Tasmanian Livestock Health Report – April 2024

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 a 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-June.

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: residual infestations could still be present in sheep and lambs on irrigation and even on dryland in some areas. Infective larvae should die out on pasture after a few heavy frosts and stop new infestations.
Black scour worms: high egg counts are still being seen. Monthly worm egg counts on weaner sheep are recommended.
Footrot and scald: are starting to spread in some areas.
Liver fluke: Eggs can be present in Fluketests now, but blood tests are the best way to detect migrating fluke in live animals.
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.
Nematodirus: If weaners are scouring, have sub-optimal growth rates and some Nematodirus eggs in the egg count this justifies a drench.
Pleurisy: is showing up in abattoir reports, slowing prime lamb growth rates and resulting in trimming at the abattoir. Check MLA's myFeedback to see if there is any data on your lambs processed this season.
Pulpy kidney: Make sure lambs get a booster if going onto rich feed such as clover or lucerne and into feedlots or droughtlots.
Weaned lamb scours: If lambs are scouring and worm egg counts are zero or very low then coccidia, Yersinia or Campylobacter gut infection could be involved; consult with your vet on best options for diagnosis and treatment.

Biosecurity story of the month - footrot eradication

There doesn't seem to be an upside to dry times, but every cloud can have a silver lining. Dry times are the perfect time to eradicate footrot.

Several large sheep enterprises have reported success with summer eradication this year. Usually preceded by footbathing at every opportunity, using footrot vaccine, some judicious culling of severe cases in the leadup to summer, and then, once the paddocks have dried out, inspecting the feet of all sheep at least twice at least a month apart and culling any sheep with any suspicion of footrot. No hospital mobs, no bringing sheep in and back out by different routes, just thorough, repeated foot inspection and immediate culling of any with a hint of footrot over the summer non-spread period.

Dry times usually mean that you have to trim back numbers. It is unfortunate that mutton prices are not what they were, but this does present an opportunity to put the footrot culls on the truck and make life easier (and more profitable) when it does start to rain more often.

If you have your own handler (reasonably priced handlers are available), good lighting, and some time, you can do your own foot inspections.

It is too late to start foot inspections this year, but you can start planning for a suppressive footbathing and vaccinating program over this winter/spring and for summer inspections next year.

Avian Influenza H5N1 confirmed in Antarctica

Avian influenza H5N1 has now been confirmed in wildlife in Antarctica. This means that this disease could enter Australia with migrating wild birds. Try to keep domestic poultry (and their feed and water supplies) physically separated from wild birds and report any multiple deaths in wildlife, wild or domesticated birds to your vet or the EAD Hotline on 1800 675 888.

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Diseases and conditions seen in April 2024

SHEEP				
Disease/condition	**Number of reports/ cases**	**Region**	**Details**	**Prevention, treatment, and other biosecurity advice or measures**
Acidosis (grain poisoning)	Twenty wethers died and others affected	Southern Tasmania	These may have been fed too much grain with no recent grain feeding to get the rumen adjusted.	Found dead, or sick with "porridge" scour. Take off grain source and feed roughage. Oral penicillin under veterinary supervision may help. Take just as long to transition to a new grain or concentrate as you do starting them on grain. Draft shy feeders off into their own pen or offer non-grain feed.
Anoestrus (not showing signs of 'coming into heat') in ewes.	A number of ewes in one flock	Southern Tasmania	No mating activity detected by ram harness	Ewes should have been cycling. Sometimes maidens do not start cycling until ram contact occurs, so using teasers for 10 days before the rams are joined or extending joining for an additional 10 days may be worthwhile.
Barbers pole worm	Widespread , deaths in	NW, Northern & Southern	Sudden death, no scouring, pale	Very high worm egg counts of up to 200,000 epg can be seen. See WORMBOSS website for details on diagnosis, control and prevention programs.

	lambs and adults	Tasmania, both dryland and irrigation.	gums, lethargy. High worm egg counts and larval ID showing mainly barbers pole worms.	
Body condition score low	A number of sheep and lambs in a number of flocks.	NW, Northern and Southern Tasmania	Body condition less than BCS 2	Usually not enough feed. Worms, fluke, and specific deficiencies (copper, selenium, B12) and diseases eg footrot may also be involved.
Broken mouth	One aged ewe in one large flock	Northern Tasmania	Incisor teeth worn down to gums, or some incisors missing. Molar teeth can also be missing, loose, food impaction.	Cull if condition score is 2 or below.
Cud stain	Two sheep in two medium flocks	Northern Tasmania	Green stain around mouth.	No obvious cause. May be due to erupting molar teeth in young sheep. Check tongue, mouth, cheeks for injuries.
Dags	Wide-spread but mainly in a small proportion of sheep.	NW, Northern and Southern Tasmania	Due to scouring.	May be due to worms, gut infection (eg Salmonella, Yersinia, coccidia), nutritional factors. Have a WORMTEST egg count done and ask the laboratory to check for coccidia, 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
Dermo (lumpy wool)	One sheep on one property	Northern Tasmania	Wool in hard blocks along topline.	Can treat with long-acting tetracycline 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
Ear cancer	One aged sheep in one medium flock	Northern Tasmania.	Ulcerated mass on ear.	Older sheep with white ears without much wool cover. Cull as soon as noticed. Can be treated surgically by a veterinarian. Can spread to glands draining that area so check parotid lymph node before performing surgery.
Flystrike	Widespread but few sheep affected. Body strike pizzle strike, shoulder strike as well as breech.	NW, N and Southern Tasmania	Breech, body, shoulder, poll strike in rams, pizzle strike in wethers. Foot strike (secondary to footrot or foot abscess). Sheep with footrot struck	Observe for damp, grey areas of wool, tail flicking, separation from mob, lying down. The AWI web site has a large number of resources and runs workshops on flystrike. See: https://www.wool.com/simplifly Use preventative treatments or examine every 2 days and treat as soon as found. Destroy maggots. If chemical treatment does not seem to be effective for as long as claimed on label, maggots can be collected for chemical resistance testing

			over ribs from lying on infected foot.	
Footrot, virulent	Several large properties	Southern, Northern Tasmania	Low % on dryland. Some eradication programs progressing well.	Eradication inspections completed now in most areas and some good cure rates from footbathing and vaccinating have been seen. Footbathing and vaccination, paring, culling "chronics" that don't respond to treatment are on-going strategies. Long acting oxytetracycline antibiotics under veterinary supervision is useful to treat chronic cases if conditions stay dry. 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
Growth rates low in lambs	One large flock	Southern Tasmania	Lambs growing slower than normal despite good feed available	Possible causes may be worms, fluke, dietary deficiency (energy, protein, micronutrients), liver damage/photosensitisation, recent scabby mouth, Mycoplasma ovis, chronic infections such as pneumonia, pleurisy etc. Conduct WORMTEST and FLUKETEST, review Feed On Offer.
Hooves overgrown	One ewe in one small flock.	Northern Tasmania	Toe of hoof very long, can curl up. Soft ground, scald and footrot can be underlying cause.	Regular trimming. Control scald /footrot if present.
Laceration to lip	One sheep in one small flock	Northern Tasmania	Suggests dog bite, could be collision with yards, fences.	Muzzle dogs that bite when handling sheep. Handle sheep calmly. Remove projections in yards
Lameness	A number of sheep in a number of flocks.	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, injuries, toe abscess, laminitis, standing on concrete surfaces too long. Identify cause and treat accordingly.
Lice (body lice)	Widespread	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	See LICEBOSS: http://www.liceboss.com.au/sheep-goats/ for a full practical guide to managing and preventing sheep body lice. Use Sheep Health Declaration when buying sheep.

			side of 10 sheep.	
Liver fluke	Detected at laboratory in about half of samples submitted plus other reports.	Northern and Southern Tasmania	Abattoir detection, farm postmortem or fluke eggs found in FLUKETEST on manure samples sent to laboratory. Bottle jaw, anaemia, weight loss and deaths from heavy infestation.	Most fluke are adult stage in bile ducts in liver at this time of year, but pickup of immatures will be continuing until July. Triclabendazole best treatment from November to June as it kills immature fluke as well as mature fluke. See fact sheet on https://sheepconnecttas.com.au/disease-factsheets/
Nasal discharge, snotty, both nostrils, some with cough	A number of lambs in a number of flocks	NW, Northern & Southern 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.
Pizzle, cut	One wether in one medium flock	Southern Tasmania	End of pizzle (prepuce) cut.	Shearers need to take care.
Ryegrass staggers	A number of weaner sheep in two large flocks	Northern Tasmania	Usually young sheep - tremors, abnormal gait, may become downers, may convulse when disturbed. Often seek water and drown in dams. Can have high mortality.	See https://dpipwe.tas.gov.au/biosecurity-tasmania/animal-biosecurity/animal-health/sheep/perennial-ryegrass-staggers for details on diagnosis treatment and prevention.
Udder dropped	A number of ewes in several flocks	Northern and Southern 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.

Scrotal hernia in ram	Southern Tas	One large flock	Intestines come through into scrotum usually only on one side, which becomes very large.	Could be repaired surgically but is heritable so ram lambs should be culled.
Shy feeders	A number of sheep and lambs in a number of flocks	Northern and Southern Tasmania	Will not come onto the grain trail or feed from troughs in containment	Some will come onto feed if you draft them out and feed in a pen of shy feeders. Otherwise sell, cull or feed hay or silage.
Toe missing	One lamb in one medium flock.	Northern Tasmania	Can be due to injury or congenital defect.	This one appeared to have been born with only one toe on one front foot.
Transport deaths	A number of sheep from one medium flock	Southern Tasmania	Found dead during break during journey.	Many possible causes. Suspected grain poisoning in this case. Ensure correct loading density per pen to ensure sheep don't smother during transport.
Worms	Widespread	NW, Northern and Southern Tasmania.	Moderate to high faecal egg count. Some high enough to be barbers pole worm.	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 weaned lambs and pre-lamb drenched ewes. See WORMBOSS at: http://www.wormboss.com.au/sheep-goats/programs/sheep.php
CATTLE				
Body condition low	A number of cows and young cattle in several herds	Northern and Southern Tasmania	BCS less than 2 (1 to 5 scale)	Check feed quantity and quality, micronutrient levels, worms, liver fluke status.
Bottle jaw	One heifer in one large herd.	Southern Tasmania	Bottle jaw usually caused by liver fluke in cattle.	Diagnosis by blood test (best) or FLUKETEST (manure sample test). Treat with effective drench. Can also be due to bovine Johne's disease (BJD), worms, low blood protein.
Corkscrew claw	One cow in one herd	Northern Tasmania	Outside claw on hind or fore foot grows up off ground in corkscrew form	Genetic cause. Cull.
Dags	Several cattle in two herds.	Northern Tasmania	Faeces stuck on tail hair.	Due to scouring. Worms, dietary factors, bacterial and viral diseases all possible. Treat for worms first and look for a response.
Diarrhoea in adult cattle	Two individual adult cattle in two herds	Northern Tasmania	Could be worms or dietary but could be viral or bacterial infection,	Treat with broad spectrum drench and offer hay. Veterinary diagnosis appropriate if persists.

			including bovine Johne's disease (BJD).	
Dry quarter in dairy cows.	One cow from one large herd	NW Tasmania	One quarter shrunken and empty while other are full of milk	Usually due to mastitis. See https://www.dairyaustralia.com.au/en/animal-management-and-milk-quality/mastitis-and-milk-quality#.YFq2Z68zY2w
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, purulent (snotty)	Widespread in young cattle	NW, Northern and Southern 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.
Nasal discharge, purulent (snotty) with diarrhoea	One young bull in one small herd	Northern Tasmania	Could be caused by a Pestivirus or secondary infections on top of primary respiratory or gut infections.	If animal is otherwise bright and alert, just keep under observation. If any other signs of ill-health use antibiotics under veterinary supervision.
Ocular (eye) discharge (clear, watery) both eyes	A small number of cattle in two medium herds.	NW, 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.
Ocular (eye) discharge (clear, watery) only one eye	A small number of cattle in a number of herds.	NW, Northern Tasmania	Usually an injury or foreign body such as grass seeds, but can also be due to Pink Eye or due to eye cancer in older cows.	Examine for foreign bodies in crush. Treat with eye ointment. Observe again later to make sure Pink Eye is not developing.
Pin bones bare	One cow in one small herd	Northern Tasmania	Due to diarrhoea.	Cure diarrhoea. Local skin treatments.
Pin bone and tail head injuries	A number of cows in several herds	Northern Tasmania	Usually due to mounting or transport injuries	Mostly unavoidable in non-pregnant or mating groups, though accessory digits on bulls should be trimmed if sharp. Transport injuries prevented by calm handling and removing projections from yards and transport vehicles.

Pre-cancerous lesion on eyelid of cow.	One case in one herd	Northern Tasmania	Growth or ulceration of eye or eyelid, but not typical of eye cancer. More common in breeds with white eyelids.	These very early lesions can be frozen, burnt (electrocautery) or surgically removed before they turn into a cancer. Prevention: Select cattle with pigmented eyelids.
Preputial prolapse	Two bulls in two medium herds	Northern Tasmania	Soft tissue of sheath hangs out. If injured while out, becomes swollen and can't go back in.	A veterinarian may be able to operate even if damaged.
Retained afterbirth and metritis	One cow in a small mob	Southern Tasmania	Afterbirth still hanging out more than three days after giving birth	If afterbirth cannot be easily removed manually, antibiotic treatment should be started under veterinary supervision and a weight such as a plastic bottle of water tied to the afterbirth to help it come out over the next few days.
Ringworm	One weaner in one large herd	NW Tasmania	Scaley circular areas of hair loss with thick whitish crust usually around head and neck.	Usually heal up eventually if left alone. Antifungal ointments or iodine can be rubbed into lesions. Can spread to people so precautions must be taken.
Teste swollen	One bull in one small herd	Northern Tasmania	One enlarged testicle	May be due to infection or injury. Veterinary examination may be worthwhile.
Warts	Several weaners in one small herd	North West Tasmania	Small 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.
Wooden tongue	One cow in one herd	Southern Tasmania	Tongue sticking out a bit, not eating	Intravenous iodine given by vet usually best treatment. Antibiotic injections under veterinary supervision may work. Reduce access to spikey plants.
ALPACAS and CAMELS				
Thickened skin, generalised	Two alpacas in one small herd	Southern Tasmania	Most likely chorioptic mange	See vet for treatment.
GOATS				
No cases reported				
PIGS				

No cases reported				
POULTRY				
No cases reported				
DEER				
Skin tumours	One white deer in one small herd	Southern Tasmania	May be benign cancers.	Veterinary examination and possibly a biopsy to identify whether it is a cancer.

Resources

Farm biosecurity plans
Everything you need to know about farm biosecurity, for example how 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/

myFeedback 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: MLA's myFeedback 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, abortion or nervous signs 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
Any material containing material of placental mammal origin (other than milk and milk by-products, properly rendered meat meal, or tallow) is swill. 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. Untreated sheep offal or sheep meat may spread other diseases such as sheep measles and bladder worm in sheep if fed to dogs, or Toxoplasma and Sarco if fed to cats. See: https://sheepconnecttasmania.files.wordpress.com/2023/07/sct-disease-factsheets-all.pdf

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 $264 million worth of sheep meats and wool in 2020-21. 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/

Farm Biosecurity Apps
If you want to know who is coming and going, warn visitors of risks and areas to avoid without spending your whole day on your mobile, you may like to consider an app that combines with a QR code on your farm entrances. See: https://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/biosecurity-at-your-fingertips/

Paraboss

The previous WormBoss, LiceBoss, and FlyBoss websites are now all in one place and have a wealth of information on, and tools to manage sheep, goat and cattle parasites.

https://paraboss.com.au/

Includes an online learning resource: https://wormboss.com.au/learn-about-sheep-worm-control-in-australia/online-learning-tasmania-introduction/