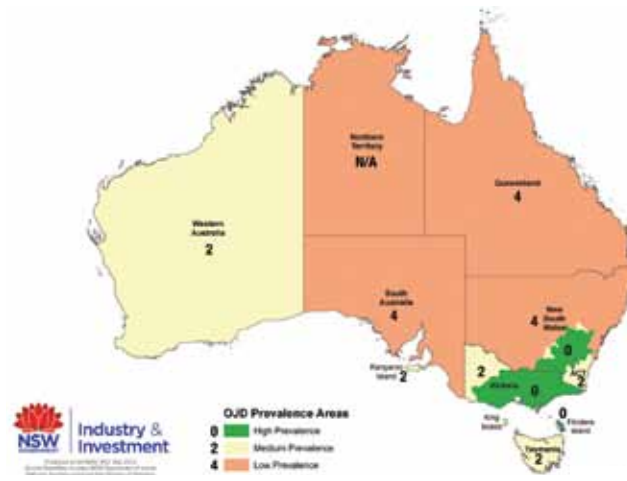
Amendments will be made to the following OJD Prevalence Areas:

- New South Wales: changes to all Medium Prevalence Area boundaries and Low Prevalence Area boundaries (refer to the Prevalence Area Map);
- Victoria: the Medium Prevalence Area will become a High Prevalence Area, and the Low Prevalence Area will change to a Medium Prevalence Area; and

- Western Australia: the Low Prevalence Area will become a Medium Prevalence Area.

There will be no changes to prevalence areas in Queensland, South Australia or Tasmania

Visit www.ojd.com.au to get up to date information on the Prevalence Area changes as well as information on gaining Assurance Based Credit Points – Sheep Health Statements are also available on this website. Additionally contact your local Department of Agriculture.



New OJD Prevalence Areas starting 1 January 2011

WOOL PRODUCER TAKES OUT BIOSECURITY HONOURS

External parasites are a pest of the past for Victorian woolgrower and 2010 *Biosecurity Farmer of the Year – animal category*, Michael Blake.

Michael has eradicated pests such as lice from his fine-wool flock and has significantly reduced the flock's internal parasite burden — largely due to best-practice biosecurity measures.

The Award, a joint initiative between Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia, was presented to Michael at a gala dinner in Sydney last night as part of the *Australian Farmer of the Year Awards*, hosted by Kondinin Group and ABC Rural.

A pioneer of on-farm biosecurity, Michael was the first to operate under 'ClipCare' and 'DalCare' and the first producer to sell sheep under 'FlockCare' accreditation.

Michael has also developed his own quality assurance (QA) and self-assessment program.

Animal Health Australia spokesperson, Duncan Rowland, said Michael was a role model for livestock biosecurity and has demonstrated the real value in pest and disease prevention.

"Michael is reaping the rewards of practices such as quarantining livestock, monitoring parasite populations, and implementing QA programs."

"Drenching is significantly reduced and drench-efficacy worm testing has resulted in a 100 per cent efficacy for every drench type."

"Biosecurity is not only saving Michael money, but his compliance with numerous QA programs has provided him with valuable access to niche international markets."

According to Michael, being named *Biosecurity Farmer of the Year* is recognition of what can be achieved through sound on-farm biosecurity measures.

"This Award showcases what can be done to protect Australia's agriculture by shaping it to be able to better adapt and respond to both environmental, and importantly, attitudinal changes in society."

"Over the years I have been dedicated to trying new and innovative, ideas, practices and processes, which I enjoy sharing with other producers. Hopefully this Award will allow me to continue to share my biosecurity experiences."

Michael Blake was also named 2010 *Wool Producer of the Year*, for more information see www.kondinin.com.au

The inaugural national *Australian Farmer of the Year Awards*, hosted by Kondinin Group and ABC Rural, are designed to promote a positive image of farmers, inspire and encourage career choices and investment interest in Australian agriculture.

