

July 2011

Riverina landholder newsletter

3 simple steps

There are three simple steps to online lodgement:

- 1 Look at the top-right hand corner of the enclosed Land and Stock Return for your Holding reference number and online password.
- 2 Visit www.lhpa.org.au/landandstock and log in using your Holding reference number and unique online password.
- 3 Fill in your land and stock details.

Why have I been sent a land and stock return?

The information you provide in your Land and Stock Return helps us build a statewide picture about agricultural usage and livestock numbers. Along with the stock ID and traceability systems we manage, this information is invaluable in the event of an emergency disease outbreak.

Even if you have no stock, it is important for you to complete a Land and Stock Return. Unless you complete a return, we automatically apply an animal health charge to next year's rates. It is also a legal requirement that you lodge a return under the Rural Lands Protection Act 1998.

Remember, your 2011 Land and Stock Return is due by 31 August 2011. Lodge online or post your return back to us.

Online land and stock returns now even easier

Now the LHPA has made it even easier to lodge your Land and Stock Return online.

Last year thousands of landholders in NSW chose to take advantage of the online lodgment facility when they received their annual Land and Stock returns in the mail.

This year, you can also update your holding and occupier details online.

Your 2011 Land and Stock Return can be lodged online at www.lhpa.org.au/landandstock

Land and Stock Returns provide Livestock Health and Pest Authorities with important information about properties in NSW.

'The online form takes around five minutes to complete and asks the same questions as the paper-based form,' said Riverina LHPA general



manager Geoff Corboy. 'All you need is access to a computer with internet.'

For more information about lodging online, including Frequently Asked Questions and privacy information, visit www.lhpa.org.au/landandstock.

Remember, your completed 2011 Land and Stock Return is due by 31 August.

Ram testing continues

Recent testing of rams for ovine brucellosis in the Riverina LHPA has uncovered low levels of ovine brucellosis. Hay district vet Colin Peake, says eradication testing in the southwest area of the Riverina LHPA has been completed, and the results have been encouraging.

Dr Peake said there were no new cases diagnosed following testing of over 500 rams in May. Those that were re-testing due to earlier positive tests are finding the incidence has been reduced.

Ovine brucellosis is a significant

economic sheep disease, caused by a bacterial infection by *Brucella ovis* mainly of the ram reproductive system.

Ovine brucellosis can be diagnosed by careful testicular palpation, and if lumps are found during the palpation the disease can be confirmed with a blood test. Dr Peake said test and slaughter is the only feasible option to eradicate ovine brucellosis from a ram flock.

Remember to source rams from Ovine Brucellosis Accredited Free Flocks.

Not an exact science, but vaccination best tool

When ovine Johne's disease (OJD) was first establishing itself there were more than enough flocks losing a lot of sheep.

For the people whose first idea that there was OJD in their mob was when a quarter of their maiden ewes died through the winter it was a severe blow.

Fortunately, the Gudair vaccine has proven to be very effective in preventing deaths and the days of paddocks littered with carcasses have passed.

Less fortunately, we are seeing OJD steadily spreading west and north with new flocks infected each year. In a few years their young adults will start to die at what we hope will still be two hundred dollars plus each.

To be really effective the Gudair vaccine should be given to lambs and it is a bit tricky to know when to start vaccinating: after all, you are vaccinating the lambs which would otherwise die when they reach three years of age.

You will understand that this is not an exact science.

Riverina ruminations

with Dan Salmon,
Senior District Vet



This leaves you with one foot in a hole and the other on a banana skin: you may waste a couple of dollars a head if you start vaccinating too soon or lose as much or even more if your sheep start to die before you start to vaccinate.

There are a few reasons why it makes sense to start using Gudair earlier rather than later.

For a start, if your sheep never start dying you are probably going to be in front anyway, and if all of your sheep are vaccinated before the bug gets onto your place you are never likely to see a problem.

Then there are the markets.

One would imagine that ewe lambs from a flock which is a hundred

kilometres from the nearest known OJD infection but have been vaccinated anyway would be a valuable commodity for producers in the high prevalence areas.

It is also possible to get as many OJD points from vaccination as are available from being in a low prevalence area. This takes 10 to 12 years so if you are keen on selling 4-point sheep you should be starting to vaccinate well before your area starts to slip down the prevalence ladder, which it is sure to do.

Everybody has an opinion about OJD, some of them based on fact, but it has shown a marvellous capacity to spread across the country and vaccination is the best tool available to prevent the disasters that it sometimes produces.

More livestock health ruminations: page 4

How to avoid a nasty shock with grazing wheats

Over the past few years grazing wheats have become popular.

They have a lot to recommend them: they provide good grazing at a time when there is not usually a lot of feed about and there is often a grain harvest at the end of it all.

The only downside so far has been the thousands of sheep that they have killed.

It has been a rude shock to muster stock off a paddock of beautiful lush feed only to have a lot of them lie down on their sides shaking with a fair few of them dying.

The cause is fairly complicated and you would have to be the only person in the Riverina to understand cellular sodium pumps to really explain it but the end result is low blood calcium or magnesium or both.

While we don't really understand it we can cure it and prevent it – at least most of the time.

A loose mix of equal parts by volume (that is code for the same number of shovelful of each into the mix) of salt, causmag and ground limestone will stop any sheep which are taking it from getting sick.

For the ones that do not take the mix either because they are shy feeders or it is still in the shed an injection of milk fever solution will sometimes work.

Injecting the solution into the bloodstream works pretty well most of the time, but because only a little bit more will kill the sheep you should not try it yourself. High prices mean that you don't have to save many sheep to pay for the vet.

Injecting 100cc under the skin will not kill the sheep, but it will not cure as many as the injection directly into the blood will.

I don't really hold with mineral mixes and lick and the like because often people use them as an excuse to starve their livestock to death, but this is a situation where it works a treat.

There are commercial mixes available which have the advantage of being waterproof so they don't turn into a slurry any time it rains, they usually have a few other vitamins and trace elements as well, but they generally don't do much harm.

Just make sure that they have plenty of calcium and magnesium!

Local partnerships help maintain reserves

Riverina LHPA has built a number of successful partnerships with other agencies in past years to assist with livestock health and pest programs, as well as travelling stock reserve maintenance.

In past years the district's travelling stock reserves could be relied upon to generate sufficient income to fund the cost of maintaining and managing the reserves. Since the onset of the drought in the early 2000s and subsequent reduction in feed availability our annual income started to decline.

Once the drought ended, the reduced total stock numbers and the dwindling number of professional drovers, together with a lack of demand due to good pasture availability on farm has further compounded this decline. This downward trend was recognised early and to ensure the travelling stock reserves placed as little pressure as possible on annual LHPA rates we have been building successful partnerships with a number of agencies by which the authority obtains valuable grant funding, not only to offset the cost to maintain and manage our stock reserves, but to implement specific livestock health programs and pest control programs.

Our local Catchment Management Authorities, in particular, have recognised the sound manner in which the reserves have been managed and have provided significant funding to assist the Riverina LHPA.

The authority is committed to managing travelling stock reserves subject to the cost of maintaining them not becoming a considerable cost to ratepayers and is currently negotiating further funding opportunities with a number of organisations.

Agencies which have assisted the Riverina LHPA in service delivery through funding include the Murray, Murrumbidgee and Lachlan CMAs, NSW Rural Fire Service, RTA and the Eastern and Western Noxious Weeds Advisory Group. We also conduct various joint programs with various government departments such as NSW Department of Primary Industries, NPWS, NSW Police and many of our local councils.



Ranger Michael Mullins discussing the current TSR Biodiversity restoration and retention project with Murray CMA's Martin Driver, Manager, Vegetation Services.

Equipment for hire to help with pest programs

The past year has seen Riverina LHPA responding to the locust and mouse plagues as well as assisting in flood relief efforts. These programs have pushed back our planned pest animal programs but with a return to more sedate conditions we will be moving forward with group rabbit control programs and feral pig control. A \$120,000 Murrumbidgee CMA rabbit ripping project in the Hay region has been delayed until later this year.

The authority has a number of different types of equipment available to landholders for hire to assist with pest management programs. Tractors with deep rippers, pig traps, bait layers and 3, 5 & 7 tyne rippers are amongst the items available. Contact your local ranger for more information.



Riverina LHPA has equipment for hire, such as this tractor with a deep ripper, to assist with pest management programs.

Plan ahead to keep cattle worms in the past

Our friends in the livestock health treatments industry have gone to a lot of trouble to make cattle drenching quick, easy and effective, if not cheap.

After all, cattle drenches are where the world anthelmintic market makes its profits.

The quick easy and effective part of cattle drenches means that we rarely see wormy cattle these days and keeps the drench companies' balance sheets healthy so that they can develop new products for us to burn out on sheep.

The lack of wormy cattle may lead some to believe that cattle worms are not a problem in the Riverina, but anyone who saw the weaners scouring to death before the effective drenches were developed can assure you that cattle worms can be as bad as sheep worms.

The science and art of cattle worm control is not as well refined as that for sheep worm control, but there are a few basics:

- Drench calves at weaning.

- Drench weaners six months after weaning.
- Keep young cattle of wormy pastures.

Adult cattle can generally look after themselves, but it is probably just as well to have a faecal egg count done on your cows at the end of each spring just to keep an eye on what is going on.

Pasture management for cattle worms is a bit more tricky than you would think because of the dung pat.

The dung pat lets the worm eggs and larvae survive longer in the summer than they would if they were out on the ground so you should be planning the weaner paddocks in January instead of March, this will usually mean dry cows or bullocks with low faecal egg counts, sheep if you have them or perhaps a grazing crop.

With reasonable cattle prices, every extra kilogram of liveweight that you can sell is a dollar or two that you can pay of the debt from the bad years, and maybe have a little left over for yourself.

Contacting Riverina LHPA

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Moulamein

61 Tallow St
MOULAMEIN NSW 2733
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Narrandera

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Attention to detail the key to lice treatment

Why are we so lousy? Not so much us, as every second sheep in Australia – or so it seems.

This is particularly galling when one considers that almost every sheep in the country is treated in some way to kill lice.

We hear a lot about lousy neighbours, stray sheep, lousy sheep on TSRs and 'shearers' moccasins' but the real reason is that the treatments are not working.

This has always been a problem but it is made worse by the fact that not every sheep producer has got the message that the insect growth regulators don't kill lice like they used to.

The reason that they don't work now is because in the days when they would kill every louse that got the right dose a lot of lice only got enough to kill some of them leaving enough to breed a new, more resistant strain of lice.

The only difference from the old days is that lice do not seem to have the genes to develop resistance to arsenic or diazinon.

There have always been between a quarter and a third of sheep flocks that were lousy (except in Western Australia where by dint of a rigorous regulatory policy which seems to have just stopped short of public hangings they were able to build their lice prevalence up to 75% of flocks). It is just that these days they seem to be rubbing more, and more people will talk about it because we don't slap them in quarantine any more.

So what is the answer?

If EVERY manager killed EVERY louse on EVERY sheep that he or she was responsible for on ONE occasion there would not be much of a problem left.

Unfortunately it means shearing every sheep at one time and

treating each one of them with something that works.

And what with lambing, cropping, harvesting and fishing trips this is often hard to achieve.

The problems with neighbours who shear at different times and lousy strays or bought in sheep would still be a problem but we could manage it.

The main thing now is to use a chemical that kills lice in a way that gives it a chance to work.

We actually have more effective chemicals available to kill lice than in the good old days of arsenic, dieldrin and diazinon and effective application is certainly easier than skull-dragging every sheep up and throwing it into the plunge dip; it is just a matter of doing the job properly.

For more information on these articles contact your local Riverina LHPA office.