Livestock Health Monitoring Report – February 2019

The Tasmanian Livestock Health Monitoring Report is a pilot project designed to confidentially gather information on diseases and conditions in livestock in Tasmania, with some emphasis on sheep and Southern Tasmania.

The project has been established to convince our overseas trading partners that we don't have livestock diseases that they are concerned about, to keep our valuable export markets open and to stop risky imports coming in.

This information is collected confidentially from livestock industry service providers.

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.

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| **SHEEP** | | | | |
| **Disease/condition** | **Number of reports/cases** | **Region** | **Details** | **Prevention, treatment, and other biosecurity advice or measures** |
| Abscess in head region of ram | One case in one flock | Southern Tasmania | Swelling and discharging pus. Caused by fighting. | Surgical drainage at lowest part of abscess. Antibiotics. |
| Aural haematoma (blood clot in ear) in rams | One case in one flock | Southern Tasmania | One ear swollen like an over-stuffed pillow. Caused by fighting. | Will eventually shrink back to a wrinkled ear if left alone. Can be drained by vet. Check does not turn into an abscess which will need draining. |
| Black udder (healing phase) | Several flocks | Northern and Southern Tasmania | Looks like a pink octopus hanging from one side of udder. | Result of udder tissue dying and falling out after acute Staph mastitis at lambing time. Best to cull these – a lot of blood vessels in the ‘legs’ and cannot be removed easily surgically. |
| Blindness and deaths in weaned lambs | One flock | Northern Tasmania | Blindness. Some died in creek (thirsty?) | A number of native plants growing along creek but none identified that have been recorded as causing blindness. Sight returned, surviving weaners recovered. |
| Bloat in lambs on lucerne or clover | Several flocks | Northern and Southern Tasmania | Lambs found dead and blown up | Can be due to true frothy bloat, pulpy kidney or red gut. Diagnosis by post mortem. Frothy bloat can be prevented by adding bloat oil to troughs. Give PK booster and offer roughage (eg hay). |
| Burns from bushfires | 20-30 sheep in two flocks | Southern Tasmania | Lung damage, burnt feet and lips most serious injuries. | Triage sheep: any down, having trouble breathing or with severe lip or hoof damage euthanase ASAP. Less severe, nurse on good feed, antibiotic cover and pain relief, re-examine very few days, euthanase if deteriorate. Singed wool only no treatment. Burnt teats only mark for re-check after healed. |
| Cancer of ear, eye, vulva, udder | Several flocks | Northern and Southern Tasmania | Usually older sheep. | Ear cancers can be removed surgically if cancer has not spread to lymph node. Best to cull such animals immediately. Destroy on farm if not fit to load. |
| Dog attack | A small number of sheep in one flock | Southern Tasmania. | Dog bites are often more serious than apparent on surface. | Best assessed by vet who may drain wounds, give antibiotics and anti-inflammatories/pain relief |
| Epididymal lesions in rams | A low % of cases in three flocks | Southern Tasmania. | A lump is felt usually just under the testicle, but can be on side or top. | 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 other testicle in good order. |
| Fly strike | Many cases | Widespread in 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. |
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| Foot abscess | Several flocks | Widespread but low prevalence within flocks. | Most cases in healing phase now, but some severe cases seen in rams. | Keep mob average BCS to 3 - 3.3, pre-lamb shear, reduce interdigital skin injury, walk through 5-10% formalin footbath weekly. 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 culls fit to load if transported. |
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| Footrot (virulent) | A number of properties | Widespread, even in composite, Coopworth, and Dorset cross sheep. One large flock with trace forwards to other large flocks. | Footrot actively spreading unless on irrigation, the rest chronic cases. | Paring, foot bathing, culling chronic cases, use of serogroup specific vaccines (see your vet for serogroup testing). Eradication by repeated foot inspections and culling all infected sheep between now and autumn break if re-infection from outside sources unlikely. Ensure culls fit to load if transported. Ask for a Sheep Health Declaration when buying sheep and ensure section B1 confirms flock is free of virulent footrot. |
| Grass seeds | Many cases | Widespread | In eyes, mouth, body (seen at slaughter) | Remove seeds from eyes and mouth – regular checks in race if have to graze off bad paddocks. Prevention: grazing management, strategic herbicides or mow/ slash/mulch to remove seed heads. |
| Hindlimb incoordination | One case in one flock | Southern Tasmania | Back legs have abnormal gait | Usually an injury. Separate from mob, place with a few sheep in small paddock and allow time to recover. Could use anti-inflammatories. |
| Lice (body lice) | Many cases | Widespread | Sheep body lice causing fleece damage. | Suppressive long-wool treatments can be used, watch wool handling and harvesting restrictions. Good separation of mobs if different shearing and treatment times. Use more recent lice products and good treatment technique for offshears eradication when shorn. Complete musters, good fences. Beware goats can carry sheep lice. |
| Liver fluke | One flock | Southern Tasmania | Seen as bottle jaw and anaemia, drop out back of mob when driven. | Causes bottle jaw and anaemia when severe. Fluke-test egg count or post mortem to diagnose. Use drench effective against immature fluke at this time of year. |
| Lumpy jaw | A few cases in one flock. | Northern Tasmania | Hard bony swelling under chin. | Cull if losing weight. |
| Ovine Brucellosis | A number of cases in one flock. | Southern Tasmania | Lamb marking % depressed. Can also result in more late lambs and some abortions. | Feel contents of scrotum, if there are any hard lumps close to testicle in more than 5% of rams get a vet to check and maybe bleed some rams for testing. Can be eradicated by bleeding/testing rams every 30 days. Buy rams from accredited properties. |
| Ovine interdigital dermatitis (OID) | One flock | Southern Tasmania | Redness between toes, can be a bit raw. | Caused by different bacteria from footrot. Usually seen when feet are constantly wet e.g. on irrigation. Lab tests to prove it is not footrot. Does not progress to under-running of hoof and easily cured by foot bathing or placing sheep on dry paddocks. |
| Pink eye | Several flocks | Southern Tasmania | Discharge down cheeks, white areas on cornea of eye. | If low percentage affected 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. |
| Pneumonia | Several cases in one flock on lucerne. | Northern Tasmania | Deaths, difficulty breathing | Diagnosis at post mortem. Antibiotic treatment of cases (best caught early). Remove from lucerne if possible. |
| Ruptured udders | Multiple ewes on several properties | Northern Tasmania | One half of udder healing after tissue has died and fallen out. | Result of “black udder” at lambing – a Staph infection. Best to cull . |
| Ryegrass staggers | Multiple sheep on one property | North-East Tasmania | Staggering and go down when driven. | Remove from high endophyte ryegrass paddocks. Keep safe from drowning. Can try feeding absorbants or drench with Epsom salts and plenty of water. |
| Soft swelling of chest wall | One case, one flock | Southern Tasmania | Soft swelling of lower part of chest wall | May have been a bruise/blood clot that separated, result of dog biting and holding fleece, or a toxic bite/sting. |
| Soft testes in ram | Several cases, several flocks | Southern Tasmania | Testicles both soft. Rams should have full, springy testicles. | Rams also had low body condition due to age. Unlikely to be fertile. Cull. Offer rams high protein and energy feed for 8 weeks prior to joining aiming for BCS 3 to 3.5 at joining. |
| Vaccination abscess | A number of cases in two flocks | Southern Tasmania | Lumps under skin at vaccination site or abscess in muscle if vaccinated too deep. | Use short needles (¼ inch for shorn, ½ inch for woolly) and vaccinate high on **side** of neck (**never** in top of neck, armpit or into back leg) especially if using Gudair. |
| Worms | A number of cases in one flock. | Southern Tasmania | Scouring weaners, high faecal egg count | Drench for worms. Check that drench is working by repeating egg count 10-14 days later. |
| **CATTLE** |  |  |  |  |
| Caecal impaction in steer | One case in one herd | Southern Tasmania | Lack of appetite most usual symptom. | Vet treatment may involve surgery or dosing with oil to loosen impaction. |
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| Eye damage | One case in one herd | Southern Tasmania | Check if eyeball ruptured. | This case severe and remainder of eye removed surgically. |
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| Pink Eye in cattle | Several herds | Northern Tasmania | Discharge down cheeks, white areas on cornea of eye. | Can treat with eye ointment or injections, glue patch over eye, suture eyelids. Prevention – vaccine against the three most common strains in Tasmania is available. |
| Wire injury to leg | One cow on one property | Southern Tasmania | Wire can be buried in leg or cut off circulation causing an amputation wound if twitched around leg | Treat with antibiotics and anti-inflammatories. May require surgery/stitching. Prevention – clean up old fences, loose wire. |