Livestock Health Monitoring Report – March 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 May.

If you need more information on this project please contact Bruce Jackson on 0407 872 520 or [rja69392@bigpond.net.au](mailto:rja69392@bigpond.net.au).

Previous reports are available on http://www.tasanimalhealth.weebly.com/

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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 sheep | One case in one flock | Southern Tasmania | Swelling and discharging pus. | Surgical drainage at lowest part of abscess. Antibiotics. |
| 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). |
| Cleft palate | One flock | Northern Tasmania | Open slit in top of inside of mouth (hard palate) | Inherited. Cull affected animal and sire and dam if known. |
| Cryptorchid | One flock | Southern Tasmania | Only one testicle in scrotum. | Inherited. Cull affected animal and sire if known. Usually still fertile but cryptorchid lambs hard to mark properly resulting in stags. |
| Engorgement on plums | One sheep in one small flock. | Southern Tasmania. | Same symptoms as grain poisoning | Drench with bicarb or rumenotomy (surgery) to remove excess fruit from rumen. |
| Epididymal lesions in rams | A low % of cases in three flocks. | Southern Tasmania. | A lump is felt inside scrotum usually attached 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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| Fighting deaths in rams | One property | Southern Tasmania | Death can be from broken neck, other fatal injuries or infection subsequent to wounds. | Make sure rams have plenty of room to get away if attacked by other rams. Vaccinate with 5-in-1 to prevent Big Head (Clostridial infection). Separate and treat injured rams. |
| Footrot (virulent) | A number of properties | Widespread, | Footrot actively spreading on irrigation, the rest chronic cases. | Paring, footbathing, culling chronic cases, use of serogroup specific vaccines. Can plan to eradicate by repeated foot inspections and culling all infected sheep next summer 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. |
| Grain poisoning | Many cases in one flock | Southern Tasmania | Ewes over-fed pellets in late pregnancy | Affected sheep can be given bicarb in water plus offered hay. Introduce pellets/grain slowly, 50 g/head/day for 2 days then increase by 50 gram/head/day every 2 days. When well settled on full ration can feed every 3-4 days. |
| Hernias (abdominal) | A number of cases in one flock | Northern Tasmania | Bulge in abdomen wall | These suspected to be caused by compressed air handler. Best just left alone, very hard to repair surgically. |
| Ill-thrift | A small to moderate number of cases in many flocks | Southern and Northern Tasmania | Mostly in weaners. Poor growth rates. | Most dryland pastures over summer do not have enough energy or protein for weaner sheep and even adult dry sheep will lose body condition. Fodder crops, irrigated pastures or supplementary feed required. Worms (especially Nematodirus in autumn), fluke, footrot, chronic pneumonia and sometimes selenium, copper or B12 deficiency can also cause ill-thrift. |
| Laminitis in ewes on grain | 20% of ewes in one flock | Southern Tasmania | Reluctant to walk, hind legs affected most. | Take off grain, offer hay. Treat with antihistamines if possible. Re-introduce grain slowly. |
| Leg fracture | One case in one flock | Southern Tasmania | This one had healed with lower half 90 degrees out of alignment. | Broken bones in sheep heal well if skin unbroken, but must be splinted properly. Must have padding between splint and leg, splint must extend one joint above and one joint below the break. Antibiotic cover and pain relief. |
| 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. |
| Nematodirus in weaner sheep | Many cases in several flocks. | Northern and Southern Tasmania | Diarrhoea with distinct smell, poor growth rates, Nematodirus faecal egg counts may not be high. | Very common in weaner sheep in autumn. Treat with an effective drench. Watch for scours/dags in autumn. |
| 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. |
| Photosensitisation | Several rams on one property | Southern Tasmania | Skin peels off face and ears. Can be due to liver damage or plant pigments. | 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, offer deep shade, move to new paddock. |
| Pneumonia | Several cases in one flock | Southern Tasmania | Deaths, difficulty breathing | Diagnosis at post mortem. Antibiotic treatment of cases (best caught early). Reduce stress and exposure to dusty feed. |
| Prolapsed uterus (chronic) | One case in one flock | Southern Tasmania | Long pink organ hanging from vulva. May be damaged. | Can be tied off and surgically removed by vet. Otherwise euthanase. Not fit to load. |
| Red gut | Multiple lambs on several properties | Northern and Southern Tasmania | Sudden deaths, bloated carcase. Lambs on irrigated Lucerne or clover pastures | Due to twisted gut. Provide roughage or move lambs onto other pasture for a day or two every week. |
| Ruptured eyeball | One ram on one property | Southern Tasmania | Eyeball shrunken in socket. | Antibiotics and pain relief/anti-inflammatories if recent or infected. Best not to surgically remove eye. |
| 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. |
| Toe abscess | Several cases, several flocks | Northern and Southern Tasmania | Very lame, no swelling, a small amount of grey pus in toe area when pared back. | Pare toe area and follow any defect/black spot back up hoof to drain small abscess to relieve pressure. Antibiotics help but usually draining abscess is enough. |
| White muscle disease | A number of cases in one flock. | Southern Tasmania | Lambs stiff and unable to walk far. Pale muscles seen at post mortem. | Drench with selenium in water. Can be saved. Prevent with selenium in pre-lamb drench for ewes, selenium in 5-in-1 vaccine at marking. |
| 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** |  |  |  |  |
| Arthritis in aged cow | One case in one herd | Southern Tasmania | Lame, swollen joint | Anti-inflammatory treatment or cull. |
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| Ataxia and loss of condition in recently calved cow | One case in one herd | Southern Tasmania | Weak in hind legs, thin. | Antibiotics and inflammatory treatment or cull. |
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| Black pizzle in bullocks | Several cases in one herd | Southern Tasmania | Black area on end of sheath. | Probably an ulcer due to rich diet high in protein. Treat with antibiotic/anti-inflammatory cream applied daily. Drop protein level in diet if possible. |
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| Liver Fluke | Multiple cases in one herd | Southern Tasmania | Diagnosed at post mortem, at slaughter or by blood or faeces tests. | Treat with flukicide that kills immature fluke at this time of year, plan treatment for adult fluke in late winter/early spring. Fence off areas where fluke snail can survive. |
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| Pink Eye in imported cattle | One herd | Southern 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. |
| Photosensitization in dairy cows | Several cattle on one property | Northern Tasmania | Red skin on nose, ears, udder, white areas, may peel later. Unsettled, milk drop, kicking at udder, seek shade. | Treat with antibiotics and anti-inflammatories or antihistamines. Blood sample to check for liver damage. Offer deep shade. Check Pithomyces spore count in pasture (Facial Eczema), blue-green algae in water source, Rough Dogs Tail (Acute Bovine Liver Disease), poisonous plants or pigment plants such as storksbill or medics in paddock. |
| Pneumonia in imported cattle | Several cattle on one property | Southern Tasmania | Discharge from nose, difficulty breathing. | Treat with antibiotics and anti-inflammatories. May require repeated courses. |
| Swollen flank/pizzle in young bull | One bull on one property | Northern Tasmania | Swollen flank and pizzle. | Fighting injury. Treat with antibiotics and anti-inflammatories. |
| Woody tongue | One cow on one property | Southern Tasmania | Tongue may stick out a bit, lose condition. Have trouble eating. | Tongue is hard and swollen. Glands around throat area can be enlarged. Vet can give intravenous injection or course of oxytetracycline antibiotic. |
| **PIGS** |  |  |  |  |
| Erysipelas | Several pigs in one herd | Southern Tasmania | Can be seen as “diamond skin”, abortion or arthritis | Penicillin is very effective treatment for acute cases. A vaccine is available for prevention. |
| Lice | One herd of pigs | Southern Tasmania | Pig lice are larger than most other lice and can be mistaken for ticks. | Injections or washes can be used to treat. Washes must be repeated in 15 days. |
| **DEER** |  |  |  |  |
| Photosensitisation | Several deer in one herd | Southern Tasmania | Skin peels off face and ears. Can be due to Facial Eczema (rare) blue-green algae in water supply, liver damage from poisonous plants, or plant pigments. | Treat with antibiotic cover, cortisone or antihistamines, access to deep shade, move off suspect paddock or water source. Pithomyces spore count pasture, check water for blue-green algae, check for poisonous or pigment plants. |
| **GOATS** |  |  |  |  |
| Dog attack | One goat on one small farm | Southern Tasmania | Often a lot of tissue damage under the skin. | Vet may drain wounds, stitch skin, antibiotic cover and anti-inflammatories/pain relief. |
| **ALPACAS** |  |  |  |  |
| Coccidiosis in a cria | One cria on one small farm | Southern Tasmania | Diarrhoea main sign and high coccidia “egg” count in faeces | Oral treatments can cure, see vet. |