

Johne's Disease in Sheep - Property Detections and Next Steps

Johne's Disease (JD) detection on your property is a starting point from where individual management and testing plans can be developed.

PIRSA will work with you to develop and create individual property disease management plans. Over time, this will decrease the production losses that occur in your flock due to this chronic wasting disease.

Johne's Disease has been detected on my property. Now what?

Once JD has been detected through voluntary abattoir surveillance or on-farm testing, it is recommended that you take your time to discuss your individual situation with a private veterinarian or PIRSA Animal Health Officer.

This is a disease that can be easily managed through grazing practices and vaccination to minimise the impact. PIRSA Animal Health Officers can assist you to develop a property disease management plan that will allow you to progress to a low-risk level.

What is a Property Disease Management Plan (PDMP) likely to include?

A PDMP can be individually developed for each property and aims to lower the level of infection and impact of Johnes disease on your property and the wider sheep industry. This may be achieved through:

- vaccination
- culling of high risk groups
- strategic grazing practices
- trade considerations.

A PDMP can be developed with the Biosecurity Animal Health Advisor in your region.

How can vaccination be used to manage JD?

Gudair vaccine is the most effective tool for managing JD. This once-off vaccination should be used on all sheep in the flock (not required on animals that won't be retained beyond two years old). The vaccine is available at local agriculture retail centres.

Is accelerated culling an appropriate strategy?

Accelerated culling can be used to remove animals that are a high risk of shedding bacterium from the property.

What is the benefit of strategic grazing practices?

The higher the level of bacteria (contamination) that young animals are exposed to, the more likely they are to develop disease later in life. Spelling paddocks and creating low-risk pastures for young stock to graze can lower levels of disease on a property.

Should I destock?

Partial or full destocking may be undertaken. Destocking allows for environmental decontamination through heat, sunlight and the reduction of bacteria load to under potentially infective doses. Land uses during this period may include:

- cropping
- grazing horses or other non-susceptible species
- retention of terminal lambs or cattle.

What are my obligations when selling stock?

There are biosecurity obligations that infected producers need to abide by to minimise the risk to other producers.

You must provide a National Sheep Health Declaration (NSHD) with all sheep that leave your property and you are encouraged to declare the JD status of your sheep as 'suspect' or 'infected'.

- Diseased (i.e. mobs of sheep that are experiencing or likely to experience mortality or morbidity due to JD) or unvaccinated sheep should be sold direct to slaughter or via feedlot and not to other producers for breeding purposes.
- All sheep sold for breeding purposes or long-life wool production should be vaccinated. "Approved Vaccinates" (i.e. vaccinated at less than 16 weeks of age) have an NLIS V-tag in the ear.

Should I inform neighbours and purchasers of previously sold animals?

It is recommended that you inform your neighbours that JD has been detected on your property. This allows them the opportunity to consider the risk to their business and undertake actions to minimise the risk.

It is also recommended that you inform all producers to whom you have recently sold animals. With written permission from the producer, PIRSA can undertake this notification on your behalf. PIRSA can also support infected properties by providing advice to individuals or community groups on how to manage JD.

Following a detection what are the pathways to low-risk status again?

A property is considered a low risk of clinical disease occurring when the whole flock consists of Approved Vaccinates. Vaccination does not eradicate the bacterium and you will still need to indicate that your property is "infected or suspect" on the NSHD.

Some producers may wish to proceed a step further by testing their flock to show that the management strategies implemented have been successful at suppressing the bacterium to a low level (non-detectable).

When JD is unable to be detected the suspect/infected status of the property will be removed and you can declare accordingly on the NSHD as to this level of testing. Please note, this does not infer that the property is disease free, rather that the property has a low prevalence and low risk of JD.

Testing consists of Pooled Faecal Culture (PFC) targeting higher risk animals. It can occur two years after the last detected infected animal has been destocked and the entire flock consists of Approved Vaccinates.

Another way to have the “infected or suspect status” removed from a property is to undertake an 18 month destocking period that includes two consecutive summers.

Are there any quarantine or movement restrictions on infected properties?

There are NO quarantines placed on properties that are detected with JD. However, should producers fail to manage JD and create risks for other producers then action may be taken under the *Livestock Act 1997*.