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Vaccination and abattoir monitoring – the key to protecting ongoing sheep trade

18 Dec 2009

NSW Chief Veterinary Officer, Bruce Christie, today warned sheep producers that if current rates of [Ovine Johne's disease \(OJD\)](#) infection continue, trading opportunities could be affected.

"Targeted surveillance in abattoirs has picked up increased levels of OJD infection in sheep originating in low and medium prevalence areas," Mr Christie said.

"Surveillance in 2008 uncovered an infection rate of 39.8% in medium prevalence areas, more than three times the 12.5% threshold for flocks in that area.

"In low prevalence areas where the threshold is 0.8%, the infection rate was also over the cut-off with 1.3%.

"These trends appear to be continuing in 2009 and national data indicates that OJD is also spreading to previously uninfected flocks in some other states.

"If similar results are reported again this year, areas of OJD prevalence will need to be adjusted to take into account the higher infection rates."

Mr Christie said changes to the prevalence areas would result in sheep producers in reclassified areas losing assurance based credit (ABC) points on [Sheep Health Statements](#), which could impact on their trade opportunities.

"The successful risk-based trading system now in place relies on the integrity of prevalence areas being maintained and we will make the necessary changes to ensure the system is not compromised," he said.

"Producers who may lose area trade points and depend on a minimum ABC score to sell restocker sheep should consider now how they can protect their trade."

Trading points were also available for vaccination, testing, or participation in the Sheep Market Assurance Program.

"OJD infection rates can be minimised if sheep producers take appropriate steps to stop the disease from spreading," Mr Christie said.

"All producers should ask for a [Sheep Health Statement](#) before buying stock or bringing in stock for agistment.

"They should know the ABC score of their own flock and use the [Sheep Health Statement](#) to assess the risk of introducing infected sheep.

"Vaccination is another key way to significantly reduce the risk of spreading OJD.

"One reason for increased infection rates may be that Gudair vaccine is not being used by producers in the medium prevalence area or on the border of the low prevalence area.

These producers must recognise they have a significant risk of infection due to trade with, or geographical proximity, to higher prevalence areas."

Further reading

[Ovine John's Disease \(www.ojd.com.au\)](http://www.ojd.com.au)

