Livestock Health Monitoring Report – February 2021

The Livestock Health Monitoring program collects confidential/anonymous information on livestock diseases and conditions observed by rural service providers in Tasmania and produces a monthly report that is circulated as widely as possible amongst Tasmanian livestock producers and service providers. It is based on a successful pilot project conducted in 2018-19.

See www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/tas-health for previous reports.

The program is designed to keep Tasmanian livestock producers and rural service providers up to date on what livestock diseases and conditions are currently occurring in Tasmania. This should mean earlier diagnosis, more effective treatment and better prevention of future outbreaks.

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.

This program should also help detect an outbreak of emergency animal disease earlier, allowing effective action to stamp it out or reduce its impact.

The program has a sheep industry emphasis, but all common livestock species are covered. The National Sheep Industry Biosecurity Strategy lies at the core of the program (see www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/nsibs)

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

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

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

For farm biosecurity plans, animal health declarations and information on biosecurity practices see: www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/

Remember:

- Report any suspicion of an Emergency Animal Disease to the Hotline on 1800 675 888
- Never feed animal protein such as meat meal to any ruminant including sheep.
- Use NVDs and NLIS tags properly so that animals can be ‘contact traced’ quickly if there is an outbreak of an Emergency Animal Disease.
- If you have pigs, don’t feed them swill.

Seasonal Disease alerts

Barbers pole worm: More widespread due to higher rainfall – monitor for pale conjunctivae, do WORMTESTS with larval differentiations.
Pink eye: reduce exposure of young sheep and cattle to flies, dust and long grass.
Flystrike: keep checking mobs even if treated with preventative chemicals as resistant flies more common now.
Acute Bovine Liver Disease (ABLD): don’t place cattle on paddocks that have a lot of dead grass with Rough Dog’s Tail weed present this autumn.

Facial eczema: seen as photosensitisation, usually on irrigated ryegrass paddocks in NE and NW. Collect a pasture sample for a spore count.
Nematodirus: Very common in weaners in autumn. Scour, slower growth rate, Nematodirus eggs present but counts may or may not be high.
Ryegrass staggers: showing up in some areas. Keep young sheep and cattle off paddocks with a history of staggers.

Biosecurity story of the month

Liver fluke damage has been seen in a 5.5% of lambs and 16% sheep at the abattoir which means a lot of wasted livers, but the production loss back on farm is a much bigger problem.

Liver fluke cause significant production loss, with only 20 fluke depressing growth rates in weaner cattle.

Wet springs mean a lot of water lying about and ideal conditions for the fluke snail to breed up. As the waters dry up, sheep and cattle eat the vegetation and become infected with fluke, so this autumn could be a bad one for liver fluke.

There is also evidence that the fluke life cycle can be completed in the North-West as well as the traditional Northern, North-Eastern, central highlands, Derwent Valley, East Coast and South-Eastern areas. Fluke have also been found on the lower Meander River which was previously thought to be fluke-free.

A lot of lambs have changed hands over recent months and a lot of weaner cattle bred in fluke-prone areas will be sold this autumn. Buyers are advised to check whether the animals they have bought have been treated for liver fluke just before sale, and, if not, consider treating or testing them. Check the 'Treatments' section of the Cattle or Sheep Health Statements for recent flukicide treatments. A FLUKETEST on manure samples can show whether the animals have adult fluke, but will not detect immatures, so treatment with a triclabendazole product can be a safer option.

Producers in fluke areas should consider testing stock in flukey paddocks and make sure routine fluke treatments are not missed this year.

It is always a good principle to isolate ("hotel quarantine") new arrivals for a few weeks if possible, let them empty out any weed seeds that may be in their digestive tract, and to test/treat for diseases you don't want on your property. Also observe for signs of disease (eg respiratory signs or lameness) and get a vet to make sure it is not a disease you don't already have.

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SHEEP				
Disease/condition	**Number of reports/ cases**	**Region**	**Details**	**Prevention, treatment, and other biosecurity advice or measures**
Abscess	One ram in medium flock	Southern Tasmania	Swelling on jaw.	Surgical draining and antibiotics usually effective.

Barbers pole worm	Confirmed in several large flocks	Southern and Northern Tasmania	Sudden death, no scouring, pale gums.	Seen as very high worm egg counts (2-4,000) and no scouring. See WORMBOSS website for details on diagnosis, control and prevention programs.
Black scour worm	One large flock	Southern Tasmania	Scouring, high worm egg Tricho-strongylus identified by larval differentiation test at lab.	See WORMBOSS web site for good treatment and prevention strategies.
Cuts to skin between toes	One medium flock	Northern Tasmania	Lameness seen, cuts observed and attributed to sharp dead cocksfoot stalks.	Use antiseptic spray or footbath to treat. Avoid grazing these paddocks till stalks soften after rain if possible.
Cysticercosis ("bladder worm")	Detected at abattoir in 2.4% of lambs and 5.3% of mutton carcases.	Southern and Northern Tasmania	Seen as small clear bags of fluid attached to liver or elsewhere in abdominal cavity of sheep at abattoir. Causes liver to be trimmed or condemned. Spread by a dog tapeworm.	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 at least 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/
Cyst on ram testicle	One ram in one medium flock	Northern Tasmania	Could be an inguinal hernia, varicose veins in cord, abscess or Ovine Brucellosis.	Inguinal hernia or varicose veins: cull ram. Abscess may be able to be treated by a vet. If more than 5% of rams have lumps/cysts you can feel on the testicles get some blood tests done for Ovine Brucellosis, a sheep disease that can depress lamb marking %.
Dermo (lumpy wool)	One property	Southern 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.
Ear cancer	Several cases in one aged ewe flock	Southern Tasmania	Crusty or ulcerated lesion anywhere on ear.	Vet can remove the cancer if caught early enough. Check no swelling of the gland (lymph node) that drains that area as cancer can spread to the gland. Make sure it is 'fit to load' if transported.
Fly strike	Many cases including body strike	Wide-spread in NW, Northern 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 FLYBOSS on http://www.flyboss.com.au/sheep-goats/ for details on treating, preventing and breeding aspects.
Foot abscess	Many flocks. 3% of sheep	Wide-spread in Northern	Swelling of one toe, hot, painful and discharge	Keep mob average BCS to 3 - 3.3, autumn or pre-lamb shear, reduce interdigital skin injury, walk through 5-10% formalin footbath weekly. Treat

	culled in one large flock.	and Southern Tasmania	pus in acute stage, Most in healing phase now but some active cases seen. May affect all 4 feet in some cases, but usually one foot.	with long-acting broad-spectrum antibiotics, keep feet dry eg on slatted floor of shearing shed, epsom salts on drainage point and bandage. Ensure fit to load if transported.
Footrot (virulent)	A number of flocks. 3% culled after bivalent vaccine in one flock, others about 10% after footbath-ing programs.	Southern, Northern and North-West Tasmania	Most are now chronic cases persisting after spring spread period but in some areas there is spread even on non-irrigated pasture due to the good season.	Paring, footbathing, culling chronic cases, use of vaccine. Eradication by repeated foot inspections and culling all infected sheep can be executed this summer. Ensure culls fit to load if transported. 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 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 (mild, "scald")	One flock	Northern Tasmania	Inflammation between toes but limited under-running of heel and sole of hoof.	Regular footbathing is usually sufficient to control during spread period and usually disappears with dry weather. Hard to eradicate.
High worm egg counts	One medium flock	Northern Tasmania	Diarrhoea, slow growth rates	Counts over 2,000 eggs per gram in summer and autumn can be due to Barbers Pole Worm. Ask the lab to do a larval differentiation to determine species of worms involved. Treat with effective drench (check that current drench family is working by doing a DRENCHCHECK). See WORMBOSS web site.
Hind leg weakness	One adult sheep in one small flock	Northern Tasmania	Recovered after paddock move	Phalaris staggers, ryegrass staggers, injury, toxicities can cause hind limb weakness. Paddock Change is a good start.
Ill-thrift in lambs	Two medium and one large flock	Southern Tasmania	Poor growth rates	Possible causes may be worms, fluke, dietary deficiency (energy, protein, micronutrients), chronic infections such as pleurisy etc. Conduct WORMTEST and FLUKETEST, review Food On Offer etc.
Lameness (chronic) in sheep	one sheep in one small flock	Southern Tasmania	Often caused by arthritis if no other obvious cause such as foot abscess.	Check for other causes such as toe abscess (pare tip of toe), foot abscess. Feel all joints for swelling. Treat with anti-inflammatories if arthritis diagnosed.
Liver damage	Three sheep in one small flock	Southern Tasmania	May result in bottle jaw, jaundice, photosensitisation, poor growth rates	May be caused by liver fluke, blue-green algae on dams, poisonous plants such as ragwort and St Johns' wort, copper poisoning, possibly fungal toxins in pasture.
Liver fluke	Detected at abattoir in 5% of lambs and 16% of mutton carcases.	Northern and Southern Tasmania	Abattoir detection, farm post mortem or Fluke eggs found in FLUKETEST on manure	Most fluke are adult stage in bile ducts in liver at this time of year but pickup of immatures will be starting about now. 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/

	Also a new detection on lower Meander river		samples sent to laboratory. Bottle jaw, anaemia, weight loss and deaths from heavy infestation.	
Lumpy wool (dermo)	Wide-spread	Southern and Northern Tasmania	Wool in hard blocks along topline.	Can treat with long-acting oxytetracycline during dry period, wait for 6 weeks and shear. Wool still valuable. Prevent by not yarding sheep when wet to skin.
Mastitis (acute or chronic)	One case in one small flock.	Southern Tasmania	Hot swollen and inflamed (acute) or hard (chronic) with abnormal milk (from watery to mayonnaise consistency)	Acute: strip out as much milk as you can and administer antibiotic treatment by injection. If only one half of udder is affected ewe can produce nearly as much milk from the other half if she recovers. Chronic cases with hard udder should be culled.
Nematodirus	Weaners in one medium flock	Northern Tasmania	Weaners scour with lowered growth rates. Nematodirus eggs present but counts may or may not be high.	Nematodirus egg counts often do not reflect adult worm burden inside the weaners. Autopsy and total worm count or treat and look for response. See WORMBOSS website for treatment and prevention.
Nephritis (kidney damage)	Detected at abattoir in 0.6% of lambs	Northern Tasmania	Kidneys are swollen, white spotted or scarred and are condemned	Infection via urinary tract. Prevention: make sure lambs have access to good quality water and have been trained to drink if source of water (eg troughs vs dams) changes at weaning.
Paring feet too hard	One large mob	Southern Tasmania	Sheep still lame a week after paring	It is hard to never draw blood when paring sheep with advanced footrot, but generally try to minimise bleeding as it also obscures lesions and interferes with identifying infected sheep as well as making lameness worse.
Photosensitisation	Two large mobs of lambs	Southern Tasmania	Reddening then peeling of skin on nose, ears, backside and body if bare shorn.	Can be due to eating certain plants such as immature canola crop, storksbill or due to liver damage (eg from blue-green algae or severe infection). Remove from paddock, provide good access to deep shade, good water and feed.
Pink eye	Several flocks	Northern and Southern Tasmania	Discharge down cheeks, white areas on surface of eye. Usually spread by flies, long grass and close contact (eg 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 if have to be yarded. Eye ointments/sprays less effective.
Ruptured udder	Small % of ewes in one large flock	Northern Tasmania	Seen as raw tissue after dead tissues fall off after very acute toxic mastitis earlier.	Some of these will heal if raw area is small and clean and raw tissue does not stick out. Otherwise should be culled.
Ryegrass staggers	Some properties	Northern Tasmania	Usually young sheep - tremors, abnormal gait, may become	See https://dpipwe.tas.gov.au/biosecurity-tasmania/animal-biosecurity/animal-health/sheep/perennial-ryegrass-staggers for details on diagnosis treatment and prevention.

			downers, may convulse when disturbed. Often seek water and drown in dams. Can have high mortality.	
Sarcosporidia ("Sarco")	Detected at abattoir in 22% of mutton carcasses.	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, persistently control feral cats over large area. See fact sheet on: https://sheepconnecttas.com.au/disease-factsheets/
Scouring on canola	25% of one large mob	Southern Tasmania	Canola crops can be low in dry matter.	Always offer reasonable quality pasture hay or cereal straw. Introduce the lambs to the crop slowly if possible to give their digestive tract time to adapt. Make sure the problem is not worms or coccidia (WORMTEST)
Sebaceous cyst on back of ear	Two aged ewes ex one medium sized flock	Northern Tasmania	Raised pea-sized lesions on back of ear. Gentle pressure pops out cheesy mass leaving shallow raw crater in skin.	Importance only in differentiating from early ear cancer.
Sheep measles	Detected at abattoir in 7.7% of lambs and 7% of mutton carcasses.	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. Carcase is trimmed or condemned if too many to trim. 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 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/
Snotty nose	One small flock	Southern Tasmania	Snot seen in nostrils.	Common in some British breed rams and does not seem to be production limiting. May also be seen with nasal bots. Nasal bots can be treated with a macrocyclic lactone (ML) drench.
Toxoplasmosis	Older ewes in a number of large flocks	Northern and Southern Tasmania	Sampling of flocks to see how common Toxo is.	Significant proportion of ewes were positive to blood test. Toxo causes foetal and neonatal lamb losses if ewes are infected during pregnancy. Ewes may become barren if infected in first 60 days of pregnancy. For control strategies see: https://sheepconnecttasmania.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/sc-factsheet-no10-toxoplasmosis_lr.pdf

Vaccination lesions	Detected at abattoir in 0.8% of lambs	Southern and Northern Tasmania	Caused by vaccinating into the muscle, armpit, top of neck etc. Trimming can involve removing the whole hind leg or front leg.	Extra care must be taken with Gudair as large lumps often result. Vaccinate under the skin high on the **side** of the neck. Never vaccinate into the muscle. For details see: https://www.zoetis.com.au/livestock-solutions/pdfs/zoetis_gudair-product-information-2018.pdf
Yersinia	Twenty deaths and 25% scouring weaners in one large flock	Northern Tasmania	Scouring and deaths.	Differentiate from worms or coccidia etc by WORMTEST and ask lab to culture for Yersinia as well. Lab can advise which antibiotics should work on scouring animals. Some stress factor is usually present (eg poor access to water, worms etc) and should be corrected.
CATTLE				
Abscess	Two animals in two small mobs	Southern Tasmania	Swelling on lip, jaw, lymph node.	Surgical drainage and antibiotics usually effective. If lymph nodes involved Actino could be cause and may respond better to intravenous sodium iodide injection (veterinarian job!).
Eye cancer	One cow	North-West Tasmania	Growth or ulceration on eyeball, third eyelid or eyelids	Small lesions can often be removed easily by a vet, more advanced may require removal of eye. If cancer gets into glands draining the eye area (below the ear), then treatment unlikely to be successful. Make sure fit to load if culled (eyelids must be able to cover/protect the growth). If not fit to load or operate on may be suitable for destruction on farm for pet food.
Fracture	One calf in one small herd	Southern Tasmania	Lameness, part of leg at odd angle. Can be due to trauma. Copper deficiency can make bones brittle.	Casts and splints can work in calves. Correct copper deficiency if present.
Lameness	8 cows in 2 herds	Southern Tasmania	Foot abscess, sub-solar abscess, laminitis, injuries etc	Remove cow from mob if possible, rest in small paddock or yard, check for foot injuries and infections and treat appropriately.
Pestivirus	Routine testing to ensure exposure to Persistently Infected (PI) cattle has given immunity to weaners.	Northern Tasmania	Pestivirus can cause early resorption of foetus, abortions, stillbirths and persistently infected (PI) runt calves that grow poorly and usually die by 18 months of age	Herd status can be assessed by blood tests or milk tests. PI animals can be detected by blood or skin sample tests. Control programs based on vaccination or exposure to PI before mating. For more information see: https://www.mla.com.au/research-and-development/animal-health-welfare-and-biosecurity/diseases/reproductive/pestivirus/ Use a Cattle Health Declaration to ensure you know status of cattle (including bulls) that you buy: https://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/National-Cattle-Health-Declaration.pdf
Photosensitisation	1 cow in one small herd	Southern Tasmania	Skin peels off areas with little hair or white hair.	May be caused by Acute Bovine Liver Disease (ABLD), blue-green algae on dams, Facial Eczema, poisonous plants.

Pink Eye	Wide-spread	Northern and Southern Tasmania	50% of calves moved from NW to S Tas, 10-15% of calves in other cases.	Start treatment early. Separate affected cattle, use spray, 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	Several herds. Half of one large mob purchased from NW.	Southern and Northern Tasmania	Difficulty breathing, cough.	Many respond to antibiotic treatment. Try to minimise stress on bought-in cattle.
Sudden death	2 calves in large herd.	Southern Tasmania	May be caused by pulpy kidney, ABLD, blackleg, plant poisoning, bloat, snake bite, Anthrax.	Best to have post mortem carried out. Ensure Clostridial vaccination up to date, check for poisonous plants, legumes. If blood from nose/mouth/anus could be anthrax so contact vet or ring hotline on 1800 675 888. In this case a tiger snake was seen chasing cattle.
Vibrio (Campylobacter)	Two herds	Northern and Southern Tasmania	Bacterial infection spread by bulls. Causes return to service and abortions.	Vaccinate bulls, complete course 4 weeks prior to joining. Cull empty females at preg testing and any female that aborts or not rearing a calf. If exposure to unvaccinated bulls is likely vaccinate females as well. See https://www.mla.com.au/research-and-development/animal-health-welfare-and-biosecurity/diseases/reproductive/vibriosis/
GOATS				
Diarrhoea	One goat in one small herd.	Southern Tasmania	May be due to worms, coccidia (even in adults), diet, poisonous plants, Johnes' disease, gut infections.	If goat does not respond to a worm drench, best to involve a vet to make a diagnosis.
Mastitis	One goat in one medium herd.	Southern Tasmania	Hot swollen udder, abnormal milk	Most respond to antibiotic treatment.
Paralysis	One goat kid in one medium herd	Southern Tasmania	Kid unable to support weight on all 4 legs.	Can be due to abscess on spine, spinal injury, white muscle disease, caprine retrovirus, copper deficiency (swayback). Treatment and prevention depend on diagnosis.
Reproductive disorders	Two small goat herds	Southern Tasmania	Abortion, failure to get in kid	Toxoplasmosis can cause abortion, barren does. Campylobacter can cause abortion in goats.
Scald (mild footrot)	One flock	Northern Tasmania	Inflammation between toes but limited under-running of heel and sole of hoof.	Regular footbathing is usually sufficient to control during spread period and usually disappears with dry weather. Hard to eradicate.
Stones blocking urinary system	One goat	Southern Tasmania	Usually male animal becomes very depressed and may get big belly full of liquid ("water belly")	Sometimes a stone is stuck in tip of penis and can be squeezed out. Otherwise surgery can be attempted but often unsuccessful. Prevention usually depends on changing diet, usually by adding more calcium and a little salt to grain-based diets.

Trauma	One goat	Southern Tasmania	Usually seen as an open wound.	Some wounds need to be trimmed and/or drained. Antibiotic cover in some cases.
PIGS				
Lameness	3 pigs in one herd	Southern Tasmania	May be due to arthritis, foot abscess, injury.	Foot abscess causes swelling of foot, arthritis may cause visible swelling of joints. Treatment depends on cause.
MMA (Metritis, mastitis, agalactia)	One sow	Southern Tasmania	Usually very soon after farrowing, Whitish discharge from vulva, hard udder, hungry piglets.	Antibiotics for metritis and metritis plus oxytocin injections to make sow let down milk for piglets. Keep farrowing area clean, plenty of water for sow, don't let sows get over-fat.
CHICKEN				
Bumblefoot	One chicken in one small flock	Southern Tasmania	Chronic bacterial (usually a Staph) infection in foot causing swelling.	Surgical drainage of abscess. Antibiotics can help in some cases. Prevent by reducing opportunities for foot injury.
Respiratory infection	2 chickens in one small flock	Southern Tasmania	May be due to mycoplasma, coryza, Infectious Bronchitis virus (IB), Infectious Laryngotracheitis (ILT) virus and secondary infections, Avian influenza and Newcastle Disease.	Antibiotics in water often used initially and further testing for viruses, resistant bacteria if little response. If a high percentage of birds die or show neurological signs avian influenza or Newcastle disease could be the problem and a vet should be called or ring the Emergency Animal Disease hotline on1800 675 888.