



Victorian  
Farmers  
Federation

Livestock

# the Stock Standard

Newsletter of the Victorian Farmers Federation Livestock Group

February 2018

## Time for reason on Ovine Johne's disease

Animal Health Australia is reviewing the five year National OJD Management plan, which has been in effect since 2013. During this period, all states except South Australia have largely deregulated OJD at the state level. Regional Biosecurity Plans have not been well supported, and abattoir monitoring and surveillance has been ad hoc and of limited effectiveness. Moving forward, we need a national approach.

Regulating a disease can lead to perverse outcomes if it creates a financial incentive to hide infections. If producers (and their neighbours) are penalised when they detect disease, then they may prefer simply not to test. Currently producers can choose not to test either through choosing an abattoir that does not conduct abattoir surveillance or not opting in to OJD screening in abattoirs that do test. This farcical situation is a direct result of the negative regulatory impact and subsequent pressure from producers within some regional biosecurity areas preferring not to know about disease rather than controlling it.

This is a classic example of regulation, combined with rational producer behaviour, actually preventing a disease from being managed effectively. A consistent national approach of monitoring and risk management is needed, which focuses on controlling the overall level of disease rather than ineffectively trying to limit the spread. The current regulation will only cause more pain in the future as the total level of the disease builds up, if not identified early.

The impacts of worms, flystrike, lice, footrot and a suite of other conditions cause far greater production losses to the sheep industry. MLA estimated that internal parasites cost the national industry \$436 million, while Ovine Johne's Disease cost roughly \$35 million. Yet stigma, fear mongering and denial remain about a disease that can be easily managed through vaccination, good farm biosecurity measures, and fair dinkum monitoring without recrimination if detected.

OJD regulation not only drives the disease underground, it limits the ability of individual farmers to make their own decisions for their businesses in choosing replacement and stud stock, limiting the genetic gain. Trade restrictions imposed by South Australia have cost producers on both sides of the border more than any potential impact of OJD.

The average sheep producer has no faith in the current OJD management plan and is losing trust and respect for the responsible entities. Unless a line is drawn in the sand this is likely to limit the impact of the current

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or future management of endemic or exotic disease control programs.

The VFF is calling upon the national sheep industry to adopt self-regulation. The solution is straightforward: treat OJD as an endemic disease that requires a national approach to monitoring. This is an opportunity to build robustness and a consistent approach that reflects our industry, not the straight lines on a map drawn by colonists.

## Primary producers and heavy vehicle safety

### Chain of Responsibility laws:

Changes to the Chain of Responsibility laws are coming in mid-2018 which will have significant implications for all farmers (not just those who drive trucks).

If a farmer consigns, packs, loads or receive goods as part of their business, they could be held legally liable for breaches of the Heavy Vehicle National Law.

Farmers will have an obligation to eliminate or minimise potential risk by doing all that is 'reasonably practicable' to ensure safety.

Further information is available at [nhvr.gov.au/cor](http://nhvr.gov.au/cor)

# A call for certainty in the kangaroo pet food industry

Victoria's peak farmer body says it's time to fully commercialise the kangaroo pet food trial and provide certainty for the industry.

"Victoria is currently the only Australian state without an approved management plan for commercial kangaroo harvesting and this is the perfect opportunity to provide a sustainable management solution to the problem" said VFF Livestock President Leonard Vallance

The kangaroo population has exploded to plague proportions in recent years with the abundant supply of grazing feed & water artificially inflating the natural kangaroo population with the Federal Department of Environment quoting more than 48 million head in Australia – up from 25 million in 2011.

This has a detrimental impact on not only agriculture but also natural and native flora and fauna; leaving no shelter being provided to animals such as reptiles, birds and insects. The kangaroo pet food industry is a means of managing the kangaroo population at a sustainable and viable level in a regulated environment.

"It's time for Minister D'Ambrosio to commit to the commercialisation and provide certainty to the people invested in the industry. We're very concerned about the amount of damage and destruction the kangaroo population is currently presenting to Victorian farming land," said Mr Vallance.

"This is the best way to reduce the economic and environmental damage caused by excess numbers of kangaroos and create jobs in the meat supply chain, and boost revenue that would be invested back into rural communities at the same time"

In all commercial situations, kangaroos and wallabies must be shot in accordance with the conditions described in the. Commercial kangaroo and wallaby harvesting is regulated by state legislation which licences commercial kangaroo and/or wallaby shooters on the condition that commercial shooters can only sell carcasses of animals that have been managed in accordance with this Code.

The VFF also see the benefit of investigating the pet food supply chain for the management of the increasing deer population in Victoria.

## Battling heat stress in livestock

The first months of summer have seen a number of above average days for both temperature and humidity in Victoria, increasing the risk of heat stress in livestock.

### Typical signs of heat stress in livestock include:

- ▶ Bunching in the shade
- ▶ Slobbering or panting
- ▶ Lack of coordination and trembling
- ▶ Agitation and restlessness

Heat stress can lead to a significant loss of production due to: reduced feed intake, increased susceptibility to other disease, changes in behaviour and, in severe cases, death. It is important to put practises in place to prevent heat stress and to know what to do when animals are suffering from heat stress.

Be aware of your herd or flocks level of risk.

Heavier and dark coloured animals are more susceptible to heat stress. Cattle in particular do not have an effective sweat system which, when combined with the heat generation from the rumen, means they are unable to dispel heat as effectively as smaller species.

Heat load can build up over a number of days, especially if nights are warm and cattle can't effectively dissipate heat.

Water water water.

Most livestock will seek shade before water, so make sure sufficient shade is provided with a reliable water source

nearby. Be sure that the water quality is suitable for the class of stock as it may deteriorate over summer.

If signs of heat stress occur, supply drinking water and consider wetting animals down with a fire hose or large droplet sprinkler.

Avoid unnecessary handling, yarding or transport during hot weather especially if stocks are showing signs of stress.

**For more information get in touch with the team at Livestock Health & Biosecurity Victoria on 1300 020 163 or [lhbv@vff.org.au](mailto:lhbv@vff.org.au).**



# Flystrike research

University of Melbourne researchers are seeking adult blowflies from properties across the country. They require sheep producers to trap, collect and send in 30 adult blowflies.

Research Dr Trent Perry said 'We are still looking for farmers who are interested in participating in the trial'.

Please email Dr Trent Perry at University of Melbourne, trentp@melbuni.edu.au, if you are interested in collecting blowflies for the research project or for further information.



## The VFF is fighting for better regional roads

Effective regional road networks are critical for the profitability and productivity of the Victorian agriculture industry.

To assist us to develop our election campaign, we want to know:

- What region are you from?
- What are your worst local roads?
- What are the key reasons for this? (eg poor maintenance by local government, increased heavy vehicle traffic, lack of state funding)

Send your responses to [policyteam@vff.org.au](mailto:policyteam@vff.org.au)



## OJD Survey

The sheep and wool industry is being invited to have its say on the future management of Ovine Johne's Disease (OJD) in Australia.

WoolProducers Australia (WPA) and Sheep Producers Australia (SPA) are seeking feedback from the sheep and wool industry on the future management of OJD, with the 2013-2018 National Ovine Johne's Disease Management Plan (NOJDMP) due to finish in 2018. The current NOJDMP was prepared by WPA and SPA after consultation with industry in 2012-13.

WPA and SPA have developed a discussion paper outlining the review process and are seeking feedback from interested stakeholders.

The discussion paper and further information is available via [www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/ojd-review/](http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/ojd-review/).

An online producer survey is also available at: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/ojdplan](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ojdplan)

Stakeholders are asked to provide feedback by COB on 12 March 2018.

The NOJDMP is managed by Animal Health Australia on behalf of WPA and SPA.

## FARMERS' FORUM

### ALL FARMERS WELCOME

Have your say on issues that impact farming in your community. Take part in the discussion:

VFF policy update, Leonard Vallance, VFF Livestock President & Ross Johns, VFF Grains President

LPA obligations - what you need to do and when, Livestock Health & Biosecurity VICTORIA

Sheet & goat eID - know your responsibilities, Agriculture Victoria

Identifying Anthrax - knowing what to look for, Livestock Health & Biosecurity VICTORIA

Q fever - battling the silent disease, Livestock Health & Biosecurity VICTORIA

#### WHERE

Ouyen Football Club Rooms  
6 Calder Hwy, Ouyen

#### WHEN

Thursday 1 March 2018

#### TIME

9:15am - 12:00pm  
Doors open from 9:00am

#### RSVP ESSENTIAL

Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> February  
1300 882 833  
[members@vff.org.au](mailto:members@vff.org.au)

Free event with lunch provided!

Proudly supported by:



# STOCK UP

a practical guide to farm biosecurity

FREE LUNCH

#### WHERE

Echuca Racing Club  
Chr Scott Rd & Murray  
Valley Hwy, Echuca

#### WHEN

Thursday 22 March 2018

#### TIME

9:30am - 1:00pm  
Doors open from 9:00am

#### REGISTER

for catering purposes  
[www.L-BV.eventbrite.com](http://www.L-BV.eventbrite.com)  
or 1300 020 163

Join us for a free event on  
**Thursday 22 March**

- ▶ What do the LPA changes mean for your livestock enterprise?
- ▶ Lessons from Bluetongue virus: the importance of traceability.
- ▶ A producers take on using biosecurity to keep their business profitable.
- ▶ Nutrition tips for healthy calves & lambs.

All livestock producers welcome.

For more information contact Kimberley Herman at [libv@vff.org.au](mailto:libv@vff.org.au)



# Quad bike rebates – making safer purchasing choices

It has been encouraging to see the continued uptake of the quad bike rebate as we reach the one year mark of the scheme.

Beef and sheep farmers are taking the lead by making safer purchasing choices – either fitting a roll over device to their quadbike, or taking the opportunity to upgrade to a safer side by side vehicle, then claiming the available rebate.

The safety message is starting to have an effect with almost 3000 Victorian farmers recognising the dangers of quad bikes on farms, which can also result in a loss of productivity; and making a decision to do something about it.

Injury and fatality statistics in farming speak for themselves – quad bikes are a major contributor.

The risks of using quad bikes without roll over protection are just too great they can lead to devastating outcomes for you, your family and your staff.

If you are yet to do something about it – here is your opportunity.



A Victorian farmer with a quad bike can take advantage of the \$1200 rebate by upgrading to a safer side-by-side vehicle. Or you can fit roll over protection to your quad bike and claim up to \$600.

Make your purchase, fill in your application, attach your tax invoice and send in to us here at the VFF and we will process your application.

For more information and applications call the Quad Bike Hotline 1300 945 030 or visit [www.bequadsafe.com.au](http://www.bequadsafe.com.au)



## Welcoming Pat Kluver

The Livestock Health & Biosecurity VICTORIA team are very excited to welcome aboard livestock veterinarian, Dr Patrick Kluver.

Starting in 2018 as Senior Livestock Specialist, Pat is bringing with him a wealth of knowledge in both endemic and exotic livestock disease control, drawing from his past experience within the Victorian Government, University of Melbourne, the Mackinnon project, Livestock Biosecurity Network and the CSIRO.

Pat's knowledge of biosecurity and livestock disease management will be a strong contribution to the project as it continues to provide access to animal health and biosecurity information through local events, fact sheets, a quarterly newsletter and more.

2018 also sees the project beginning work in the Peri-Urban sector, raising awareness among small landholders about their responsibilities as livestock owners and the role of biosecurity.

The LHBV team continues to be available to all livestock producers in Victoria so be sure to keep an eye out for us at a local events or field day, keep up to date with us on Twitter, Facebook or [www.lhbv.org.au](http://www.lhbv.org.au), and get in touch on **1300 020 163** or [lhbv@vff.org.au](mailto:lhbv@vff.org.au).

## Farm Plan 21

Central Victorian farmers will have the opportunity to create a digital map of their farm when Agriculture Victoria delivers a FarmPlan21 course in Meredith this March.

Training in the use of a simple mapping program is just one feature of the FarmPlan21 training program.

The course, which is delivered one day (6 hours) per week, over four weeks guides farmers through the process of creating or updating a whole farm plan and setting realistic goals for their business.

The course will cover:

- ▶ Vision and goal setting
- ▶ Soil productivity and soil health
- ▶ Land capability
- ▶ Farm water supply
- ▶ Grazing and pasture management
- ▶ Risk management (biosecurity, climate and fire).

The FarmPlan21 course will be held at Meredith Community Centre (4 Russell Street) over four Fridays during March (March 2, 9, 16 and 23).

Sessions will run from 9.30am to 3pm and will include presentations from guest speakers, as well as visits to local farms.

The cost of taking part is \$100 per business and lunch is provided.

The course will be delivered by Agriculture Victoria, with support from the Leigh Catchment Group.

To register, or for more information, contact:  
Heather Field at Agriculture Victoria by Email: [heather.field@ecodev.vic.gov.au](mailto:heather.field@ecodev.vic.gov.au) or Phone: 0438 391 210.

More information about FarmPlan21 can be found on the Agriculture Victoria website at: <http://go.vic.gov.au/lhNFFn>

**Disclaimer:** This publication is provided in good faith and as a guide only. It may be of assistance to you, but the VFF Livestock Group does not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or consequence that may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

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