Livestock Health Monitoring Report – May 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 July.

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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** |
| Abortion | One case on one property | Northern Tasmania | One case suspected at scanning | Best diagnosis is to submit 5 aborted or suspected stillbirth lambs to lab for diagnosis. Campylobacter vaccine can be used before mating. Toxoplasmosis - best to expose maidens before mating if possible. |
| Arthritis | A number of weaners in a number of flocks | Widespread | Crippled or lame lambs. Also seen in abattoir where the whole quarter will be trimmed if one joint affected. | Infection via navel after birth or orally can be reduced by encouraging good colostrum intake in first 12 hours of life. Have ewes on good feed so they start to lactate without delay. Post-marking arthritis reduced by good marking hygiene, drop lambs from cradle so they land on their feet, removing tails at third joint (level with tip of vulva in ewe lambs). Submit recently affected lambs or joints to laboratory to culture for Erysipelas and use vaccine if detected. |
| Barbers Pole worm (Haemonchus) | A number of deaths in one flock | Southern Tasmania | Deaths in young sheep with bottle jaw. | Treat with an effective drench. Use of long-acting drench such as closantel before Christmas worth considering. |
| Bladder worm | Many lines of lambs and sheep at abattoir | Northern and Southern Tasmania | Small clear cyst hanging off abdominal organs. Tapeworm head can be seen inside cyst. | Does not affect lamb growth rates but means poor tapeworm control in dogs as it is spread by dogs. Treat all dogs on property with wormer containing praziquantel every 30 days. Insist hunters and contractors treat their dogs 2 days before entry. Control stray dogs. |
| Blue-green algae toxicity | One flock 7 died. | Northern Tasmania | Sudden deaths, nervous symptoms early, photosensitisation later | Prevent access to still water bodies with blue-green scum on surface or wind-blown to one shore. Remove from water source. Give access to deep shade. |
| Cancerous growth | One ewe, one flock | Southern Tasmania | Any lump that grows over time and especially if it develops an ulcerated surface could be cancer. | Most lumps on eyelids, nose, vulva, tail (mulesed) and ears are cancers brought on by sun exposure. Other cancers are possible but rare. Mulesing with a “V” over the tail and cutting tails at vulva tip length helps prevent tail and vulval cancer, shade trees help prevent others. Some can be removed surgically if caught early but not usually economic. |
| Coccidia in WORMTEST results | One flock | Southern Tasmania | Lab reported counting some coccidia as well as worm eggs. | Many young sheep excrete some coccidia but are not affected. Only treat for coccidia if scouring with low roundworm egg count or if post mortem shows typical damage to intestines. |
| Contact toxicity/allergy | One ram in one flock | Southern Tasmania | Shedding of wool around mouth due to reaction to unknown feed or water source component. | Soft feed and clean water supply till healed. If a flock problem change feed and/or water sources. |
| Copper poisoning | A number of lambs in one flock being fed pellets | Southern Tasmania | Sheep die suddenly with anaemia and jaundice | Even a small excess of copper in the diet makes copper build up in the liver. A stress event releases all the copper and the red blood cells break down. No effective treatment once anaemic. Oral molybdenum and sulphur can reduce copper uptake in surviving sheep in the mob. |
| Eye cancer | 1 sheep on one property | Northern Tasmania | Raw fleshy growth on eyelid | Best to cull, surgery possible but uneconomic. |
| Foot abscess | Several flocks | Northern and Southern Tasmania. | Some severe cases seen in heavy rams. Many old healed cases with residual lameness. | 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 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) | 6% of over 10,000 sheep in one property, two others also affected. | Southern and Northern Tasmania, | Footrot actively spreading on irrigation or in wetter areas, the rest chronic cases. | Paring, footbathing, culling chronic cases, use of serogroup specific vaccines (see your vet for serogroup testing). Eradication by repeated foot inspections and culling all infected sheep could be planned for next summer. 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. |
| Footrot (mild) | 1 ewe in one flock | Southern Tasmania | Inflammation between toes but limited under-running of heel and sole of hoof. | Regular footbathing is usually sufficient to control. Hard to eradicate. |
| Grain poisoning | Several flocks | Southern Tasmania | Sheep on grain feeding have porridge-like scour and look depressed, may die. | Drench with tablespoon of bicarb in water, take off all concentrate feeds and offer hay or dry pasture. Prevention: Introduce grain slowly (50g/head /day, increase by 50g/head/day every 2nd day. |
| Hard udder | Three ewes in one flock | Northern Tasmania | Udder is very hard. | Chronic mastitis, best to cull. |
| Hypocalcaemia (‘milk fever”) | A number of heavily pregnant ewes affected in one incident on one property. | Southern Tasmania | Late pregnancy ewes go down after period off feed or while grazing on cereal crops or paddock dominated by sorrel or docks especially if sprayed. | 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 or crutching. Avoid forcing sheep to graze off sorrel or sprayed docks. |
| Lice (body lice) | Many cases | Widespread | Sheep body lice causing 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 sheep. | 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 | Several flocks | Southern Tasmania especially Bothwell irrigation and Derwent Valley. | Seen as bottle jaw and anaemia, drop out back of mob when driven or feedback from abattoir. | Causes bottle jaw and anaemia when severe. Fluketest egg count or post mortem to diagnose. Use drench effective against immature fluke at this time of year. |
| Lumpy wool | Several cases in several flocks | Northern and Southern Tasmania | Hard blocks of wool along top of back and other areas | Treat with long-acting oxytetracycline and keep dry. Shear when wool has grown out enough. Wool still valuable. Prevent by not yarding sheep when wet to skin. |
| Malnutrition | A number of flocks | Southern Tasmania | Sheep and lambs in low body condition score, some down. | Monitor nutrition levels by body condition scoring (feel for prominent ends of ‘short ribs’ in loin area). Supply additional feed if less the condition score 2. |
| Nervous symptoms | 1 lamb in one flock | Northern Tasmania | Lying on side, head thrown back | Can be due to pulpy kidney, B1 deficiency or poisonous plants. Post mortem/laboratory tests can assist diagnosis. Give PK booster, treat early cases with large doses of vitamin B1. Identify and exclude from poisonous plants. |
| OJD (Ovine Johnes’ Disease) | One new flock | Southern Tasmania | Adult (2yo+) sheep lose weight, may or may not scour, don’t respond to drench and die over a few months. | Sheep that lose weight and don’t respond to drenching on OJD confirmed properties should be euthanased. Prevention: use Gudair vaccine, one shot at marking or weaning on all sheep to be kept on as adults. Vaccinate on side of upper neck under skin, taking care not to self-inject. |
| Pleurisy | A small number of cases detected in the abattoir | Northern and Southern Tasmania | Seen at abattoir, results in whole rib cage being trimmed out. Reduces return to producer. | Seen in survivors of pneumonia. See below for treatment/prevention. |
| Pneumonia | A number of cases in a lamb feedlot | Northern Tasmania | Deaths, difficulty breathing | Diagnosis at post mortem. Antibiotic treatment of cases (best caught early). Reduce any stress factors, reduce dust levels in feed. |
| Sarco | Many properties affected. Detected at abattoir. | Widespread | ‘Rice grain’ like lesions in carcase. Carcase trimming and condemnations reduces return to producer. | Spread by cats. Keep cats out of feed sheds. Don’t feed raw sheep meat to cats. Clean up carcases promptly. Wide area programs most effective so work with your neighbours on cat control. |
| Sheep measles | Mostly low % of cases in many flocks. | Widespread | Small knotty lumps in carcase muscle. Trimming and condemns at abattoir reduces return to producer. | Spread by dogs. Does not affect lamb growth rates but means poor tapeworm control in dogs. Treat all dogs on property with wormer containing praziquantel every 30 days. Insist hunters and contractors treat their dogs 2 days before entry. Control stray dogs. |
| Sub-fertility | Many cases | Widespread but more in dryer areas such as Derwent Valley (110mm rain for 2019) | Lower than normal twinning % at scanning. | Nutrition has major effect on twin conception rate. Ewes should be about condition score 3 at mating and on reasonable feeding levels. |
| Swollen testicle | One ram in one flock | Southern Tasmania | One testicle larger than other | Differentiate from scrotal hernia. Treat with antibiotics and anti-inflammatories. |
| Toe abscess | One ram in one flock | Southern Tasmania | Marked lameness, no swelling | Immediate relief when tip of toe pared back carefully to release pus. |
| Toxoplasmosis | One flock | Southern Tasmania | Late abortions. | Expose maidens before mating by running them in areas frequented by breeding cats. |
| Vaccination abscess | A number of cases in three flocks detected at abattoir. | Northern and Southern Tasmania | Lumps under skin at vaccination site or abscess in muscle if vaccinated too deep. Muscle lesions trimmed at abattoir reducing return to producer. | 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 | Widespread | Northern and Southern Tasmania | Scouring weaners, high faecal egg count. | 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. |
| **CATTLE** | | | | |
| Abscess | Two cows in one herd. | Southern Tasmania | Swelling behind jaw in these 2. | Can be caused by Actino (same as wooden tongue). Vet can drain the abscess, curette (scrape out infected tissue), flush, give antibiotics or intravenous injection. Prevention: try to avoid feed containing sharp bits. |
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| Campylobacter (“Vibrio”) infertility | One dairy herd | Southern Tasmania | Cows thought to be in calf return to service, abortions, sub-optimal in-calf % at pregnancy testing. Common in beef cattle as well as dairy. | Diagnosis by vaginal swabs (cow) or sheath scraping (bull). Vaccine available will cure as well as prevent. |
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| Cooperia | 100% of weaner cattle with nearly pure Cooperia worm infections | Northern Tasmania | Scour, sub-optimal growth rates. | Treat with effective drench. Try to create “clean” paddocks for weaner cattle. Monitor with WORTEST every month. |
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| Downer cow | One cow on 1 property. | Southern Tasmania | Mature cow, in very good condition, 6 weeks from calving, no nervous signs. | Possibly pregnancy toxaemia if on poor feed, a urine test can help confirm. Ketosis treatments. Also possible are infections and poisonous plants. |
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| Ill-thrift in weaners | 2 heifers from a larger mob on one property. | Southern Tasmania | Heifers not growing out. | Treat for worms and fluke. If no response may be worth getting vet to examine and possibly test for pestivirus. |
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| Liver fluke | Abattoir feedback – several properties | Southern Tasmania | Bottle jaw and anaemia rare in cattle. Usually seen as sub-optimal growth rates in young cattle or low condition score in adults. | Treat all cattle in late winter with effective adult flukicide in fluke areas. May need autumn treatments for immatures as well in heavily infested areas. |
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| Malnutrition | Several properties | Southern Tasmania | Cattle in poor condition, weak, down. | Monitor nutrition levels by body condition scoring. Start supplementary feed once cattle get below condition score 2. |
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| Ostertagia (brown stomach worm) | A number of weaned cattle in one herd | Northern Tasmania | Scour, sub-optimal growth rates. | Ostertagia worms are poor egg layers so faecal egg counts may not be high. Use an effective drench. Long-acting products should be administered to weaner cattle in winter to prevent inhibited larvae accumulating in lining of 4th stomach and causing type 2 Ostertagiasis next autumn. |
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| Split hooves | A number of cattle in one herd | Southern Tasmania | Vertical splits form in the wall of the hoof. | May be conformation (and possibly hereditary) vitamin/mineral deficiency or dry cold conditions. Unless causing lameness, leave alone. If lame may need to check for hoof abscess and feed dietary supplement with copper, zinc, vitamins A , D and biotin. |
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| Woody Tongue (Actino) | One cow in one herd | Southern Tasmania | Loss of condition, rough coat, tip of tongue may stick out a bit. | Vet can treat with intravenous injection or certain antibiotics. Prevention by reducing any sharp components of feed that can damage tongue and let the bacteria in. |
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| **PIGS** | | | | |
| Infertility | Several sows on one property | Southern Tasmania | Mate with boar but don’t get pregnant. | Could be parvovirus which can cause stillbirths, mummified foetuses, foetal death and infertility. A vaccine is available to prevent but not cure the disease |
| 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. |
| **GOATS** | | | | |
| Downer | One 20 y.o. goat on one property | Southern Tasmania | Thin weak, down. | Could be Johne’s Disease, CAE virus, worms, cancer, loss of teeth or in this case just old age. Euthanasia often most humane option for very old animals. |
| Malnutrition | Several properties | Southern Tasmania | Thin weak, go down easily. | Monitor nutrition levels by condition scoring. Start supplementary feed when condition score gets below 2. |
| Mastitis | 1 goat on one property | Southern Tasmania | Hot swollen udder or clots in milk. | Can use half cow mastitis treatments or intra-muscular antibiotic injections. |
| Worms | 1 goat one property | Southern Tasmania | Scouring, down | Treat with effective drench. Some drenches don’t work well in goats as goats break some drenches down rapidly. Drench resistance is common. Assess worm burdens with faecal egg counts (WORMTEST) and assess effectiveness of drench 10-14 days after drenching. Feed well and try to create ‘clean’ paddocks. |
| **ALPACAS** | | | | |
| Pink eye | 1 alpaca on one property | Southern Tasmania | Discharge from eye, cloudy cornea. | Can use oxytetracycline powder in eye twice a day for 7 days or refer to vet. |