

12 June 2012

Sheep producers given 6 months to meet new OJD rules

Industry is being reminded that the six month transition period to the revised ovine Johne's disease (OJD) management plan begins on 1 July this year, while changes to the current OJD Prevalence Areas or the Assurance Based Credit (ABC) Scheme arrangements will not occur until 1 January 2013.

"The transition phase gives producers sufficient time to put strategies in place for managing the disease and to plan for future movement and trading requirements," Sheepmeat Council President Ian McColl said.

"While the current plan continues until the end of this year, we are using the transition phase to talk to producer groups around the country. An information campaign is also underway.

"We are encouraging producers to request a Sheep Health Statement when acquiring stock and to ensure that the animals they purchase have a higher ABC point score than their home flock. The new approach will have more of a focus on risk management, with the onus on individual buyers and sellers understanding and managing their risk." He said.

From 1 January 2013, there will be only two areas in Australia for ovine Johne's disease control purposes:

- Protected Areas will be located where the disease is rare and regional activities are controlling any incursions.
- Control Areas will encompass regions where the disease is well established, or continues to spread, or where there is no regional approach to preventing OJD.

Geoff Power, President of WoolProducers Australia, said strategies for disease control and prevention in a Control Area should include biosecurity planning at the individual flock and regional level.

"We strongly encourage producers in future Control Areas to vaccinate their flocks to reduce mortalities and provide protection against the disease spreading laterally," Mr Power said.

"Protected Areas will be underpinned by a group biosecurity plan. We expect these to be regions where cases are actively managed, monitoring is occurring and producers are working together to maintain the status of the area. States which have a low level of disease and have maintained a regulated response for the management of OJD will also be considered for Protected Area status." He added.

More information on the new program is available from www.ojd.com.au

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