



# Transporting and selling sheep with scabby mouth

Current as of March 2023.

**This factsheet assists a person responsible for sheep in meeting their animal welfare obligations when assessing whether sheep with scabby mouth are fit for transport or sale at a saleyard.**

## What is scabby mouth?

Scabby mouth is a highly contagious viral disease of sheep and goats (often in weaners over summer) that is common in Western Australia.

Scabby mouth causes scabs and pustules **most commonly** around the muzzle (lips and nostrils).

Scabby mouth causes scabs and pustules **less commonly** around eyes, feet, lower leg, teats, vulva, scrotum, pizzle and anus.

Scabs may occur as single scabs or packed-together and form large wart-like lesions. Signs of early infection are not usually seen but can include redness, slight swelling of the skin, watery blisters and pustules which quickly rupture to form thick brown scabs.

For more information on scabby mouth, including causes, treatment, prevention, and its zoonotic infection in humans visit: <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/livestock-biosecurity/scabby-mouth-sheep>.

## Secondary complications to scabby mouth

Scabby mouth can sometimes be affected by secondary complications including:

- bacterial infection (pus)
- flystrike (maggots)
- trauma (physical bumps or knocks that cause lesions to discharge).

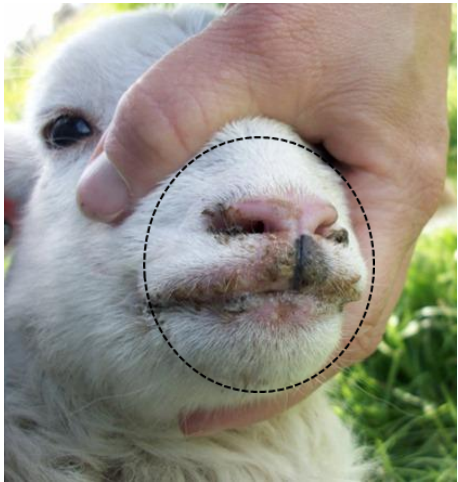


For information on flystrike visit: [www.agric.wa.gov.au/livestock-parasites/managing-flystrike-sheep](http://www.agric.wa.gov.au/livestock-parasites/managing-flystrike-sheep) or [flyboss.com.au](http://flyboss.com.au).


## Assessing facial scabby mouth lesions for fitness to load or to sell at saleyard

Table 1 provides examples of scabby mouth fitness to load or sell at saleyard assessment. The dotted line denotes the muzzle (nose and lips) area.

- Lesions should not cover more than 50% this area, whether or not they are discharging.
- Sheep with lesions greater than 3cm and discharging, or complicated with pus and/or flystrike, are not fit to be loaded or sold at a saleyard.

Table 1 – Assessing facial scabby mouth lesions for fitness to load or to sell at a saleyard

Image of lesion	Assessment	Fit for transport or sale?
	<p>Assessment Estimate: 5% of muzzle</p> <p><b>Less than 50%</b> of the muzzle is covered with active sores, scabs and/or pustules. Lesions may be early stage (redness), but are not oozing or bleeding</p> <p><i>Photo courtesy from Crookwell Veterinary Hospital</i></p>	<p><b>YES</b></p>
	<p>Assessment Estimate: 10% of muzzle</p> <p><b>Less than 50%</b> of the muzzle is covered with active sores, scabs and/or pustules. Lesions are not oozing or bleeding, scabs are crusted and healing (resolving).</p> <p><i>Photo courtesy of Crookwell Veterinary Hospital</i></p>	<p><b>YES</b></p>
	<p>Assessment Estimate: 80% of muzzle</p> <p><b>More than 50%</b> of the muzzle is covered with active sores, scabs and/or pustules. Sheep with lesions at this stage will suffer pain if bumped (trauma) during handling, transport and as a result of trauma in transit, lesions are likely to ooze and bleed.</p> <p><i>Photo courtesy of Animals' Angels Australia</i></p>	<p><b>NO</b></p>

	<p>Assessment Estimate: 90% of muzzle</p> <p><b>More than 50%</b> of the muzzle is covered with active sores, scabs and/or pustules</p> <p><i>Photo courtesy of Animals' Angels Australia</i></p>	<p><b>NO</b></p>
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## Determining whether sheep with scabby mouth be transported or sold at a saleyard

Transportation or sale of sheep with scabby mouth depends on the percentage of the muzzle or other body locations showing scabby mouth lesions, the size of the lesion, if it is discharging or if it has secondary complications. Severe scabby mouth lesions are those that cover over 50% of the muzzle. Lesions on other body parts should also be assessed.

**Under the Animal Welfare (Transport Saleyards and Depots) (Cattle and Sheep) Regulations 2020 (Transport Regulations) you must not supply for transport, load on a transport vehicle or offer for sale at saleyard, a sheep that has any of the following conditions:**

- has severe scabby mouth disease as it is suffering from a condition, injury or disease that is likely to cause increased pain or distress to the animal during transport
- has a visible lesion (wound, ulcer, abscess or sore) that is discharging and is more than 3cm in length in any direction
- has a lesion (wound, ulcer, abscess or sore) of the pizzle (prepuce), penis, sheath or scrotum
- has any other condition that is likely to cause increased pain or distress to the animal during transport.

## Livestock must be fit for the journey

Under the Transport Regulations, it is an offence for all persons involved in the process to consign or load sheep for transport, that are unfit to undertake the journey, whether from the property of origin, saleyard or other place.

Sheep that have been assessed as not fit for transport cannot be sold at a saleyard. If an animal is considered borderline for its fitness to undertake the journey, consider whether the animal's condition will deteriorate during the journey and/or at the saleyard rendering them unfit for sale or further transportation. Animals will be assessed at a saleyard before sale and again before consigning and loading on the transport vehicle for the outward journey.

## Exemption

An animal that is unfit to undertake a journey may be loaded and transported only under the following conditions:

- the consignor and/or transporter has advice from a veterinarian that the animal can undertake the intended journey
- the transporter ensures that the animal is loaded and transported in accordance with the veterinarian's advice
- the transporter ensures the animal is transported the shortest distance necessary either to another property or abattoir

A copy of this veterinary advice should accompany the animal to the final destination.

It is strongly recommended the veterinary advice is provided in writing. It is up to the consignor and/or the transporter to prove the veterinarian advised that the animal could undertake the journey and was loaded and transported in accordance with the advice of the veterinarian.

**Animals transported under veterinary advice must not be sent to a saleyard as they cannot be offered for sale or sold.**

## Appropriate arrangements for livestock that are not fit for transport or sale

The consignor or person responsible for the livestock animal must ensure that appropriate arrangements are made at first reasonable opportunity if it is not fit to be transported or sold at a saleyard.

Appropriate arrangements mean one or more of the following, depending on the condition of the animal:

- separating the animal from any other animal and resting it until it has recovered
- treating the animal as appropriate to its condition, including seeking veterinary advice
- destroying the animal using a method of humane destruction.

### **At the first reasonable opportunity**

At the first reasonable opportunity means appropriate arrangements for the animal are undertaken without delay except where a reasonable delay is caused by a significant reason relating to resources, skills, safety or the immediate welfare of other livestock.

## More information

- Animal Welfare (Transport, Saleyards and Depots) (Cattle and Sheep) Regulations 2020
- Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines: Land Transport of Livestock; Livestock at Saleyards and Depots
- Animal Welfare Factsheets
  - Transporting and selling sheep and cattle with visible tumours and lesions
  - Are your livestock fit to load?
  - Are sheep and cattle fit to be sold at a saleyard?
  - Humane destruction of sheep and cattle
  - Animal Welfare Responsibilities – Consignors and Transporters
  - Animal Welfare Responsibilities – Saleyards
- [flyboss.com.au](http://flyboss.com.au)
- [agric.wa.gov.au/animalwelfare](https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/animalwelfare)



For more information and to view the suite of animal welfare factsheets, scan the QR code, or visit: <https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/animalwelfare/resources-and-publications>.

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