The Tasmanian Livestock Health Report – May 2022

The Tasmanian Livestock Health Report summarises information on livestock diseases and conditions observed by rural service providers across Tasmania.

Sheep abattoir data from the National Sheep Health Monitoring Project is also summarised.

See www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/tas-health for previous reports and to register for free email subscription, or join the Tasmanian Livestock Health Facebook group

Funding is provided by Animal Health Australia (with support from Sheep Producers Australia and WoolProducers Australia) and by NRE. Private veterinarians coordinate the project.

You are welcome to distribute this report to anyone you like. The next Tasmanian Livestock Health Report will be out in mid-July.

If you need more information on this project, please contact Bruce Jackson on 0407 872 520 or rja69392@bigpond.net.au.

Also see the Resources section at the end of this report.

Seasonal Alerts

Foot abscess: both heel abscess and toe abscess will be common from now on with wet conditions underfoot in rams and heavy ewes, especially those with multiples.
Footrot and scald: are actively spreading in most areas now.
Black scour worms: losses have already been seen and the risk will increase over winter. Monthly worm egg counts may be warranted as it looks like this will be a bad year for black scour worm.
Pregnancy toxaemia: ewes in the last 7 weeks of pregnancy are at risk, especially if carrying multiples and if energy intake does not increase over this period.
Hypocalcaemia ("milk fever"): in ewes that are held off feed for more than 12 hours in late pregnancy and those grazed on cereal crops or other lush feed.
Grass tetany: cows from 1 week before, to 4 weeks after calving that are on green grass that may have been fertilised with potash and or nitrogen. Cows that are overweight and off feed for handling are particularly at risk.

Biosecurity story of the month – the importance of early detection of FMD

In 2001 foot and mouth disease (FMD) entered the United Kingdom. It spread from pigs to sheep (in which the disease is not very obvious) which were then traded through saleyards and it was some weeks before the UK Veterinary Service was alerted to its presence. In that time the virus had spread over a large area and it took many months, 13 billion dollars and the destruction of 6.5 million livestock before the outbreak was eradicated.

If FMD broke out in Australia it would cost about 25 billion dollars in the first year. That is about 68 million dollars a day, so the sooner it is detected and the sooner it is eradicated the less it costs. There had been previous outbreaks in the UK that were detected very early, were stamped out promptly and no-one can even remember what year those outbreaks occurred in – unlike the 2001 outbreak.

So, if you ever have any suspicion of FMD at all in cattle, pigs, sheep or goats that you see under any circumstances, then talk to your vet or ring the hotline on 1800 675 888 (you have a duty to

report even if you are not the owner!). You may save our livestock industries 68 million dollars (or a lot more).

Contact Tracing and FMD

While talking about FMD and how easily it can spread over large distances when infected animals are transported, let's consider the importance of rapid contact tracing.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, contact tracing was initially slow and cumbersome as tracing staff rang people and asked them questions. Then we scanned ourselves into venues and suddenly tracing was swift and accurate and exposed people could be isolated before they infected other people.

The same principle applies with animals. If we can locate exposed animals fast enough, we can isolate them and stop the spread.

So, it is important to have a good livestock tracing system that holds all the information we need for a swift response. Keeping information relating to your PIC up to date, making sure that all animals are tagged properly, filling in the NVD completely and accurately, and recording property to property movements are all important parts of the system.

Diseases and conditions seen in Tasmania in May 2022

SHEEP				
Disease/ condition	**Number of reports/ cases**	**Region**	**Details**	**Prevention, treatment, and other biosecurity advice or measures**
Black scour worm	Scouring and deaths in one medium flock	Southern Tasmania	Scouring, high worm egg count, Trichostrongylus identified by larval culture test at lab.	See WORMBOSS web site for good treatment and prevention strategies.
Condition score, low	Many flocks	NW, Northern and Southern Tasmania	Body condition scores (BCS) lower than optimal for breeding and production	Most common cause is insufficient energy in the diet, but specific deficiencies (selenium etc), broken mouth, worms, fluke, pneumonia, kidney disease, liver disease, etc can also be responsible.
Cysticercosis ("bladder worm")	Detected at abattoir in 6.8% of lambs and 7.5% of mutton carcases.	NW, Southern and Northern Tasmania.	Seen as small clear bags of fluid attached to liver, intestines, or elsewhere in abdominal	Prevented by stopping dogs from eating sheep offal and/or by treating all dogs including pets with a wormer containing praziquantel every 30 days. Visiting dogs (contractors, shooters) must be treated about 2 days before arrival on property. Keep stray dogs off the property. These measures also prevent sheep measles and hydatids. See fact sheet on: https://sheepconnecttas.com.au/disease-factsheets/

			cavity of sheep at abattoir. Causes liver to be trimmed or condemned, 'runners' condemned. Spread by a dog tapeworm.	
Dags	Widespread	NW, Southern and Northern Tasmania	Due to scouring.	May be due to worms, gut infection (e.g. Salmonella, Yersinia), nutritional factors. Have a WORMTEST egg count done and ask the laboratory to culture for Yersinia and Salmonella if egg counts are low. Check paddock for plants such as capeweed. Crutch. The Dealing with Dag Advisor Manual is available at www.wool.com/flystrikelatest.
Deaths during transport	Four sheep from several flocks.	Northern Tasmania	Found dead or destroyed on unloading.	Many possible causes. Ensure sheep are fit to load and use correct loading density per pen to ensure sheep don't smother during transport.
Ear tag infection	Three lambs from one medium mob	Northern Tasmania	Swelling, crusts, discharge around area where tag goes through ear	Clean and apply antiseptic spray. If ear is swollen may need antibiotics under veterinary supervision. Prevent by soaking tags in antiseptic before applying.
Fleece rot	Sporadic cases in several flocks	Southern Tasmania	Green or blue discoloration of wool.	Caused by constantly wet fleece plus some genetic pre-disposition mainly in Merinos. "Devil's grip" pre-disposes. Pre-disposes to body strike. Use preventative flystrike measures/chemicals and select against this trait.
Foot abscess (heel abscess)	Small % on one property.	Southern Tasmania	Swelling of one toe, hot, painful and discharge pus in acute stage. May affect all 4 feet in some cases, but usually one foot.	Fresh cases showing up now. Treat: Pare away hoof to allow drainage of pus, inject long-acting broad-spectrum antibiotics and anti-inflammatories (under vet supervision), keep feet dry e.g. on slatted floor of shearing shed if possible, place epsom salts on drainage point and bandage. Ensure fit to load if transported. Prevent: Keep mob average BCS to 3 - 3.3, autumn or pre-lamb shear, reduce interdigital skin injury, walk through 5-10% formalin or 10% zinc footbath weekly. See https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/314410/Foot-abscess-in-sheep.pdf
Footrot (virulent)	Widespread	NW, Northern and Southern Tasmania	Active spread has started in most areas.	Control by footbathing, use of vaccine, cull chronic cases. Too late to attempt eradication now but can plan for this coming summer. Prevention: Ask for a Sheep Health Declaration when buying sheep and ensure section B1 confirms flock is free of virulent footrot but still footbath and check feet on arrival. Maintain good boundary fences. See Ute Guide for Tasmania: https://www.wool.com/globalassets/wool/sheep/welfare/other-husbandry/footrot--a-guide-to-identification-and-control-in-the-field---tas-2019.pdf
Footrot, benign ('scald')	Several sheep in one medium and one large flock	Southern Tasmania	Score 1 and 2 lesions (less than 2mm under-running of hoof horn at heel)	Also called scald but Ovine Interdigital Dermatitis (OID) shows same signs. Re-check in 14 days to ensure it is not progressing to virulent footrot. Usually responds to footbathing and dry conditions underfoot.
Hernia (abdominal), large	One case in one flock	Northern Tasmania	Large bulge in abdomen wall	Cull. May not be fit to load depending on size. Very hard to repair surgically.
Horn growing into head (in-grown horn)	Three wethers and rams from 2 flocks	Northern Tasmania	Horn has grown into and damaged the skin.	May result in animal welfare penalties. Horns must be trimmed on-farm. Ask your vet for some embryotomy wire as it allows horn to be removed safely. Prevention: Dehorn lambs so that a margin of haired skin is removed with horn.

Lameness	A number of sheep in a number of mobs	NW, Northern and Southern Tasmania	Reluctant to bear full weight on at least one leg.	Could be footrot, scald, foot abscess, scabby mouth of feet, arthritis, injuries, toe abscess, laminitis, standing on concrete surfaces too long. Identify cause and treat accordingly.
Lice (body lice)	Widespread	NW, Northern and Southern Tasmania.	Sheep body lice cause fleece damage. Check for 2mm long insects with broad reddish head moving slowly away from light by parting wool 10 times down each side of 10 sheep.	See LICEBOSS: http://www.liceboss.com.au/sheep-goats/ for a full practical guide to managing and preventing sheep body lice. Ask for Sheep Health Declaration when buying sheep. Isolate and treat or check introduced sheep.
Listeria	20 deaths on one large property	Northern Tasmania	Sheep may dribble saliva, ears droop, have head tilt, blind, walk in circles, die. Often associated with silage or brassica bulb feeding.	This case not associated with silage. Remove from offending feed. Treat cases early with antibiotics under veterinary supervision but usually unsuccessful.
Liver fluke	Detected at abattoir in 1.5% of lambs and 3% of mutton carcasses.	NW, Northern and Southern Tasmania	Abattoir detection, farm post mortem or Fluke eggs found in FLUKETEST on manure samples sent to laboratory. Bottle jaw, anaemia, weight loss and deaths from heavy infestation.	Pickup of immatures is continuing, and mature fluke will be in bile ducts now so Fluketest monitoring is worthwhile. Triclabendazole best treatment from November to July as it kills immature fluke as well as mature fluke but has 63 days ESI. Treat slaughter stock then keep them on paddocks with trough water until slaughter if possible or use albendazole at higher recommended dose rate even though it only kills adults (10 day WHP/ESI). Consider treatment with a different flukicide family in late winter to kill adult fluke that may be resistant to triclabendazole (resistance has been demonstrated in Tasmania.) See fact sheet on https://sheepconnecttas.com.au/disease-factsheets/
Lumpy wool (dermo)	A number of properties	NW, Southern and Northern Tasmania	Wool in hard blocks along topline.	Can treat with long-acting tetracycline during dry period (with vet supervision), wait for 6 weeks and shear. Wool still valuable. Prevent by not yarding sheep when wet to skin.
Nasal discharge, purulent, both nostrils	Several sheep in several flocks	Northern Tasmania	Can be due to viral or bacterial infections or nasal bots.	If sheep are bright and alert no action required. If depressed, laboured breathing, deaths, veterinary advice should be sought.
Nephritis (kidney damage)	Detected at abattoir in 5.9% of lambs and 7.5% of mutton carcases	NW, Northern and Southern Tasmania	Kidneys are swollen, white spotted or scarred.	Infection via urinary tract, via the blood stream or due to other factors. Prevention: make sure sheep have access to good quality water and lambs have been trained to drink if source of water (e.g. troughs vs dams) changes at weaning. Remove tails at third joint and treat any infections such as pneumonia early.
Ovine Johnes' disease (OJD)	Sporadic deaths in two large flocks	Southern Tasmania	Adult sheep over 2 yrs old waste away over several	Quickest diagnosis is by post mortem. Prevent by vaccinating lambs at marking with Gudair vaccine. If confirmed present in the flock, euthanase any sheep over 18 months of age that waste away and don't respond to drenching. See factsheet on:

			months and die despite drenching.	http://www.ojd.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/OJD_factsheet.pdf
Pleurisy	Seen in 1.4% of lamb and 1.4% of mutton carcasses.	Northern Tasmania	Lungs stuck to chest wall due to previous bout of pneumonia. Usually results in major trimming in abattoir. Deaths on farm as well.	Treat sick sheep with cough or respiratory distress with antibiotics (under vet supervision). Try to avoid stress events, drench sheep carefully, avoid dusty feedstuffs.
Pink eye	Two flocks	Northern and Southern Tasmania	Discharge down cheeks, white areas on cornea of eye. Usually spread by flies, long grass and close contact (e.g. yarding)	If low prevalence and on good feed and water leave alone to self-heal as mustering can increase spread within mob. Treat with antibiotic injections under vet supervision. Eye ointments/sprays less effective.
Salmonella	A number of sudden deaths in a feedlot	Northern Tasmania	Sudden death. Inflamed gut seen at post mortem	Prevent by reducing stress. Buffers in formulated pellet feeds may predispose to infection.
Sarcosporidia ("Sarco")	Detected at abattoir in 0.04% of lamb/hogget carcases and 5.9% of mutton carcasses.	NW, Southern and Northern Tasmania	Small 'rice grain' whitish raised lesions on outside of food pipe (oesophagus), diaphragm and in skeletal muscles. Carcase trimmed or condemned.	Spread by cats. Takes a long time to grow so not seen in lambs. Deny cats access to sheep meat, burn or bury carcasses promptly, eradicate feral cats over large area. See fact sheet on: https://sheepconnecttas.com.au/disease-factsheets/
Scour in prime lambs	10% of lambs in one large mob	Northern Tasmania	Can be due to worms, coccidia, Cryptosporidia, Giardia, E coli bacterial gut infection, nutritional factors.	Worms most common cause. WORMTEST or drench and see if they respond. Check for sudden diet change to lush feed, plants such as capeweed. May need veterinary involvement if growth rates are low.
Sheep measles	Detected at abattoir in 7% of lamb and 5.6% of mutton carcasses	NW, Northern and Southern Tasmania	Small whitish mass about half the size of a 5 cent piece protruding from the muscle of the heart, diaphragm or skeletal muscle. Hearts condemned. Carcase is trimmed or condemned if	This is the intermediate stage of a dog tapeworm. Prevented by stopping dogs from eating raw sheep meat. Freeze sheep carcase meat for 2 weeks before feeding to dogs, burn/bury sheep carcases promptly and/or treat all dogs including pets with a wormer containing praziquantel every 30 days. Visiting dogs (contractors, shooters) must be treated 2 days before arrival on property. Keep stray dogs off the property. See fact sheet on https://sheepconnecttas.com.au/disease-factsheets/

			too many to trim.	
Sudden deaths on regrowth barley	One large flock 20 dead ex 400	Southern Tasmania	Lambs found dead and carcase blown up.	May be caused by, Pulpy Kidney (PK), Salmonella or plant poisoning e.g. nitrate. Give third PK vaccination or use 8-in-one, have post mortem done, check nitrate levels in cereal crop.
Worms	Multiple reports. Significant weaner deaths on some properties	Wide-spread	Scour, High faecal egg count. One count over 3300 in prime lambs. Most counts moderate.	Black scour worm dominating now. Barbers Pole Worm can also still be present at this time of year. Differentiate from nutritional scour or coccidia by WORMTEST. Use effective drench. Check that drench is working by repeating egg count 10-14 days later. Try to plan 'clean' paddocks for pre-lamb drenched ewes. See WORMBOSS at: http://www.wormboss.com.au/sheep-goats/programs/sheep.php
CATTLE				
Cloudy cornea	Several cattle in two herds	Northern and Southern Tasmania	Cornea is cloudy and sometimes small blood vessels can be seen growing across it from the edges.	Usually healing injury or healing Pink Eye. No need to do anything if there is no discharge.
Condition score low	A number of cows in several herds	Northern Tasmania	Ribs showing in beef cattle, quite sunken between pins and tailhead in dairy cows	Possibly due to age/teeth, under-nutrition, fluke, worms or chronic disease.
Copper levels in liver are high	One herd	Northern Tasmania	No acute deaths but best to reduce copper levels.	Cattle are not as susceptible to chronic copper toxicity as sheep, but can accumulate copper over some time then suffer acute red blood cell breakdown, anaemia and death. Stop supplementing copper. Can use molybdenum and sulphur compounds to reduce copper levels in liver.
Downer cow during loading	One cow in one beef herd	Northern Tasmania	Possibly transport tetany, ryegrass staggers, spinal or hind leg injury.	This one went splay-legged. Inject 2 bags of calcium/magnesium solution under skin. May need to euthanase if proper care not available.
Empty cows at pregnancy testing	10% of one large herd, over 50% in another medium herd.	Northern and Southern Tasmania	Could be vibrio, bull failure Pestivirus, possibly tri-trichomonas.	Veterinary investigation required.
Eye cancer/pre-cancerous lesion in Hereford cow.	One case in one herd	Northern Tasmania	Growth on outside edge of eyeball.	Very early growths like these can be frozen, burnt (electrocautery) or scraped off. More advanced require surgery. Severe require euthanasia. Don't transport if the cow can't close eyelid over the growth.
Facial Eczema	One herd	Northern Tasmania	Seen mainly as illness/liver damage. No peeling of skin on face due to pigmented skin in this case.	Cows on irrigated ryegrass pastures. Cases rise slowly over spring and peak Feb/March, ease off into winter. Pithomyces spore counts over 40,000 spores per gram. Treat: access to shade Prevention: Spore test pastures and keep cows off paddocks with high counts. Add zinc to ration – consult with vet/nutritionist.

Mastitis in dairy cows.	A number of cases in a number of herds	NW Tasmania	Udder or milk abnormal.	See https://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/en/animal-management-and-milk-quality/mastitis-and-milk-quality#.YFq2Z68zY2w
Nasal discharge, blood-stained	One steer in one medium herd	Northern Tasmania	Could be caused by a number of respiratory viruses, by trauma or allergy.	If animal is otherwise bright and alert, just keep under observation. If any other signs of ill-health use antibiotics under veterinary supervision.
Pink Eye	Ongoing outbreak on one large property	Northern Tasmania	Discharge down the cheeks, inflamed conjunctiva and cornea, sometimes with ulceration of cornea.	Start treatment early. Separate affected cattle, use eye creams, antibiotic injection into eyelids, eye patches or vet can stitch eyelids. There is a vaccine available that covers most of the strains of pink eye bacteria that occur in Tasmania.
Respiratory disease	One weaner in one herd.	Northern Tasmania	Cough, nasal discharge, difficulty breathing.	May respond to antibiotic treatment under veterinary supervision.
Ringworm	One herd of young cattle	Southern Tasmania	Scaley circular areas of hair loss usually around head and neck.	Usually heal up eventually if left alone. Antifungal ointments or iodine can be rubbed into lesions. Can spread to man so precautions must be taken.
Rota virus	One herd	NW Tasmania	Scours in young calves	Keep calves warm and dry and pens clean. Keep calves hydrated with regular milk feeds, oral rehydration antibiotic cover to stop other secondary infections under veterinary supervision. See Dairy Australia web site on calf rearing
Scouring	Several steers in several herds	Northern Tasmania	Can be due to worms, selenium or copper deficiency, nutritional factors, gut infection, toxicities.	Do cattle Wormtest or try a drench, feed some roughage. Call the vet if no response and if growth rates are reduced
Sudden death with scour	2 weaners in one large herd.	Northern Tasmania	May be caused by pulpy kidney, plant poisoning, Salmonella.	Best to have post mortem carried out. Ensure Clostridial vaccination up to date, check for poisonous plants or nitrate levels if on crop.
Vibrio (Campylobacter)	One large herd. One empty cow still positive despite 2 years of vaccinating bulls.	Southern Tasmania	Bacterial infection spread by bulls. Causes return to service and abortions.	Vaccinate bulls, complete course 4 weeks prior to joining. May well be worth vaccinating females as well. See https://www.mla.com.au/research-and-development/animal-health-welfare-and-biosecurity/diseases/reproductive/vibriosis/
ALPACAS and CAMELS				
No reports				
GOATS				

No reports				
PIGS				
No reports				
POULTRY				
No reports				
DEER				
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Resources

Farm biosecurity plans
Everything you need to know about farm biosecurity, for example to make a biosecurity plan for LPA accreditation, can be found on: https://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/

Animal health declarations
Provide an animal health declaration when selling sheep, cattle, goats and camelids, and ask to see declarations when purchasing or moving these animals onto your property. See: https://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/toolkit/declarations-and-statements/

Livestock Data Link (LDL) allows you to access information on carcase data, diseases and conditions detected in your sheep at slaughter through the National Sheep Health Monitoring Project. See: https://www.integritysystems.com.au/globalassets/isc/pdf-files/ldl-pdf-files/about-livestock-data-link.pdf for more details.

Report any suspicion of an Emergency Animal Disease
Report any suspicion of an Emergency Animal Disease, especially slobbering/lameness in ruminants and pigs, sudden death in multiple pigs, to your vet or the Hotline on 1800 675 888. Early detection is critical if eradication is to be successful.

Comply with the Ruminant Feed Ban
Protect access to our export markets by never feeding animal protein such as meat meal to any ruminant including sheep, cattle, goats, deer and alpacas. See: https://animalhealthaustralia.com.au/australian-ruminant-feed-ban/

Maintain market access through strong tracing systems
Use NVDs and NLIS tags properly so that animals can be 'contact traced' quickly if there is an outbreak of an Emergency Animal Disease or a chemical residue problem. Especially important to list all PICs on NLIS tags in sale mobs of sheep on the NVD. See: https://nre.tas.gov.au/agriculture/animal-industries/identifying-selling-moving-livestock

If you have pigs, don't feed them swill
Check whether waste food you want to feed to pigs is "swill" or not. Swill which contains food from overseas can introduce devastating diseases such as foot and mouth disease or African swine fever into Tasmania. For more detail see: https://nre.tas.gov.au/biosecurity-tasmania/animal-biosecurity/animal-health/pigs/swill-feeding

Never feed raw untreated offal or sheep meat to dogs or cats.
Untreated offal from sheep, goats, cattle and pigs may spread hydatids if fed to dogs. Sheep offal or sheep meat may spread diseases such as hydatids, sheep measles and bladder worm in sheep if fed to dogs, or Toxoplasma and Sarco if fed to cats. See: https://sheepconnecttas.com.au/disease-factsheets/

Bucks for Brains
If you have a sheep or cow showing neurological (nervous) signs you may be able to claim a subsidy for a post mortem investigation (https://animalhealthaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Bucks-for-Brains_Jun16_WEB.pdf)

Maintaining Tasmania's export markets:
Information from these reports may be used to help convince our overseas trading partners that we don't have certain livestock diseases that they are concerned about, thus keeping our valuable export markets open and stopping risky imports coming in. For example, Tasmania exported approximately $100 million worth of sheep meats and wool in 2019-20. See: https://nre.tas.gov.au/agriculture/facts-figures/tasmanian-agri-food-scorecards

The National Sheep Industry Biosecurity Strategy
The National Sheep Industry Biosecurity Strategy lies at the core of this program, see: www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/nsibs