

When did you last think about OB?

The bacterial disease Ovine Brucellosis (OB) affects the reproductive performance of sheep flocks, resulting in infertility in rams and increased abortions in ewes.

It often goes unrecognised, potentially causing severe economic losses.

In any infected flock, there will be a percentage of infected rams with obvious clinical lesions on their testicles, some infected rams with no lesions and some non-infected rams.

Rams usually become permanently infected and excrete the OB bacteria periodically in their semen. Sedomy is the most common way rams become infected. They may also become infected when exposed to infected semen in ewes from recent matings.

Control and prevention requires a range of tactics, including:

- testing and culling infected rams
- examining ram testicles prior to purchasing or joining, checking for any lesions, irregularities or differences between the

- contents of the two sides of the scrotum that cannot otherwise be explained
- purchasing rams from OB-free accredited breeders, ensuring their accreditation is current
- isolating new stock until their OB status is determined
- running rams in small mobs, separating young and old rams
- testing rams for OB at least one month before joining
- avoiding running rams with ewes during lambing periods to prevent contraction
- ensuring sound boundary fences to prevent stray or rogue rams.

Eradication is based on eliminating infection in older rams and preventing infection of young rams. This involves a combination of manual examination, blood testing and removal of infected rams. Treatment of infected animals is not worthwhile as it is unlikely to improve their fertility.

The voluntary OB accreditation scheme ensures rams are disease free for interstate movement, ram sales and export. A property assessment is required to achieve OB free accreditation. Testing is done by a vet and involved blood sampling and a manual examination. The scheme is managed by Agriculture Victoria.

Tip: for more detail you can download VFFs fact sheet online at bit.ly/2dJbXsQ

For more information, contact Livestock Health & Biosecurity Victoria's Catherine James on 0418 360 470, cjames@vff.org.au or on Twitter @vff_LHBV.



Image: *Brucella ovis* often causes the tail of the epididymis to swell and the associated testis to shrink as shown on the left from a 15-month-old ram. Source: Sheep Connect SA

Quad Safety Rebate on a roll

Farmers are rushing to get in on the Quad Bike Safety Rebate Scheme, with the program receiving more than 100 applications less than a week after it opened last Saturday.

The Victorian Farmers Federation, which is administering the State Government's \$6 million initiative to encourage farmers to fit their quad bikes with operator protection devices (OPDs) or buy a safer alternative vehicle, confirmed it had received 106 applications by Friday morning.

"We're all excited at the response we've had to the scheme and we hope people keep calling to take advantage of this fantastic rebate offer," VFF Vice President Brett Hosking said.

"OPDs and other protection are vital to protect farmers, their families, and their workers from the risks of using quad bikes.

"For every application we process, there's one more quad bike being fitted with safety gear to protect a farmer from the risk of rollovers, and the enthusiastic response we've had to the program shows that farmers right across Victoria are dedicated to ensuring they run a safe operation."

Farmers can tap into the VFF's www.bequadsafe.com.au website to claim up to \$1200 (GST exempt) in rebates on OPDs, side-by-side (SSV) and other alternate vehicles.



Applicants have so far rushed to claim the rebate on OPDs, with around 60 applying for rebates on the \$600 Quadbar and about 8 opting for the more expensive ATV Lifeguard, valued at \$1200. The other 38 applicants have applied for rebates on alternative vehicles.

All rebates will be available for a period of two years or until the funds are exhausted – whichever occurs first. Rebates will also be allocated on a first-in first-served basis to eligible applicants with complete applications.

"The scheme is open to all farmers and we're encouraging everyone to get in early to take advantage of the rebate offer," Mr Hosking said.

"We're hoping to process more than 5000 applications while the scheme is open and we're off to a rollicking start!"

Any farmer who has purchased an approved OPD or alternative vehicle from September 1 is eligible for the rebate.

Further details on farmer eligibility for the scheme can be found at www.bequadsafe.com.au or by calling the VFF on 1300 945 030 for an application.