Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

WA livestock disease outlook

Producer edition | April 2018

Recent livestock disease cases in WA

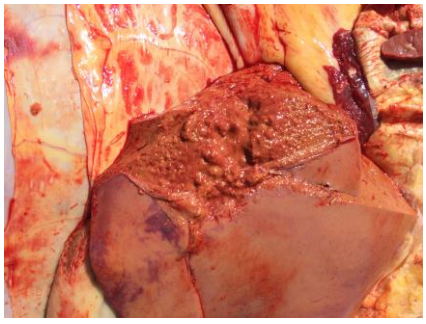
Deaths in cattle fed vegetable scraps

- In a mob of 18 cattle, seven died and six had breathing difficulties.
- The cattle had been fed vegetable scraps from a supermarket (including sweet potatoes), wheat stubble, hay and pellets.
- Lab testing showed a severe pneumonia with emphysema. Toxic interstitial pneumonia was diagnosed, likely due to consumption of mouldy sweet potatoes.
- Sweet potatoes can be colonised by a fungus which causes production of the toxin, 4-ipomeanol. The toxin results in severe respiratory problems when eaten by cattle and can cause sudden deaths.
- Waste vegetables may be a source of contamination not only for toxins but also animal matter. Food that is contaminated with animal matter is restricted animal material and is illegal to feed to ruminants in Australia.

Fig 1: Firm, inflamed lung from cow affected by interstitial pneumonia.

Respiratory signs and sudden death in Droughtmaster cattle in the Midwest

- A total of 14 Droughtmaster cattle from a mob of 180 died suddenly within 7-10 days of being moved onto an oat stubble paddock with others showing respiratory and neurological signs.
- Deaths stopped when cattle were moved to another paddock.
- The cattle showed no further signs until early April when cattle were fed hay cut from the oat stubble paddock. Several days later, 20 cattle died. Sheep fed the same hay were unaffected.
- Testing of the hay samples showed moderate and high risk of annual ryegrass toxicity (ARGT). A faecal test from one of the dead cattle was also positive for ARGT.
- **Differential diagnoses:** bovine spongiform encephalopathy (exotic) in animals showing neurological signs, thiamine deficiency, grass tetany. Discuss with your DPIRD vet subsidies available for testing where signs may be similar to exotic diseases such as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies.
- Paddock management strategies to reduce the risk of ARGT in livestock include hay testing prior to feeding out, managing grazing of the paddock to remove seed-heads before they become toxic, controlling the ryegrass or sowing a safe ryegrass variety. Read more on these control strategies.



In some cases of ARGT, you may see (from left): Fig 2: a pale, fatty liver or Fig 3: neurological signs such as leg paddling and change in eye position. Fig 4: Annual ryegrass.

In autumn, watch for these livestock diseases:

Typical history and signs
Gastrointestinal worms in cattle • Mild summer weather and some rain may have allowed survival of infective larval stages on pasture in the southwest. • Recent cases of cattle showing signs including diarrhoea, lethargy and poor body condition have been submitted to DPIRD. Testing has found significant worm burdens and gastrointestinal damage despite drenching. This can lead to reduced immunity and poorer outcomes when cattle are affected by other conditions. • In winter rainfall areas, the brown stomach worm (*Ostertagia ostertagi*) is a major parasite of cattle. • Ensure drenches are effective against parasites in your region and administered correctly. See the DPIRD drenching beef cattle webpage for more information.
Pregnancy toxaemia in ewes • Pregnancy toxaemia occurs most commonly in late pregnant/early lactating ewes. Signs include depression, lack of appetite, weakness, lying down, neurologic signs, and death. Signs may be worse following stress. Affected ewes may be separate from the mob. • Ewes carrying multiple lambs are at higher risk and if identified early at scanning can be separated and fed carefully. • Pregnancy toxaemia can be avoided if producers provide adequate nutrition to the ewes and minimise stress (e.g. avoid herding and yarding of ewes in late pregnancy and early lactation). • Early diagnosis and treatment by a vet and supplementary feeding of good quality hay and oats can halt deterioration. • DPIRD's pregnancy toxaemia webpage has information on prevention and treatment. Adult sheep showing neurological signs should be tested for reportable diseases such as scrapie. Speak to your DPIRD field vet about subsidised investigations.
Calf scours • Affects young calves in autumn and early winter. Newborn calves that received a good supply of colostrum from their dams will be better protected. • Signs include depressed appearance, diarrhoea, lying down and death. • Calf scours may be caused by single or multiple organisms. Some common organisms include coronavirus, rotavirus, *E. coli*, *Salmonella* and *Cryptosporidium*. Cows can be vaccinated against a number of these prior to calving with immunity transferred to the calf. • DPIRD's calf scours webpage contains a number of strategies to prevent and treat an outbreak.

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in sheep – would you recognise the signs?

An outbreak of the exotic disease, FMD, in Australia would be devastating to our producers and economy. Being aware of the signs of FMD and knowing how to report them is important for every producer and vet. In cattle, FMD can cause blisters on the mouth, tongue, feet and teats, lameness, drooling and unwillingness to rise. In sheep however the signs can be quite subtle and may only result in mild lameness but can also cause blisters on the mouth and coronary band.

If you see signs that are similar to FMD in your livestock, call the emergency animal disease hotline on **1800 675 888** or contact your vet.

Protect your livestock markets: call a vet when animals are sick

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. Data from livestock disease investigations provide evidence that WA is free from these diseases and supports our access to markets.

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