Tasmanian Livestock Health Report – December 2022

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

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-February.

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 Disease Alerts

Barber's pole worm: high worm egg counts due to barber's pole worm have already been recorded in Northern Tasmania. Watch for anaemia (pale gums, conjunctiva), dropping to back of mob when mustered, bottle jaw, sudden deaths. Ask for a larval ID if a worm egg count is over 1500 epg.
Footrot and scald: have stopped spreading in low rainfall areas but still active in wetter areas.
Scabby mouth: in lambs on their feet and mouth.
Arthritis in lambs: If you have more than the odd case it may be worth asking your vet about testing for Erysipelas. There is a vaccine for Erysipelas.
Flystrike: Is in full swing in some areas. The sheep blowfly gets active as soon as the temperature is over 15 degrees, and due to wet conditions causing dermo and fleece rot, you may see body strike even in short-woolled sheep and lambs.
Pulpy kidney: Make sure lambs get their second vaccination at weaning if going onto rich feed such as clover or lucerne.
Lucerne red gut: seen as sudden death with a very bloated carcase on irrigated lucerne or clover. Offering roughage such as hay or straw or alternating between pasture and the lucerne/clover can help prevent cases.
Acute bovine liver disease (ABLD): use sheep to graze off paddocks that have grown a lot of rough dog's tail weed, so that cattle can graze safely in autumn.
Ryegrass staggers: watch for signs of nervous system problems and keep young sheep off paddocks with a history of staggers.
Liver fluke: immature fluke are migrating through the liver now, so make sure Black Disease vaccination is up to date. May be too early to start monitoring for fluke eggs in Wormtests unless not treated last winter.

Biosecurity story of the month – Theileriosis

A case of Theileriosis has been detected in a home-bred cow in the North-west, the first such case in Tasmania. Theileriosis has been present since 2006 in NSW and since 2011 in Victoria (mainly Gippsland) and has caused significant economic loss on a number of farms. Theileriosis is also present in New Zealand.

Theileriosis is caused by a protozoan parasite (*Theileria orientalis ikeda*) that attaches to and destroys cattle red blood cells. This results in anaemia and jaundice, making the inside lining of the eyelids pale and yellowish. Severely affected cattle are depressed, have a high temperature, can't walk very far, pregnant cows often abort, and deaths are common.

The bush tick (*Haemaphysalis longicornis*) is the usual vector that spreads Theileria although other means such as biting flies, sucking lice and vaccination needles are also possible. It is a three-host tick, meaning that it goes through 3 life stages, feeding on one host, dropping off to develop into the next stage and then finding another host. Bush ticks can survive on sheep, horses, pigs, goats, birds and wildlife and once established cannot be eradicated. Likewise, it is extremely difficult to stop them coming into a state such as Tasmania through border quarantine methods.

The bush tick has not been identified in Tasmania yet, and if it remains uncommon, the disease will also remain rare. However, a lot of cattle have been imported into Tasmania, many of them from areas on the mainland where the bush tick and Theileriosis are present.

The key needs for bush tick survival are:

- Annual mean temp over 12 °C
- Minimum average July temperature over 2 °C
- Maximum July average temperature over 12 °C
- Annual rainfall over 1000 mm pa
- Altitude less than 300 metres

A number of farms on the North-West coast and parts of King Island meet these conditions as well as irrigated areas of the North and North-East. It is important that cattle producers in these areas call their veterinarian if they have cattle that are anaemic, jaundiced, depressed, abort or die so that Theileriosis can be ruled out as a possible cause. Treatment is much more effective if used early in the course of the disease.

If ticks are found on cattle, an NRE entomologist should be contacted. Properties will not be quarantined if Theileriosis is diagnosed or bush tick infestation is detected.

The most useful preventative action you can take is to closely inspect all cattle that come onto your property from the mainland. Bush ticks usually attach:

- around the tail
- on the udder
- inside the legs
- on the brisket
- in the ears

If you find any ticks, have them identified by an NRE entomologist and take advice on eradicating them from the cattle. If no ticks are seen (larval and nymphal ticks will be very hard to see) treat all cattle with an injectable doramectin if possible (note the long milk and meat withholding periods) and keep them isolated on a paddock with short vegetation for at least a week. This treatment should kill most of any bush ticks that could be present on the cattle and should also be useful as a worm and lice treatment.

DairyTas Board and Dairy Australia are funding a bush tick survey of likely Tasmanian habitat in areas where cattle have been imported from the mainland, but the work will not commence until next spring.

Diseases and conditions seen in December 2022

SHEEP				
Disease/condition	**Number of reports/ cases**	**Region**	**Details**	**Prevention, treatment, and other biosecurity advice or measures**
Abortion	Only 63% lamb marking in a flock that scanned 120%.	Northern Tasmania	Aborted lambs not found, but not many picked up at lambing time.	Best diagnosis is to submit up to 5 aborted lambs to lab for diagnosis, but in this situation take bloods for Toxo and Campylobacter testing at marking. Campylobacter, Toxo, Listeria, Chlamydia, Salmonella, are all possible causes.
Black scour worm	Dominant species in larval ID test in one large flock	Northern Tasmania	Scouring, high worm egg count, Trichostrongylus identified by larval differentiation test at lab.	See WORMBOSS web site for good treatment and prevention strategies.
Body condition score low	2 sheep in one small flock	Northern Tasmania	Body condition less than BCS 2	Usually not enough feed. Worms, fluke, OJD, broken mouth, cancer and specific deficiencies and diseases eg footrot may also be involved.
Crusty nostrils	One sheep in one small mob	Northern Tasmania	Probably the result of upper respiratory tract infection	No action unless other signs of respiratory disease or production loss are seen.
Dags	Wide-spread but incidence declining, many dried up now.	NW, Northern and Southern Tasmania	Due to scouring.	May be due to worms, gut infection (eg Salmonella, Yersinia), coccidia, nutritional factors. Have a WORTEST egg count done and ask the laboratory to culture for Yersinia/Salmonella/Campylobacter if egg counts are low. Check paddock for plants such as capeweed. Crutch and ensure fly prevention program is effective. The Dealing with Dag Advisor Manual is available at www.wool.com/flystrikelatest.
Dermo (lumpy wool)	Lambs in one medium flock, and low percentages in two other flocks. Reported as widespread.	Widespread	Lambs can get dermo on muzzle, backs of ears, but mainly seen in young sheep as wool in hard blocks along topline.	Lamb muzzle lesions will generally heal naturally after weaning. Can treat generalised form with long-acting tetracycline under vet supervision during dry period, wait for 6 weeks and shear. Wool still valuable. Prevent by not yarding sheep when wet to skin. See: https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/314320/9819-Lumpy-wool---Primefact-986.pdf
Drench resistant worms	One large flock	Northern Tasmania	Drenchtest showed resistance to white, clear and ML drenches but moxidectin Zolvix and	See WORMBOSS for strategies to manage and prevent drench resistance.

			Startect still 100%	
Fly strike	Many cases	Wide- spread in Northern NW and Southern Tasmania.	Mostly breech strike but body strike too.	Identify and correct causes of scouring. Chemical preventative treatments or frequent inspection and early treatment of strikes. See https://www.wool.com/sheep/welfare/breech-flystrike/flystrikeresources/ for comprehensive information on treatment and control.
Footrot, virulent	Seen in two large, one medium and one small flock	NW, Southern, Northern Tasmania	Spread is still occurring on a number of properties in wetter areas but has stopped in low rainfall areas.	You may be able to eradicate this summer by repeated foot inspections and culling of infected sheep. Prevention: Ask for a Sheep Health Declaration when buying sheep and ensure section B1 confirms flock is free of virulent footrot but still footbath quarantine and check feet on arrival. Footbath sheep returning from shows. Maintain good boundary fence. 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 (mild, "scald")	One ram in one large flock.	Southern Tasmania	Inflammation between toes but less than 2mm of under-running of heel of hoof.	Regular footbathing is usually sufficient to control during spread period and usually disappears with dry weather. Hard to eradicate.
Lameness	Widespread, particularly in older rams.	NW, Northern and Southern Tasmania	Reluctant to bear full weight on at least one foot.	Could be footrot, scald, foot abscess, scabby mouth of feet, strawberry footrot, injuries, toe abscess, laminitis, standing on concrete surfaces too long. Identify cause and treat accordingly.
Listeria (suspected)	A number of adult sheep in one large flock	Northern Tasmania	Listeria usually causes nervous symptoms such as head tilt, circling. Usually associated with feeding silage or root crops.	There is no vaccine against Listeria and antibiotic treatment of early clinical cases not always effective. See your vet to get a proper diagnosis by post mortem.
Newborn lamb deaths	Excess deaths in one large flock	Northern Tasmania	Newborn lambs found dead in lambing paddock	Can be due to diseases such as Toxo or Campylobacter, or can be due to slow birth, mis-mothering, exposure etc. Lamb post mortems can help identify causes and solutions.
Ovine Johnes' disease (OJD)	A number of ewes died or culled in one large flock	Southern Tasmania	Adult sheep over 2 yrs old waste away over several months and die despite drenching.	Quickest diagnosis is by post mortem. Prevent by vaccinating lambs at marking with Gudair vaccine. If confirmed present in the flock, cull any sheep over 18 months of age that waste away and don't respond to drenching. See factsheet on: http://www.ojd.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/OJD_factsheet.pdf
Photosensitisation	Very common in a number of flocks in both lambs and older sheep.	NW, Southern and Northern Tasmania	Mostly just peeling of skin of back of ears but also face and ears and legs in severe cases.	Blood sample for liver damage check, spore count pasture for Pithomyces (Facial Eczema) spores, check water for blue-green algae, poisonous plants and pigment plants (eg storksbill, medics). Treat with anti-inflammatories, antibiotics, if necessary (under vet supervision), offer deep shade, move to new paddock. Older sheep with scars – make sure they always have access to shade or cull.
Scabby mouth	Small % of ewe hoggets in one large flock	Northern Tasmania	Crusts and raw areas on corners of mouth in this case, sometimes seen on feet	Caused by a tough virus that persists on a property once introduced, but skin injury is needed to allow virus to establish. Best left to heal on their own. Can prevent with vaccine at marking. See: https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/179835/sheep-health-scabby-mouth.pdf

			and on ewe's teats as well.	
Shelly toe	10% of sheep in one medium flock	NW Tasmania	Curved separation of hoof wall from sole up hoof wall near front of hoof.	Conformational defect rather than a disease condition. Is heritable and can be selected against. Best to pare off under-run hoof wall as dirt and manure can pack into the cleft and cause a form of toe abscess.
Starvation and oedema of lower body	One lamb in one small flock	Southern Tasmania	Lamb in poor condition and soft swelling in legs, lower abdomen.	Poor nutrition, low protein intake. Corrected with good feeding and parasite control.
Stiff gait in weaned lambs	A number of lambs from one vendor in a large lamb finishing flock.	Northern Tasmania	Could be white muscles disease (selenium deficiency), scald in all 4 feet, arthritis.	First have a good look at the feet and feel the joints for swelling and/or pain and/or heat. If no sign of scald or arthritis call your vet to do a post mortem or blood tests to check for white muscle disease or treat with selenium if not treated recently.
Sulfa responsive scour	A number of weaners in one medium flock	Southern Tasmania	Weaned lambs scouring but with zero egg count. Scouring stopped when treated with sulfa drugs	Usually due to Campylobacter, coccidia or Yersinia. Also reduce stress, overcrowding, offer clean water source, move to new paddock.
Udder dropped	One ewe in one medium flock	Northern Tasmania	Ligaments holding udder up become stretched and udder hangs low even after lambs weaned	Cull. See https://www.mla.com.au/fittojoin for guidelines on assessing ewes after weaning to estimate their potential to potential to rear another lamb.
Wasting in small numbers of adult sheep	A single adult sheep in two small flocks	Southern Tasmania	Cold be OJD, worn teeth, worms, fluke, cancer, liver or kidney damage, pneumonia.	Post mortem may identify the cause. Gudair vaccine claims to reduce OJD losses by 90% so an odd OJD case in fully vaccinated flocks is common.
Worms	Widespread	NW, Northern, Southern Tasmania	Worms can be diagnosed by scouring, anaemia, poor weight gain which respond to drenching, or by WORMTEST with or without larval identification, or total worm count at post mortem.	Trichostrongylus (black scour worm) numbers still high in larval ID tests lately though egg counts generally low to medium. See WORMBOSS at: http://www.wormboss.com.au/sheep-goats/programs/sheep.php
CATTLE				
Actino abscess	Several steers in two herds	Northern Tasmania	Swellings usually around head/upper neck, usually after damage to mouth due	Actino abscesses can be treated by a vet. Can be seen a classical "woody tongue) where the tongue is affected, or abscesses in lymph nodes mainly around head but anywhere on body. Can be seen in wet years when cattle on lush pasture eat coarse spikey plants to get roughage. Prevent by offering hay or straw.

			to coarse feed etc.	
"Bottle" teat/mastitis	One cow from one medium herd	Southern Tasmania	Teats too large for calf to get into mouth resulting in mastitis in that quarter.	Treat mastitis, cull cow after weaning. Check cows at marking or weaning and cull.
Chorioptic mange	Two steers from one medium herd	Northern Tasmania	Hair loss around tail head. Rough scaley skin. Diagnosis by skin scraping.	Most cases should recover over the next month or so. A number of registered treatments are available including ML drenches and pour-ons.
Corneal scarring	One cow in one medium herd	Northern Tasmania	White irregular marks on cornea (front of eye) but no inflammation or discharge.	No action required. Be aware cow will have limited vision on that side when handling.
Cut coronary band (top of hoof) on foot	One bull from one small herd	Northern Tasmania	Was not fit to load and lost weight.	Stitching not usually possible. Strapping can speed up healing.
Dystocia (difficult birth)	1 heifer in one herd	Southern Tasmania	Calf not delivered within 3 hours of start of birth process.	Heifers should generally be 300kg+ at mating and grow at up to 1 kg per day in last third of pregnancy. Need to be observed frequently over calving period. Assist if no progress after 3 hours.
Foot abscess	1 steer in one medium herd	Southern Tasmania	Swollen foot, may discharge, very lame. Wet conditions.	May respond to antibiotics and anti-inflammatories under vet supervision and move to dry area. Sometimes need surgical drainage and curette and gluing a wooden block under the sound toe.
Inter-digital fibroma	One bull in one medium herd	Northern Tasmania	Crusty hairless mass protruded from top/front of interdigital cleft	Caused by wet conditions underfoot and excess spreading of toes. More common in bulls. A vet can surgically remove the mass.
Mastitis with abscess	One case in one small dairy herd	Southern Tasmania	Udder or milk abnormal. High cell count. Lump in udder.	A vet can drain the abscess and treat mastitis with antibiotics via teat canal or by injection. See https://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/en/animal-management-and-milk-quality/mastitis-and-milk-quality#.YFq2Z68zY2w
Nasal discharge	One steer in one medium herd	Northern Tasmania	Could be caused by a number of respiratory viruses and bacterial infections 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.
Nervous and respiratory signs	One cow in one small herd	Southern Tasmania	Suspected brain abscess but could be due to Bovine thrombotic meningoencephalitis (TEM).	Veterinary examination necessary to determine likely cause and treatment.

Ocular (eye) discharge (clear, watery)	One steer from one medium herd	Northern Tasmania	Usually caused by an irritant such as pollen, dust etc but can be first stage of Pink Eye.	May not be possible to remove from irritants. Observe again later to make sure Pink Eye is not developing.
Photosensitisation	1 cow in one small herd	Southern Tasmania	Skin peels off areas with little hair or white hair, in this case on the udder.	May be caused by Acute Bovine Liver Disease (ABLD), blue-green algae on dams, Facial Eczema, poisonous plants. Remove from paddock, provide deep shade to protect from sunlight. Multivitamin injections, antibiotic cover if necessary.
Pink eye	One cow in one herd	Northern Tasmania	Inflamed conjunctiva cloudy cornea, discharge down cheeks.	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. See: https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/103904/pinkeye-in-cattle.pdf
Splayed front legs/overgrown hooves	One bull in one small herd	Northern Tasmania	Lower front legs turned outwards, hooves long and curled up.	Conformational fault. Cull.
Theileriosis	One cow in one large herd	NW Tasmania	Anaemia and jaundice (pale and yellow inside eyelids), drop out when driven, abortion, deaths.	New to Tasmania, this disease is caused by a red blood cell parasite usually spread by bush ticks (*Haemaphysalis longicornis*), cases seen November to March. Diagnosed by blood tests. Call your vet if you see any sign of abortion or anaemia. Prevention: Treat cattle introduced from mainland with an injectable doramectin and isolate for at least a week.
Wasted hip	One cow in one small mob	Northern Tasmania	Muscles of hindquarter waste away due to less use because of lameness in that leg	A variety of injuries and degenerative changes of hip and stifle joints can cause wasting. Generally best to cull if fit to load or destroy on-farm if not fit to load. Suitable for pet food.
Warts	Several steers in one medium herd	Northern Tasmania	Grey cauliflower-like growth anywhere on body but often around head.	Normally only seen in young cattle. Will normally self-cure if left alone. A vaccine can be made up if warts persist or are very extensive.
ALPACAS and CAMELS				
NIL this month				
GOATS				
Drench resistant worms	One large herd.	Northern Tasmania	Egg counts not reduced by more than 98% 10-14 days after drenching with drench containing clear, white, ML and closantel.	Goats break down some drenches much faster than sheep. Some off-label treatments can be effective – see your vet. See WORMBOSS for sheep and goats for strategies to manage and prevent drench resistance in goats.

PIGS				
Nil this month				

POULTRY				
Nil this month				

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

Phone A Vet

A telemedicine app that caters for production animals. Download the app from your usual provider. Can use video, photos, texting, you can select your vet. Experienced sheep, cattle, goat, camelid and pig vets are available. See: https://www.phoneavet.com.au/