Animal health advice for producers in the Hunter

Tips for spring from the District Vet team

It has been an incredibly tough run of seasons in our region and some farmers have just experienced their third difficult winter in a row. With inadequate and at times only patchy rain falling across much of the Hunter during autumn and winter, many local producers are again facing spring and summer with less than enough feed to carry their stock through the season.

If you are planning to maintain pregnant, calving and or lactating cows especially, in many areas you will need to introduce alternate feed sources such as grain, silage or hay. Due to ongoing drought conditions across many parts of the country, this could be difficult or expensive to source so please consider your options wisely, and consult the team at Hunter Local Land Services or your private veterinarian if you need more support in making nutrition or animal health decisions for your herd.

If you are purchasing feed, please be conscious of correctly assessing the minimum energy requirements of your stock and ensuring any purchased feed is good quality. Last year in particular, there were a number of stock losses attributed to poor quality feed that failed to meet the basic energy content required, especially for lactating, calving or pregnant stock. Problems with high nitrate levels in some feed also caused issues and proved fatal on occasion.

Ensure you maintain vaccinations and drenching programs in addition to meeting adequate nutritional requirements for stock as there have been recent incidents of livestock deaths caused by Barber’s Pole Worm anaemia, liver fluke and black leg. It is possible because of feed shortages livestock have been grazing closer to the ground than usual and this has led to them picking up the worm larvae, liver fluke or black leg spores.

As a service to industry, District Veterinarians track which diseases are circulating so that we can not only give early warnings but also to help producers decide what vaccinations and preparations they need to consider. Your assistance in reporting suspect cases to your local District Vet is appreciated.

Drought Support: Don’t Self Assess

With numerous types of drought support available from both the NSW and Australian governments, it is important not to self-assess and seek help to ensure you are aware of all available assistance measures.

Hunter Local Land Services can help with ‘boots on the ground’ services during times of drought. Our staff can assist producers with livestock and pasture advice, animal health issues, pest animal problems, applying for roadside grazing permits and available Traveling Stock Routes. You must also seek approval from your local council prior to placing stock on roads.

The NSW Government’s Emergency Drought Relief Package 2019-20 includes $70 million for Drought Transport Subsidies. The subsidy can be applied to the cost of transporting: fodder, water to a property for stock or domestic use, stock to and from agistment, stock to sale or slaughter. For applications received from 1 July 2019 the subsidy also includes transporting of farm chemicals, fertiliser and seed to farms.

Farmers who applied for the Drought Transport Subsidy in the 2018/19 financial year (Round One) are able to apply for an additional $40,000 for invoices dated between 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020. Farmers who did not apply for the Drought Transport Subsidy prior to 30 June 2019 (Round One), can apply for a maximum subsidy of $40,000 for invoices dated from 1 January 2018 - 30 June 2020.

Hunter Local Land Services has a dedicated Drought Administration Officer, Anne Lantry, available to help you lodge applications with the NSW Rural Assistance Authority, including claiming Drought Transport Subsidies. You can make an appointment to meet Anne by calling 1300 795 299.

Or speak to Anne direct via: Phone: 0428 394 668 Email: anne.lantry@lls.nsw.gov.au
Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme

The NSW Government, through the NSW Rural Assistance Authority, is delivering the Federal Government-funded $12 million rebate program to drought affected livestock farmers for the purchase and upgrade of on-farm water infrastructure. The On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate scheme is available to eligible primary producers who can claim a rebate of 25% of the cost for; new purchases, and installation of pipes, water storages and water pumps, de-silting dams, and associated power supplies such as generators. This Rebate scheme can be applied to costs incurred from 1st July 2018. The maximum that can be claimed is $25,000 per farm enterprise. The availability of rebates is subject to funds being available. No rebates will be offered beyond the allocated funding of $12 million. Applications close 30 June 2021 or when the funding allocation is exhausted, whichever occurs first. Information about drought subsidies, low-interest loans and other support measures can be found at www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub

Where are you buying your livestock from?

Recently one of our district vets was conducting a piggery inspection and found limping sheep and goats, which turned out to have footrot.

Footrot is a contagious bacterial disease of both sheep and goats and is caused by a combination of two bacteria, which work together to destroy the hoof and sole causing extreme lameness. Footrot is a whole flock problem.

Footrot can remain in the foot unnoticed for years, until the environmental conditions are ideal for expression of the disease. Virulent Footrot is a notifiable disease which requires a person to notify an authorised officer (e.g. LLS District Vet) under the Biosecurity Act 2015 after they suspect or become aware of footrot in sheep and goats. Regulatory action may result if virulent footrot is not promptly notified. Once footrot is diagnosed or suspected on a property, a District Veterinarian will develop an eradication program in order to clean up the property.

Please ensure that any introduced sheep/goats come from a clean property and that the owners of the sheep/goats are willing to provide a signed National Sheep/Goat Health Statement before you take delivery of the animals to guarantee the animals health. Quarantine any new animals, checking for any signs of illness. Maintain strict farm biosecurity, with well-maintained fences in order to prevent straying stock.

Under the Biosecurity Act 2015, everyone involved in the livestock industries must be aware of biosecurity risks for their industry and take all reasonable and practical measures to prevent and manage biosecurity risks.

These days many people are purchasing livestock from sources online such as Gumtree, Facebook, or through word of mouth. Often these sources are not selling animals in the correct way and you are putting your property and other animals at risk. All animals should be transported with a National Vendor Declaration or a Travelling Stock Statement, NLIS tag in their ear which should be transferred on the NLIS Database, everyone with livestock needs a Property Identification Code on their land which can be obtained from your Local Land Service Office and always ask for a National Health Declaration Certificate.

The last thing you want to do is purchase a few sheep or goats to eat your grass and weeds and end up with your property under quarantine.
Worms in dry times

It is a common misconception that worms will not be an issue during dry times and unfortunately worm management can go by the wayside.

During dry times the pasture becomes very short and worm larvae congregate on the lower few centimetres of the pasture, consequently stock are picking up more worm larvae as they eat the last of the available forage.

Animals tend to congregate in any area that has green pick available. This may be around a water course, a leaking trough or water pipe under the shade of a tree where the morning dew remains for longer and these areas then become highly contaminated with worm eggs and larvae. A moist environment will often enable the worm eggs to develop into the infective larval stage which can survive up to six months in cooler conditions (depending on the worm species) and up to three months in hotter conditions.

These photos are from an animal that died from a heavy liver fluke infestation in the Lower Hunter. On the right side of the liver you can see the adult liver fluke that have been extracted from the bile ducts. The bile ducts (white area on the left side of the photo) were extremely thickened and the liver was shrunken to half its normal size. This property is in a liver fluke area and preventative drenches are used at regular recommended intervals. Due to the extreme dry conditions that we have in the Hunter, the use of liver fluke preventative drenches had been decreased. This property has a constant wet area in a small section of a paddock due to run off from a subdivision. There is always an area of green pick that provided a perfect environment for the liver fluke larvae to develop and cattle to forage. Cattle are happy to graze in wet marshy areas that are favoured by the liver fluke snail (intermediate host), so the eggs are deposited in a suitable environment.

Worm issues have also been noticed in the Upper Hunter, where drought conditions have been extreme! There have been cases of barber’s pole worm in sheep, where there was no feed available in the paddock and the producers had to trail feed grain. On post mortem examination there have been multiple cases of encysted Ostertagia (Brown Stomach Worm) in cattle. Ostertagia larval stage has the ability to burrow into the glands of the abomasum (4th stomach) and cease development until the outside conditions are ideal. Eruption of these larvae at the same time can cause severe illness. The photo on the left demonstrates a bumpy appearance to the lining of the abomasum which is a great demonstration of the encysted Ostertagia.

It is important to not forget about worms during these dry times. As stock become lighter in condition and pasture declines in quality and quantity, stock are not able to mount an effective immune response and become more susceptible to worms. Continue to monitor the health of your livestock with regular worm egg counts and clinical signs.

Early Weaning

Early weaning is a tool that should be considered to assist producers to maintain the fat score of their breeders. Calves can be weaned onto good feed from 100 kilos (approx 3 months of age). This is beneficial for the cow, the calf and your pocket. Splitting the cow calf unit and feeding separately saves considerable feed and water as it is more efficient to feed/water the calf directly rather than through the cow.

Ideally aim to keep breeders at a fat score of 2.5-3 out of 5. Ensuring breeders do not drop below fat score 2 (a minimum of 5mm of fat on the rump) is important as once cows fall below 5mm of rump fat they will start to metabolise muscle and fertility drops. Maintaining breeder condition helps to ensure breeders can cycle and conceive again, but maybe more importantly it ensures producers maintain the flexibility to market their breeders should conditions change or opportunity arises. If breeder condition falls buyers evaporate and in some cases the cattle are then not fit to transport. This is an awkward situation for all to be faced with.

Maintaining breeder condition and ensuring their daily energy needs are met by supplementary feed (when paddock feed is insufficient which unfortunately is the common situation in many areas at the moment) is also important for pregnant cows. Compromised maternal nutrition during gestation produces offspring with reduced meat quality due to less muscle fibres. Muscle fibres are formed during the 2nd-8th month of gestation and the number of muscles fibres does not increase after birth. If your business is producing steers for the meat market maintaining breeder condition and budgeting to feed what you have chosen to keep right through pregnancy and into lactation is crucial.
African Swine Fever (ASF) Alert and rules for feeding pigs

Pig ownership is becoming increasingly popular and more and more people are choosing to own pigs. If you own any number of pigs, regardless of the size of your property, you must have a PIC. This is a Property Identification Code (PIC) and can be obtained by contacting your Local Land Services Office.

All pigs (including pet pigs) must be permanently identified with a NLIS ear tag (which includes the PIC) or a swine brand before leaving your property. All movements must be recorded on a PigPass NVD, which must accompany the pigs in transit. The information must then be recorded in the PigPass database within 48 hours by the person receiving the pigs. Pig producers and owners must complete a PigPass NVD whenever pigs are moved to another property, saleyard, abattoir or showground, even if the ownership of the pigs doesn’t change. This is important for disease tracing. PigPass can be obtained from: http://www.pigpass.com.au or by phoning 1800 001 458.

Swill Feeding is illegal for all pigs (including pet pigs) in Australia. Swill feeding is the feeding of mammalian products to pigs. Feeding food waste to pigs is one of the major causes of a Foot and Mouth Disease Outbreak overseas. Swill includes meat and meat products, including anything that has come into contact with meat or meat products. The feeding of swill is highly illegal.

Prohibited swill includes:

- Meat pies, sausage rolls, cheese and bacon rolls, pizza, deli meats, table scraps that contain or have been in contact with meat or meat products
- Household, commercial or industrial waste, including restaurant food and discarded cooking oils
- Anything that has been in contact with meat or meat by products, such as meat trays and take-away food containers

Swill may contain serious exotic diseases that could devastate our livestock industries domestically and internationally. We are very lucky in Australia not to have many of the diseases that are present overseas. An outbreak of something like Foot and Mouth Disease would cripple our livestock industry and have devastating socio-economic impacts. The feeding of swill to pigs provides the most likely opportunity for the Foot and Mouth Disease virus and ASF to become established in Australia. Other exotic diseases such as Swine Vesicular Disease have also been transmitted overseas as a result of swill feeding.

African Swine Fever (ASF) is a highly contagious disease of pigs. It can cause fever, skin lesions, incoordination, lameness, diarrhoea, and pneumonia (laboured breathing). It can affect all breeds and ages. Most infected animals die within 10 days. There have been no reported cases of ASF in Australia. The virus is highly resistant in the environment and in contaminated pork products. There is no vaccine or treatment available. Recent outbreaks of ASF throughout Asia and Europe this year, including outbreaks in popular tourist destinations for Australians, such as Vietnam and Cambodia, pose a greatly increased risk to the Australian livestock industries. Illegally imported pork products, if swill fed to pigs in Australia could potentially introduce African Swine Fever with devastating effects.
Hendra awareness

As most people are aware there has been a Hendra case in a single horse in the Upper Hunter. This is the furthest south that a case has occurred. It is also unusual in being so far inland.

Hendra is a virus that is carried by flying foxes and can infect horses that eat/drink/reside in paddocks where flying foxes may be feeding or roosting in trees. Humans who have had very close contact with sick horses without wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) may become infected. There has never been a human case of Hendra from direct contact with a bat; they have all been from contact with an infected horse. There has also never been human to human spread of the disease. Some dogs and cats have developed antibodies after close exposure to a sick horse but there has been no human disease from contact with these animals.

There is, however, a risk to humans of contracting Australian Bat Lyssa Virus from contact with infected bats or flying foxes. For this reason it is recommended not to handle live or sick bats or flying foxes.

The Hunter Valley property affected by the recent case of Hendra infection in a horse was issued a Biosecurity Direction limiting movement of susceptible species and isolating in contact horses. All people who had been in contact with the affected horse were interviewed and monitored by NSW Public Health. At the end of the 21 day risk period the Biosecurity Direction was revoked with all in contact people and animals remaining healthy throughout. These events are a great example of the effectiveness of the One Health policy coordinating human and animal health sectors in management of zoonoses (diseases that people can get from animals) with collaboration and input from both human and animal medical teams.

The more widespread effect of this outbreak has been an increased awareness of the risk of Hendra infection in horses in previously “safe” areas. Loss of habitat has led to flying foxes having to travel and form colonies in new areas on a more permanent basis, as well as drought forcing them to search further afield for food sources. When these fragmented colonies appear in agricultural areas there is greater chance of interaction with both people and horses.

Public concern seems to revolve around the safety of individual horses, safety of people working with horses on a daily basis, safety of holding horse events in the area and the ability to access veterinary care if required. Good biosecurity practices can manage most of the issues of concern and there is no reason to stop holding horse events.

Vaccination is the best protection, but making sure horses are fed and watered away from trees that may be used as roosts or for feeding by bats, washing feed and water buckets with detergent before use and preventing horses from grazing in and around the base of trees are all effective at minimizing the risk. Covering water troughs and keeping horses under cover overnight also decrease the risk of exposure.

Event organisers should have a plan in place for dealing with unwell horses at an event and should consider the use of the Horse Health Declaration to monitor health prior to arriving at the event. Horse stud owners and professionals should consider their obligations with respect to work health and safety for their staff in their decision making. Owners should seek advice from their private practitioner regarding vaccination and the use of PPE when handling unwell horses. The virus is easily killed by soap and water so the encouragement of good personal hygiene around horses is also important.
Managing pain in calves during disbudding and castration.

We have recently received a number of queries about different methods of pain relief available for use in calves when disbudding and castrating. A couple of new products are now available to assist producers and it is great to see increased interest and use of pain relief by producers for these essential, but painful, husbandry procedures.

Providing adequate pain relief is best practice for cattle of all ages. It provides improved welfare outcomes for the animal with a range of production and marketing benefits. Adequate pain management reduces pain and stress in the animal, promotes more rapid wound healing, reduces complications, generally increases weight gain, and improves consumer perceptions of welfare for livestock production. This is increasingly important and is crucial to maintaining consumer and community support for livestock production – sometimes called our “social licence to farm”.

A recent NFF poll highlights the disconnect between rural and urban Australia with 83% of Australians having no connection to agriculture but 95% of people viewing farm animal welfare a concern. The interest and uptake in pain relief, by producers, for husbandry procedures clearly demonstrates that our farming values match those of our city consumers.

So what are the options available to producers for both dairy and beef animals? Producers can have their private veterinarian perform these procedures using sedation and a variety of very effective pain relief methods. Alternatively, producers can perform these procedures themselves using a combination of readily available products that have recently come onto the market.

1. Veterinarians can perform these procedures for producers either through a short calf sedation allowing multiple procedures to be performed quickly whilst the animal is “asleep” or in the standing animal/calf cradle. Both methods usually involve;
   - **Nerve blocks** (local anaesthetic such as lignocaine is injected around the nerves and tissues of the horn bud or testes. This removes sensation and pain for several hours; and
   - **Anti-inflammatories** can also be given via either the injectable or oral route to provide longer term pain relief (24 hours) by minimising inflammation.
   - **Antiseptic agents and flystrike control**: Prevent infection and reduce damage due to flies.

The veterinarian approach has the benefit of blocking pain prior to the action of debudding, for example. Whereas the Producer applied pain relief approach, outlined below, works on numbing the area immediately after the surgical procedure.

2. Producers, who are skilled and trained in the technique of disbudding and castration, can also perform these procedures, in animals under six months of age) using “producer applied” pain relief products, such as Trisolfan® and Buccalgesic®. These pain relief products have different but complementary modes of action and when used together in combination offer a sound approach to pain relief in cattle husbandry.

Trisolfan® is a relatively new product. It is a gel that is applied immediately after dehorning or castration onto the surgical wound site and into the inguinal canal during castration. This product is available from Produce stores.

Trisolfan® numbs the surgical area as it contains two topical anaesthetics (lignocaine and bupivacaine) as well as adrenaline that reduces bleeding and prolongs the local anaesthetic effect. It also includes centrimide – an antiseptic to guard against infection.

This product was originally registered for use in Mulesing, tail docking and castration in sheep. But is now also registered and used for disbudding and castration in calves. Trisolfen provides rapid onset (but shorter duration) pain relief by numbing the surgical site. It can be used singly or in combination with oral anti-inflammatory medication such as Buccalgesic® which has a slower onset but a longer duration of action.

Buccalgesic®, is a second product now available to producers. It is an oral anti-inflammatory gel (available from your private veterinarian) that is deposited between the gum and molar teeth to provide anti-inflammatory pain relief at a systemic level.

Whilst providing adequate pain relief is best practice in calves and cattle of all ages, it is mandatory when dehorning or castrating cattle greater than six months old (According to Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Cattle) and must be performed by a veterinarian.

Bandaging horns must not be performed as it does not adequately stop blood supply to horns. Dehorning using caustic agents are only for calves less than two weeks of age with at least four hours separation from the mother and other calves, and dry conditions after application.
Elastrator rings for castration are also only suitable when castrating very young calves ie less than two weeks of age.

Please note that horn tipping is not considered dehorning. It involves removal of the non-sensitive non-vascular horn tissue only. Tipping lacks many of the benefits of dehorning as tipped horns still cause bruising to other animals.

Further information on disbudding and castration can be found in the MLA manual "A guide to best practice husbandry in beef cattle". We have copies of this booklet in our LLS offices or it is available for download at https://futurebeef.com.au/wp-content/uploads/A-guide-to-best-practice-husbandry-in-beef-cattle-Branding-castrating-and-dehorning.pdf


For more information please contact your private or District Veterinarian.
National Vendor Declaration (NVD) Requirements

Hunter Local Land Services would like to remind all vendors and carriers that an NVD is required by law for all livestock movements for the purposes of sale, including to saleyards, feedlots, or privately. Additionally, an NVD may be required if a Transported Stock Statement is not being used for the transport of livestock between properties, e.g. for agistment. It is imperative that all required sections of the NVD are completed. This includes Part B of the form, the carrier’s declaration.

The NVD document is an essential component for upholding Australia’s reputation as a reliable supplier of safe red meat. We remind all vendors of their responsibility in upholding this reputation.

The Biosecurity (National Livestock Identification System) Regulation 2017 clause 32 states:

32 Delivery information

1. In this Division: delivery information, in relation to identifiable stock, means the following information:
   (a) the type of stock and the number of each type of stock,
   (b) the date the stock left the previous property,
   (c) the property identification code of the previous property,
   (d) the unique serial number of any NLIS movement document created in relation to the delivery of the stock,
   (e) in the case of pigs, sheep or goats:
      (i) the relevant identification particulars of the pigs, sheep or goats, and
      (ii) whether the pigs, sheep or goats were bred on the previous property,
   (f) a completed delivery declaration that includes the following:
      (i) the name and signature of the person preparing the declaration,
      (ii) the date on which the declaration is made,
      (iii) the property identification code of the property to which the stock are to be delivered (or if the code is not known or readily available, the name and address of the person to whom the stock are to be delivered).

2. Delivery information is to be provided at the time of delivery.

3. Despite any provision of this Division, delivery information is not required to be provided or kept in circumstances where identifiable stock arrive at a property because they are being transferred from one vehicle to another in the course of being transported and are on the property for less than 24 hours.

Failure to comply with clause 32 of the Biosecurity (National Livestock Identification System) Regulation 2017 for failing to accurately detail the delivery information of stock under the National Livestock Identification System is an offence. In the case of an offence under the Biosecurity Act 2015, the maximum penalty is $220,000 for individuals and $440,000 for a corporation.

If you have any questions with regards to National Vendor Declaration please call the Tocal Office on Ph. 49384900.
Hunter and Mid Coast cattle producers are being asked to consider their management approach to Three Day Sickness, this spring, as Hunter Local Land Services animal health surveillance activities finds our region’s herds have had very little exposure to the virus over the previous two hot dry summers.

This creates infection risks for mature, pregnant, lactating and finished cattle and these animals may benefit this year, more than any other year, from Vaccine protection during Spring before mosquitos potentially arrive over summer carrying the virus.

Three Day Sickness, also known as Bovine Ephemeral Fever (BEF), is a viral disease of cattle transmitted by mosquitos and midges. In our region, particularly, closer to the coast, it normally arrives in mid to late summer, only occasionally skipping a year. Such regular virus appearance, in the past, means each year’s crop of weaners are generally infected whilst young and then have good lifelong protection against the inflammatory effects of the virus.

However, the very minimal distribution of the virus over the previous two years could mean our herd is more severely affected when the virus does arrive, as herds have a higher proportion of non-immune stock. In addition, when cattle are older, heavier, pregnant and lactating when first infected they are generally more severely affected than young cattle. In this situation, vaccination by November may be an important part of on farm cattle management.

The virus causes lameness and fever. Cattle can become recumbent, and it can affect bull fertility and cause abortion in breeders. There is also a considerable management burden looking after recumbent cattle. Hunter Local Land Services monitors the distribution of this and other mosquito and midge borne viruses through sentinel herds at Taree, Maitland, Singleton and Scone. Monthly blood sampling results of the sentinel herds confirm this situation. The dry weather seems to have changed the normal seasonal and regular infection pattern, so that herds in the Mid Coast and Hunter farming areas have missed their normal exposure to the virus two years running.

The District Vet team is advising producers may need to consider vaccinating their older and/or higher value stock towards the end of this year against a 2020 BEF season. The vaccine is available from private veterinary practitioners.

Winter pinkeye

The primary infectious agent in Bovine Keratoconjunctivitis (pinkeye) is the bacterium Moraxella bovis, but another strain, Moraxella bovoculi, has recently been identified as also playing a role in the development of pinkeye on some farms. Either organism can cause pinkeye during any season. However, M. bovoculi tends to be found in more winter pinkeye cases. The pinkeye vaccine ‘Piliguard’ is effective only against Moraxella bovis. It is not effective against Moraxella bovoculi, so if Piliguard appears to have failed to protect your cattle against pinkeye it may be because Moraxella bovoculi is the cause of the infection. In order to properly diagnose which bacteria is responsible for causing pinkeye on your property, particularly if pinkeye vaccination appears to have failed, swabs taken from the eyes of new cases (i.e. before they are treated with antibiotics) should be sent to a laboratory for culture and sensitivity testing (i.e. identification of the bacteria and testing to see which antibiotics are effective in killing it).

Treatment for ‘winter pinkeye’ caused by Moraxella bovoculi is the same as for pinkeye caused by the more common Moraxella bovis (i.e. antibiotic ointments, eye patches in severe cases, fly control etc), except that American research suggests that tetracycline antibiotics (such as Teramycin spray or powder) might not be effective against some infections by Moraxella bovoculi. Consequently, cloxacillin-based eye ointments (Orbenin Eye Ointment, Opticlox Eye Ointment) might be a better choice for treatment of winter pinkeye. Obtaining antibiotic treatments for your livestock will require you to consult your private veterinarian.
NEW FIT TO LOAD GUIDELINES ARE OUT

An updated guide to help producers, agents, buyers and transporters decide if an animal is fit to be loaded for transport by road or rail has been released by Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA).

The 2019 edition of the national guide, Is the animal fit to load?, includes new content to ensure best practice animal welfare when preparing, loading and delivering cattle, sheep and goats.

The new guide has been endorsed by all red meat peak industry councils, Animal Health Australia, Dairy Australia, and other peak industry bodies throughout the value chain. This includes the Australian Livestock and Rural Transporters Association, the Australian Livestock & Property Agents Association, and the Australian Livestock Markets’ Association.

To download the guide or to order a hard copy, visit: mla.com.au/isitfittoload
STOCK WELFARE
DURING DRY TIMES
www.droughthub.nsw.gov.au

TRANSPORT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

On Farm

Responsibility Parties:
Stock Owner

Stock owners are encouraged to develop a stock management plan early to help mitigate poor animal welfare outcomes.

If destocking is required, farmers should make this decision early enough to ensure livestock transported to market are fit for travel. Farmers have an obligation to ensure the welfare of their livestock. It is the responsibility of the person in charge to ensure that animals are prepared correctly and will cope well with the entire journey.

Farm and Loading

Responsibility Parties:
Stock owner and transport operators

Animals selected for transport must be ‘fit to load’. Transport operators in consultation with the stock owner, determine fitness to load and the loading density. The transport operator is responsible for the welfare of the animal throughout the journey from loading to unloading.

Abattoir and Unloading

Responsibility Parties:
Transport operators and abattoir personnel

A large number of providers are involved in the delivery of services to livestock processing establishments. These include stock owners, agents, transport operators, feed suppliers and personnel operating at depots, scales, saleyards and feedlots. All have a responsibility to ensure that animals are handled and managed in accordance with welfare requirements.

Saleyards and Unloading

Responsibility Parties:
Transport operators, saleyard manager, livestock agents, and stockpersons

Transport operators are responsible for the welfare of the animal throughout the journey from loading to unloading.

The care and management of livestock at the saleyards including the handling, drafting, selection as ‘fit for sale’, appropriate treatment for weak, ill or injured animals, penning and the provision of feed and water whilst holding, is the shared responsibility of the saleyard manager, livestock agents and stockpersons.

Saleyards and Loading

Responsibility Parties:
Consignor, saleyard manager, livestock agents, stockpersons, buyers and transport operators

Assembly and preparation of livestock for transport, including selection as ‘fit for the intended journey’ is the responsibility of all. Transport operators are responsible for the welfare of the animal throughout the journey from loading to unloading.

Farm and Unloading

Responsibility Parties:
Transport operators and stock owners

The transport operator is responsible for the welfare of the animal throughout the journey from loading to unloading.

Stock owners have an obligation to ensure the welfare of their livestock from unloading.

The RSPCA NSW, NSW Police and Animal Welfare League NSW are the enforcement agencies of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 and can investigate cruelty to an animal.

For more information www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/livestocktransport
EAD exclusion - Malignant Catarrhal Fever

In April this year our District Vet at Scone was called out to a cow showing signs of blistering on the nose, lameness and bluing of the eyes. The landholder, who was very aware of the relevance of these signs, contacted the office very concerned that the symptoms of the animal were similar to signs of serious Emergency Animal Diseases (EADs) such as Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD). All livestock owners should be on the lookout for signs of these diseases, which should be reported immediately to your LLS District Veterinarian or the EAD Hotline 1800 675 888.

On arrival at the property the animal had recently died but had erosive lesions on the nose as well as some degree of separation of the hoof (see photos). Blisters of the nose and feet can be seen in Foot and Mouth Disease, Vesicular Stomatitis and Malignant Catarrhal Fever (wildebeest associated) which are all exotic to Australia.

Samples were taken and sent to the state government veterinary laboratory and from there to the Animal Health Laboratory in Victoria to test for Foot and Mouth Disease and Vesicular Stomatitis. Results came back negative for these two. Results from the state laboratory confirmed the cause of death was Malignant Catarrhal fever (sheep associated).

Malignant catarrhal fever (sheep associated) is an infectious systemic disease that affects mainly cattle and deer. The disease occurs sporadically in cattle and is typically acute and fatal. Occasionally animals may experience mild infections with evidence of recovery. Clinical signs range from mucopurulent discharge from the eyes, nose and mouth, bilateral corneal opacity, mucosal erosions, swollen lymph nodes, lameness, and neurological signs (trembling, stupor, aggressiveness, and convulsions) to sudden death, fever and depression. Animals that are affected have typically had contact with sheep at some time during the last 20 months. Sheep are asymptomatic but can shed the virus when infected. MCF is transmitted only from carriers to clinically susceptible animals (cattle and deer); affected animals do not transmit the virus.