

Merino Matters



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AVOID NASTY SURPRISES WHEN BUYING SHEEP

Use the National Sheep Health Statement

THE National Sheep Health Statement (NSHS) is the single most useful document you can use when buying or selling sheep.

Sellers can use it as an opportunity to promote the health status of their sheep and it allows buyers to assess health risks and buy wisely.

The NSHS is not legally required for sheep trading in this state but when used it carries the same weight as a statutory declaration so it will give sheep buyers an additional level of confidence in the stock they are buying.

Section one of the NSHS contains information about the origin of the consignment and the description and identity details of the sheep.

Section two contains information on the Ovine Johne's disease (OJD) risk associated with the sheep being sold.

Each extra Assurance Based Credit (ABC) point in section two corresponds to around a four-fold reduction in the risk of buying in OJD with these sheep.

All sheep that have spent their whole life in Western Australia get two points in Category A, as the whole state is a medium prevalence area.

Area prevalence indicates the likelihood that the sheep have been exposed to OJD through neighbour contact or local sheep movements.

Flocks that are known or suspected of being infected gain no credits under Category A, but can gain credits under Categories B, C, and D for activities undertaken to reduce risk and increase assurance.

Points under categories B, C and D are accrued for testing (abattoir surveillance, pooled faecal culture) or for vaccination.

The NSHS also contains valuable information about footrot, *Brucella ovis* accreditation, lice treatments and vaccination for other diseases such as pulpy kidney.

The NSHS allows buyers to see the health risks of the sheep they are looking at and is a good indicator of the OJD status of the sheep while it allows sellers to promote the health status of their sheep to potential buyers.

For more information go to www.ojd.com.au or contact Anna Erickson, WA State Johne's Disease co-ordinator, DAFWA, on 9881 0211



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