

The National OJD Management Plan 2012-2017

What you need to know

Why do we need a National OJD Management Plan?

Ovine Johne's disease (OJD) is a silent but costly disease. Sheep may look healthy but shed high numbers of bacteria and spread the infection before the disease becomes apparent. In infected flocks, OJD has a serious welfare and financial impact, as it affects growth and production. Infected sheep can waste away and die.

Infected flocks are a risk for the whole sheep industry. The bacteria causing OJD can be brought onto a property either by purchasing infected sheep, from straying sheep or spread from neighbouring infected properties. Under the right conditions the bacteria can survive in the environment for long periods.

The sheep industry needs to work together to effectively control OJD.

Why are changes being made to the National OJD Management Plan?

The current OJD Management Plan finishes this year. An extensive review of the Plan has been undertaken and has identified improvements to assist producers to control and prevent OJD.

What are the changes?

The revised Management Plan gives producers greater flexibility to manage their OJD risk. Producers will now gain credit for what they are actively doing to control and prevent the disease.

The program will no longer use the existing High, Medium and Low Prevalence Areas. Initially, all areas will default to Control Areas. Some regions will be able to become a Protected Area by demonstrating that their OJD prevalence is low, and that action is being taken to effectively control the disease and prevent it from entering their region.

How will the changes affect me?

The new arrangements will build on and recognise the achievements of areas that have successfully controlled the disease. If you are currently in a low prevalence area and manage your OJD risk, you are well placed to attain protected status under the revised arrangements.

If you are in SheepMAP, your current MAP status will not be affected.

If you are in Medium and High prevalence areas you will be required to actively manage your disease risk to benefit from the new program.

A revision of the Sheep Health Statement (SHS) and ABC Scheme will be undertaken and any changes will be incorporated into the revised Plan.

What is a Control Area?

A control area is one where the disease is well established or where there is no regional approach to preventing OJD. Initially, all regions will be Control Areas. Some areas will be able to gain Protected Area status by demonstrating that their OJD prevalence is low, and that action is being taken to effectively control the disease and prevent it from entering their area.

What if I am in a Control Area?

You will need to manage your own risk, and there are a number of tools available to help. These include vaccination, flock testing, SheepMAP, grazing management and biosecurity measures such as using Sheep Health Statements when trading. Further information on the Control Areas and the tools is available on the OJD website (www.ojd.com.au).

What is a Protected Area?

A Protected Area is an area where the disease is not known to occur or is rare, and a regional biosecurity plan is in place to prevent, detect and control the disease.

How do I become part of a protected area?

Your region will need to be able to demonstrate that it has a low level of OJD and have a regional biosecurity plan in place that outlines the actions necessary to maintain that. Guidelines for developing and submitting the plan will be available shortly.

What is a regional biosecurity plan?

A regional biosecurity plan documents the agreed actions by you and other farmers in your region to get and maintain protected status and maximise your commercial advantage. It will outline measures like conditions on sheep movements into the area, vaccination policy and response to disease detection.

Can sheep be traded between the Control and Protected Areas?

Trading or moving sheep always carries an OJD risk and therefore you should always use a Sheep Health Statement to obtain the best information available.

The risk of disease spread is greater when moving animals from a control area to a protected area so there will be minimum entry requirements set.

When will the changes take effect?

The revised plan will take effect from 1 January 2013. The current arrangements including prevalence areas and the ABC scheme will be in place until then. Regional biosecurity plans can be submitted from 1 July 2012.

What should I be doing now?

All producers should:

- purchase sheep with a Sheep Health Statement identifying them as high assurance (low risk)
- maintain good on-farm biosecurity practices (www.farmbiosecurity.com.au for biosecurity tips)
- provide a Sheep Health Statement when selling sheep not for slaughter
- consider the benefits of vaccination
- start liaising with fellow producers, consultants, vets, and the state departments on preparing a Regional Biosecurity Plan
- Visit www.ojd.com.au for further information as it become available.

Producers should be aware that sheep being sourced from regions where the disease is actively spreading can have a greater chance of carrying the disease than their ABC score indicates.

Where can I find more information?

See www.ojd.com.au for further program details as they become available.