

Livestock Health Monitoring Report – July 2021

The Livestock Health Monitoring program collects confidential/anonymous information on livestock diseases and conditions observed by rural service providers and abattoir data from the National Sheep Health Monitoring Project 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 and to **subscribe** to receive a digital copy every month by email.

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 <https://animalhealthaustralia.com.au/tas-health/>)

Funding is provided by Animal Health Australia (with support from Sheep Producers Australia and WoolProducers Australia) and by DPI/PWE. 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-September.

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/

Livestock Data Link (LDL) allows you to access information on carcass 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.

Remember:

- Report any suspicion of an Emergency Animal Disease to your vet or 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.
- Never feed raw untreated offal or sheepmeat to dogs or cats.
- 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)

Seasonal Disease alerts

Grass tetany: Cows from the week before birth to 4 weeks after calving can be affected, especially if in good condition.

Black scour worm: sheep on permanent pastures are picking up a lot of black scour worm larvae now. They can go down very quickly, keep a good eye on young sheep. WORMTEST to monitor for build-up.

Footrot and scald: are actively spreading in areas where rainfall has been high.

Chorioptic mange: may be seen from now on in cattle. Usually responds to a mectin pour-on or injection.

Liver fluke: plan to treat sheep and cattle between now and October to help break the life cycle.

Twin lamb disease: Feed ewes well in the last 7 weeks of pregnancy.

Goitre: if diagnosed in the past, or ewes are grazing brassicas, drench ewes with 300 mg of potassium iodide pre-lambing

White muscle disease: Most soils in Tasmania are deficient. Treat ewes with selenium pre-lambing using only one form of supplementation.

Hypocalcaemia (“milk fever”): Don't keep heavily pregnant ewes off feed for more than a few hours. Feed calcium/salt/magnesium loose lick if on cereal crops.

Campylobacter and Toxoplasmosis in sheep: Abortions/stillbirths are being seen now. Have 5 aborted lambs and afterbirth tested at the lab, consider blood tests of dry ewes at marking.

Biosecurity story of the month

There have been many reports of abortions and premature/stillborn lambs over the last few weeks. The common causes of abortion and premature/stillborn lambs in Tasmania are Campylobacter, Toxoplasmosis ('Toxo') and Listeria.

Campylobacter is common where ewes are intensively grazed, confinement fed or trail fed during pregnancy. Producers in these situations should routinely vaccinate. Others may wish to first confirm the presence of Campylobacter in the flock. Submitting 5 typical aborted/stillborn lambs (and afterbirth too if possible) to the laboratory (through your veterinarian) is best, as the laboratory will test for all the common causes of abortion. A test for Campylobacter can also be conducted on ten blood samples collected from dry ewes at marking time.

The Campylobacter vaccine covers both strains of Campylobacter that occur in Tasmania.

The next most common cause of abortion and premature/stillborn lambs is Toxoplasmosis. Toxo is spread by cats and currently we are waiting on results from one flock where ewe lambs, that had been vaccinated with campylobacter vaccine, aborted. The owner reported that 18 cats had been destroyed around the farm sheds over recent weeks, so Toxo is the mostly likely cause.

A case study of Toxo abortion storms in 2016 showed that up to 62% of scanned foetuses can be lost and two large enterprises each lost close to \$100,000 worth of lambs.

Cats also spread Sarcocystis ('Sarco'), a common cause of condemnation and trimming of mutton carcasses.

The highest priority is to exclude all cats from all types of feed stores, especially grain stores. Don't feed sheep meat or offal to cats unless cooked thoroughly.

Research by the University of Tasmania has shown that large area cat control will markedly reduce the percentage of ewes that are exposed to Toxo. If individual farms control cats, cats excreting Toxo and Sarco 'eggs' can still enter the farm and infect sheep, as cats can travel up to 9 kilometres in a single night, so it is important to work with neighbours and other local land managers to control cat numbers over a large area.

Trapping combined with shooting can be quite effective. Winter is the right time to trap as food is scarce and normally shy feral cats will enter traps to get food baits. Make sure you cut off other sources of food by covering dead animal pits and disposing of all types of carcasses, afterbirth and household scraps so that cats cannot access them.

Set traps along the edges of bush, fence lines, roadsides, feedstores, sheds and near disposal areas. Bury the mesh of the bottom of the trap in the ground if you can. Cooked chicken is a good bait and replace regularly - cats come to the trap by smell. A 'culvert trap' is available and will stop quolls and devils setting off the traps (see the PestSmart web site and Landcare website at: https://www.landcaretas.org.au/how_to_use_a_cat_trap).

If your farm is close to a town, stray and domestic cats can spread disease. If so, contact Landcare Tasmania who sometimes run projects to get township residents on board to control strays and restrict wandering domestic cats.



Diseases and conditions seen in July 2021

SHEEP				
Disease/condition	Number of reports/cases	Region	Details	Prevention, treatment, and other biosecurity advice or measures
Abortion	Common	Wide-spread	Many flocks reporting losses 2-4 weeks before lambs are due. Some detected at scanning.	Best diagnosis is to submit 5 aborted lambs to lab for diagnosis, can take bloods for Toxo testing and vaginal swabs from ewes with evidence of recent abortion if no foetuses available. Campylobacter, Toxo, Listeria, Salmonella all possible causes.
Arthritis	A number of sheep and lambs in a number of flocks	Southern Tasmania	Aged sheep (degenerative) or lambs (usually infectious) lame with enlarged joints	Aged sheep – cull or use anti-inflammatory treatments if a pet. Euthanasia if not responsive. Lambs – infectious – antibiotics may work early. Send some affected lambs or unopened joints to lab to see if Erysipelas is cause. If so, can vaccinate ewes to prevent in lambs and can also vaccinate lambs.
Black scour worm	Widespread	Northern and Southern Tasmania mostly on paddocks irrigated last summer.	Scouring, high worm egg count, Trichostrongylus identified by larval ID test at lab.	Monitor young sheep closely, they can go downhill fast. Monitor with regular monthly WORMTESTs and go to 2-weekly tests if egg counts rising rapidly. See WORMBOSS web site for good treatment and prevention strategies.

Cataract	One ewe in one medium flock	Southern Tasmania	The lens inside the eye is a shade of white	This one just in one eye which also showed iris damage so probably due to trauma some time ago. Cataracts in both eyes seen in very old sheep.
Coccidiosis in weaned lambs.	One flock.	Northern Tasmania	Scouring with moderate worm egg count but high coccidia count.	Presence of some coccidia on faecal exam does not necessarily mean coccidia are affecting health. Usually respond well to sulpha drugs. Prevention by good nutrition and don't allow lambs to concentrate on damp areas in paddock.
Contracted tendons in lambs.	A number of 8 week old lambs in one flock	Southern Tasmania.	May be caused by the ewe eating weeds such as wild radish, or manganese deficiency.	Lambs can recover if kept in a small yard with the ewe. Administering some manganese may help in some cases. May need to strap the fetlocks to protect them if knuckling right over.
Cysticercosis ("bladder worm")	Detected at necropsy in 2 sheep from one small flock.	Northern Tasmania	Seen as small clear bags of fluid attached to liver or elsewhere in abdominal cavity of sheep and lambs. Causes liver to be trimmed or condemned and runners to be 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/
Dead ewes	A number on one property	Southern Tasmania	A number of possible causes, including OJD, poisonous plants, Clostridial diseases, worms, fluke	Best to get some post mortems done to determine cause. This farm had stopped using OJD vaccine 4 years ago.
Epididymitis in rams	Small number of cases in two flocks	Southern Tasmania.	Usually the 'peg' just under the testicle is swollen, but can be on side or top of testicle.	Can be due to trauma or infection. Ovine Brucellosis should be suspected if a number of rams have epididymitis (see vet). Ram may still be fertile if the other testicle is in good order.
Foot abscess	A number of flocks	Southern and Northern 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.	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. Pare away hoof to allow drainage of pus. Treat 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. One only displayed score 1 and 2 lesions but was virulent on lab test	Southern, Northern Tasmania	Spread is well under way on a number of properties	Control by footbathing, use of vaccine. Prepare for eradication next summer by keeping number of infected sheep low. 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 (Intermediate)	One flock	Southern, Tasmania	Generally under-running is up to score 3, with very few score 4 or 5 (under-running of hard horn of the hoof)	Treat as for virulent footrot but should cause less economic loss and may seem to disappear in dry years. Should be eradicable. Control by footbathing and/or use of vaccine. Prepare for eradication next summer by keeping number of infected sheep low. 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")	A number of flocks	Northern and Southern 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.
Hernia of abdominal wall	A number of ewes in a medium flock	Northern Tasmania	Probably caused by excessive pressure from sheep handling equipment	Soft 'bumps' bulging out from abdominal wall. A defect in the abdominal wall can be felt. Sheep handlers should be adjusted to hold sheep firmly but not apply excessive pressure.
Hypocalcaemia ('milk fever')	A number of heavily pregnant ewes in a small flock	Southern Tasmania	Late pregnancy ewes go down after period off feed or on cereal crops.	Treat with injection containing calcium (eg 4-in-1) 1/5 of a pack under skin. Warm pack in hot water before injection if possible and massage in well. Should get up within 30 minutes. If green rumen contents coming out of nostrils give antibiotic cover. Prevent with mineral supplement if on cereal crops, don't keep off feed long if shearing, crutching or for pre-lamb treatments
Jaundiced lamb carcasses at abattoir	A number of carcasses from a number of flocks	Widespread	Carcass fat appears slightly yellow.	Some carcasses will resume normal fat colour after a night in the chiller. Possible causes include: too many high-carotene flat weeds in diet, Mycoplasma bacteria destroying red blood cells, grazing too long solely on brassica crop or from liver damage. Vet investigation may be able to determine cause.
Lameness	A number of sheep in a number of mobs	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)	Many flocks	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 with deranged fleece.	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. Maintain good boundary fences. "Hotel quarantine" and consider treatment of introduced sheep.
Liver fluke	Several reports from vets.	Northern and Southern Tasmania. Seen on Tamar river for first time.	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, and pickup of immatures should have stopped now. Triclabendazole best treatment from November to July as it kills immature fluke as well as mature fluke but has 63 day ESI. Treat slaughter stock then keep them in paddocks with trough water until slaughter if possible. Consider treatment with a different flukicide family in from now to October to

			samples sent to laboratory. Bottle jaw, anaemia, weight loss and deaths from heavy infestation.	kill adult fluke. See fact sheet on https://sheepconnecttas.com.au/disease-factsheets/
Liver abscess	Two lamb carcasses from one large flock	Northern Tasmania	Seen as small, raised areas on surface of liver and small pale areas within liver.	May be caused by damage to lining of rumen (eg from grain feeding) allowing bacteria to get into liver, or migrating parasite larvae (eg bladder worm, liver fluke)
Low conception rate	Several flocks	Southern Tasmania	Poor scanning rates	Could be ewe nutrition, ram problems, early abortion/resorption. A thorough vet investigation required to determine cause.
Meningitis and diarrhoea	10 weaners in one large flock	Southern Tasmania	"Star-gazing", blind, eyeball flicking from side to side, watery diarrhoea	Bacterial infection, responded to veterinary treatment.
Newborn lamb deaths	Excess deaths in one small flock	Southern 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.
Pink eye	A number of flocks	Northern and Southern Tasmania	Discharge down cheeks, white areas on cornea of eye.	Usually spread by flies, long grass, sharing large whole bales of hay, 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. Eye ointments/sprays less effective.
Pregnancy toxaemia (twin lamb disease)	A number of flocks	Southern Tasmania	Caused by insufficient energy in diet in last 6 weeks of pregnancy. Usually in multiple-bearing ewes.	If heavily pregnant ewes go down in last 6 weeks, inject 1/5 milk fever pack under skin and massage in well (to differentiate from milk fever). If ewe does not get up within an hour, twin lamb disease is most likely cause. Oral treatments rarely work unless you catch them while still able to walk but dropping out of back of mob.
Salmonella	Mixed age wethers in one large flock	Northern Tasmania	Sudden death. Inflamed gut seen at post mortem	Antibiotic treatment of affected live animals. Prevent by reducing stress.
Scour in poddy lamb	One lamb in one small flock	Southern Tasmania	Faeces normal colour but loose	This one responded to diluting the formula out more. Provide fresh water and electrolytes, reduce stress (provide shelter etc)
Scrotal abscess	One ram in one large flock	Southern Tasmania	Discharge from an injury to scrotum	Vet performed surgery to provide drainage, curetted the abscess, flushed with antiseptic and provided antibiotic cover.
Scrotal dermatitis	One ram in one large flock	Southern Tasmania	Thickening and crusting over bottom of scrotum	If more than 10 square cm affected, ram can become sub-fertile. Can be caused by Chorioptes or lumpy wool bacteria. Clean, soak off scabs, apply antiseptic and treat with long-acting ML drench.
Small testicle on one side	One ram in one large flock	Southern Tasmania	One testicle smaller than normal	Ram likely to be fertile but ram lambs by that ram may be hard to castrate as condition may be heritable and the small testicle may be carried high.

Swollen pizzle in wethers	Several wethers in one large flock	Southern Tasmania	Pizzles swollen	Suspected to be due to shearing injury in this case, but pizzle rot (usually due to rich diet high in protein) can also cause ulceration and swelling of end of pizzle as well.
Uterine prolapse	One case in one small flock	Southern Tasmania	Long pink organ hanging from vulva after lambing. May be damaged.	Acute fresh cases can be cleaned, gently pushed back in (elevate ewe's hindquarters) give pessaries/antibiotics. Chronic cases can be tied off and surgically removed by vet. Otherwise euthanase. Not fit to load.
White muscle disease in lambs	Several lambs in several flocks	Southern Tasmania	Lambs walk stiffly with hard muscles. Whitish areas in main muscle groups seen on post mortem	Treat ewes with selenium in pre-lambing drench or vaccination, with intra-ruminal pellets or add selenium to fertiliser every 2 years as per product instructions. Affected lambs can be given oral selenium and can recover with good nursing.
Worms	Many flocks having problems with young sheep.	Northern, Southern and NW 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 now and do a lot of damage. Carryover barbers pole worm burdens still possible. See WORMBOSS at: http://www.wormboss.com.au/sheep-goats/programs/sheep.php
Yersinia	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. Treat scouring animals. Some stress factor is usually present (eg cold wet weather, worms etc).
CATTLE				
Brown stomach worm (Ostertagia)	One large herd	Northern Tasmania	Worm egg counts with larval identification showed that brown stomach worm is an emerging problem.	Brown stomach worm egg counts are often low even though significant worm burdens are present. A blood test that detects a stomach wall enzyme (pepsinogen) can assist diagnosis. Worm larvae picked up over winter/spring by young cattle can lay dormant in stomach wall and emerge next autumn. A long-acting ML anthelmintic to cover the winter/early spring period may be required. WORMBOSS for cattle contains good information on cattle worms,
Botulism	A number of cows in a large dairy herd	North-West Tasmania	Cows down, paralysed, tongues hanging out. Significant deaths.	A wallaby carcass contaminating a bale of silage was the cause. Cows were vaccinated against botulism after diagnosis but continued to die for 30 days. Prevented by ensuring carcasses are cleaned up especially in silage paddocks. Preventative vaccination is available, but botulism is rare in Tasmania.
Chorioptic mange	Several cows in one medium herd	Northern Tasmania	Hair loss around tail head and flanks. Rough scaly skin. Diagnosis by skin scraping.	More common as winter progresses. Can become severe if cattle are stressed and short on feed. A number of registered treatments are available including ML drenches and pour-ons.

Cooperia – resistant to mectin family drenches	One large herd.	Northern Tasmania	Scour, sub-optimal growth rates. Weaner cattle with high worm egg counts in manure samples 11 days after ML family treatment.	High % Cooperia detected using larval ID in lab. Resistance to the Ivermectin family of drenches has been seen in Tasmania, but oral BZ drenches usually still work. Try to create “clean” paddocks for weaner cattle. Monitor with WORTEST every month. WORMBOSS for cattle contains good information on cattle worms and managing drench resistance.
Difficult birth (dystocia) due to twins	A number of cows in a medium herd	Southern Tasmania	Often one twin can be pushed back and the first twin delivered, then the second one.	Twinning may be hereditary in cattle. Female calves born with a male twin are usually infertile (Feemartin).
Grass tetany (hypomagnesaemia)	2 cows in one medium herd	Southern Tasmania	Week before to 4 weeks after calving. Found dead or down, hyper-excitabile.	Treat with 4-in-1 packs under skin. Prevent with Causmag on hay or magnesium boluses. Magnesium blocks may not ensure all cows get protective dose every day.
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 and a weight such as a plastic bottle of water tied to the afterbirth to help it come out over the next few days.

ALPACAS and CAMELS

NIL this month				
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GOATS

Bottle jaw	One aged doe in one flock.	Southern Tasmania	Bottle jaw usually caused by Barber’s Pole Worm (Haemonchus) or liver fluke. Johne’s Disease also possible	Diagnosis WORMTEST/FLUKETEST (manure sample test). Or by post mortem (Barber’s Pole worms easily seen in 4 th stomach, liver fluke can be squeezed out of cut section of liver). Treat with effective drench. Goats can be vaccinated with Gudair to prevent Johne’s Disease.
Lice	One herd	Southern Tasmania	Goats can be infested with both sucking lice (large and dark), and body lice (smaller, lighter colour) Only survive a few days off goat.	Sprays, pour-on and powder treatments available. Re-treat (sprays, powder) after 15 days to break life cycle.

PIGS

NIL this month				
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POULTRY

Diarrhoea	One hen in one small flock	Southern Tasmania	Could be due to worms, coccidia or bacterial infection	Worm the hen first and talk to vet about treatment for other possibilities.
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