Department of Agriculture and Food

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Supporting your success

WA livestock disease outlook

Producer edition | March 2017

Reporting livestock disease protects our ability to trade

Australia's ability to sell livestock and livestock products depends on evidence from our surveillance systems that we are free of livestock diseases that are reportable or affect trade. To gather this proof of freedom, the Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia (DAFWA) investigates cases where livestock show signs of disease similar to reportable or trade diseases.

The *WA livestock disease outlook – for producers* is collated from information collected by DAFWA and private veterinarians as part of proving Australia's freedom from those diseases. In 2015/16, data from our surveillance systems allowed WA to access markets valued at $2 billion.

Recent significant cases submitted to DAFWA Diagnostic Laboratory Services

Case data from February to March 2017

Sudden death of six heifers in the Great Southern

- Six Angus heifers from a mob of 175 bought from a saleyard in the previous month died suddenly with four found dead within a week.
- One of the dead heifers had blood in the nasal passages. Sudden death and bloody discharges can be a sign of the reportable disease anthrax. The vet did not postmortem the animal. Anthrax is a potentially fatal zoonotic (a disease that can infect people), and postmortems can increase the risk of infection and release more spores into the environment. Instead, the vet took a sample of the blood from the nose and other blood samples from the dead heifer and one sick heifer.
- The laboratory carried out anthrax testing and the results were negative. Testing also ruled out *Theileria*.
- Diagnosis was not possible from the blood samples but investigations can continue now anthrax has been ruled out.
- Anthrax spores can live in soil for up to 50 years and in animal bones for up to 200 years. The risk of an outbreak is higher after heavy rainfall. The last recorded case of anthrax in WA was in 1994 but it has been reported recently in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.
- Extreme care must be taken when handling animals suspected of dying from anthrax. People can contract cutaneous anthrax from handling infected animals and animal products and inhalation anthrax from inhaling aerosolised spores. Anyone exposed to anthrax should contact their medical practitioner immediately.
- If you see sudden death in stock with the presence of bloody discharges, call your veterinarian or the emergency animal disease hotline on 1800 675 888.

Read more on anthrax on the DAFWA website at agric.wa.gov.au.

Melioidosis in alpacas in the Avon Valley

- Melioidosis was diagnosed on a property following the deaths of more than 30 alpacas.
- Disease signs in affected animals included lack of coordination, abortions and breathing difficulties. Some animals had a brown or bloody discharge from the mouth and nose.
- The bacterium that causes melioidosis, *Burkholderia pseudomallei,* can live in soil and water for long periods. Soil disturbance and recent heavy rainfall are thought to have contributed to this outbreak.
- Melioidosis is present across tropical northern Australia. It has been diagnosed in the Gidgegannup, Chittering and Toodyay areas on rare occasions since 1966.
- Goats, sheep, pigs, camelids and other species are able to be infected.

- Melioidosis is most commonly contracted from contaminated soil and water but has the potential to be zoonotic. Although people are unlikely to contract melioidosis from animals, those in contact with animals that may be infected are advised to wear personal protective equipment and minimise exposure to the animal and environment. Although it is not a reportable disease in livestock, melioidosis in people must be notified to the WA Department of Health. Report any suspected cases or exposure to the WA Health Metropolitan Communicable Disease Control service on 9222 8588 or 1300 623 292.

Read more on melioidosis in animals on the DAFWA website.

Bacterial pneumonia in sheep following shower dipping

- Five days after shower dipping, 4% of a mob of adult ewes had weakness, lethargy, fever, swollen fetlocks, rapid breathing and nasal discharge. Some were found dead.
- A veterinary postmortem on two sheep in condition score 2.5 or better found they were in early pregnancy with severe lung disease.
- Laboratory testing confirmed severe pneumonia caused by a mixed bacterial infection that included *Salmonella* Typhimurium, a zoonotic organism.
- No sheep dipped on the first day became sick. The sump was not emptied and no fresh chemical or water added before dipping on the second day. As sheep that became sick had been dipped on the second day, the most likely source of infection was from inhalation of dip fluid aerosol contaminated with bacteria.
- *Salmonella* Typhimurium is the most common type of *Salmonella* in WA. Usually it causes fever, diarrhoea and abortions in sheep. Outbreaks occur where there has been faecal contamination of feed and water points coupled with stressful events like cold, wet weather or high stocking densities.
- Some other types of *Salmonella* are exotic to WA and reportable. Please contact your vet if you see fever, abortion and diarrhoea in your stock.

Read more on parasite control at paraboss.com.au and more on *Salmonella* on the DAFWA website.

In early autumn, be on the lookout for:

Disease	Typical history and signs
Pink eye in cattle Read more about pink eye on the DAFWA website	• Common in summer/autumn and spread by flies. Stress, dry, dusty conditions and UV damage in combination with the bacteria *Moraxella bovis* result in disease. • More often seen in younger stock, affects one or both eyes, is contagious and painful. • Signs include light sensitivity, excessive blinking, watery eyes, eye ulceration and decreased productivity. • Treatment and prevention methods include antibiotics, reducing fly populations and dust/UV exposure, isolating affected/brought-in animals, eye patches and vaccination.
Ketosis in cattle To learn more about ketosis, search 'ketosis in cattle DAFWA video'	• Occurs when energy demand is greater than energy intake in cows of any age. • Signs include a sudden drop in body condition, milk production and appetite, usually 2–8 weeks post-calving. In some cases, there can be neurological signs. • Breath/milk may smell like acetone. • Check for underlying issues such as poor diet, metabolic or gastrointestinal conditions. • Conditions that damage the liver such as lupinosis and grazing Paterson's curse and other toxic plants will increase susceptibility to ketosis. • To prevent ketosis, manage body condition and nutrition carefully.

Surveillance program and sampling kits for ewe abortion and newborn lamb deaths

DAFWA is conducting a surveillance program targeting ewe abortion and newborn lamb deaths. The program is designed to help sheep producers identify the cause of abortions and newborn lamb losses in their flock, a problem which costs the Australian lamb industry an estimated $540 million a year. It will also support WA's sheep export industry by providing surveillance results that show WA remains free from significant diseases that cause sheep abortions. Producers can obtain their free sampling kits from their local DAFWA veterinarian or private veterinarian. Search 'lamb deaths' on the DAFWA website for more information.

We welcome feedback. To provide comments or to subscribe to the monthly email newsletter, *WA livestock disease outlook*, email waldo@agric.wa.gov.au