

# BIOSECURITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR BUYING SHEEP



**It is always important to consider biosecurity risks when purchasing new sheep, bringing sheep back from agistment or when stray sheep are returned to the property.**

While value for money is often the biggest concern for producers looking to purchase sheep, these decisions often come with a level of biosecurity risk.

**On-farm biosecurity is the management of risks caused by weeds, pests and diseases entering, emerging, establishing or spreading.**

It is important for producers to decide what level of risk they are willing to take when making purchasing decisions as these can potentially negatively impact animal welfare and productivity.

Producers also need to decide what measures they will take to minimise biosecurity risks and ensure the livestock are free from disease and conditions that could potentially be spread to their flock.

## STEP 1. DECIDING TO PURCHASE SHEEP

**Q. Are you willing to risk on-farm biosecurity to buy in sheep?**

- If **no**, how will existing sheep be managed to ensure productivity is maximised? For instance, you may consider implementing new practices such as pregnancy scanning to boost lambing and weaning percentages or retaining older ewes for another breeding season.
- If **yes**, what measures need to be put into place to reduce the risk of weeds, pests or diseases entering and establishing on the property?

**Q. What are your objectives for buying stock? What class of stock are being purchased? What does this mean for biosecurity risks?**

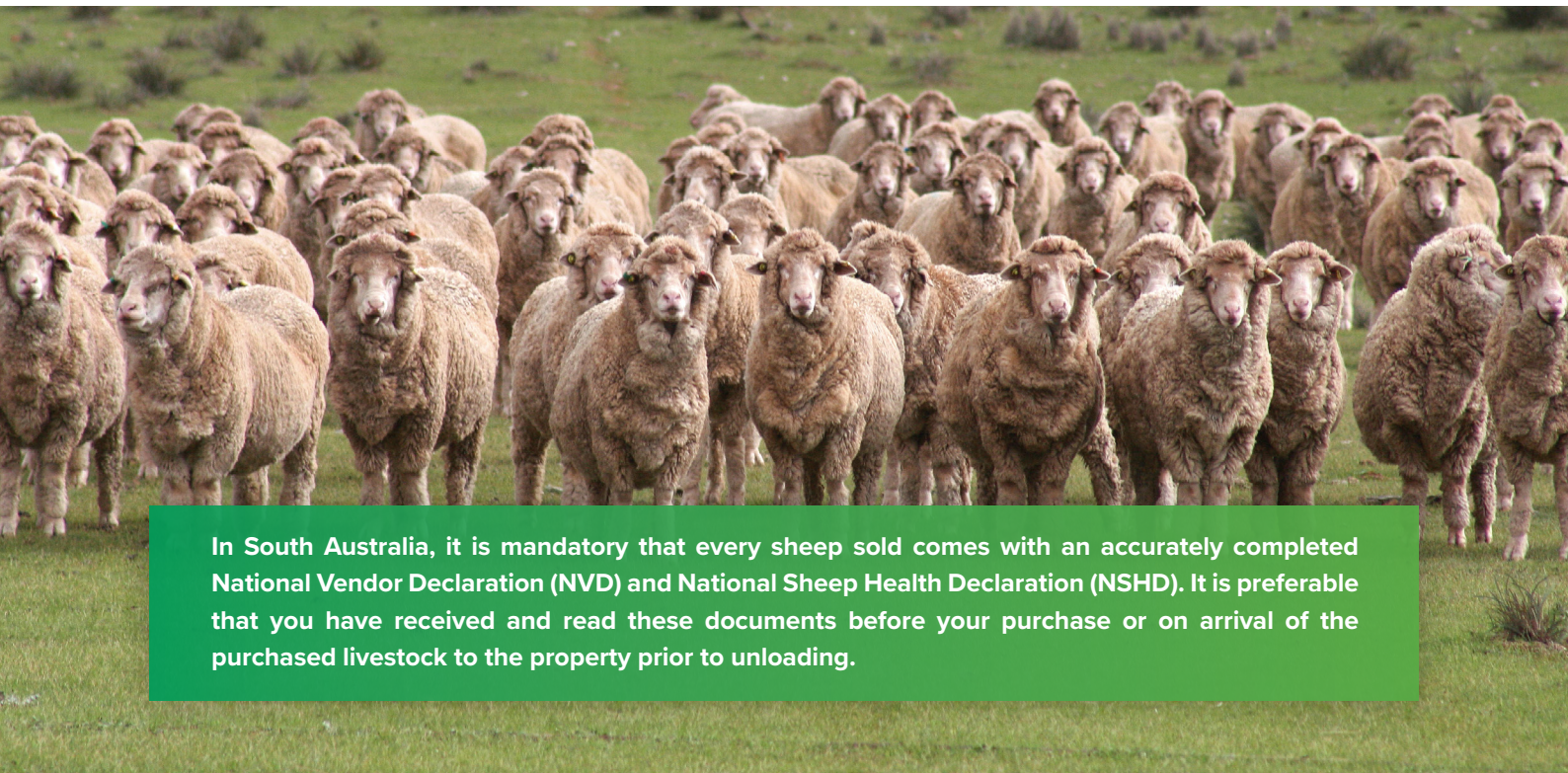
- **Short-term trade:** Purchasing trade animals allows flexibility and is a good option to utilise excess feed. Trade animals are

usually on the property for a short period to boost productivity e.g. lambs for fattening or empty ewes for mating and selling as 'scanned in lamb'.

If purchasing trade animals, it is best to isolate them from the existing flock while they are on the property. This will reduce the risk of any disease spreading between the two groups.

- **Long-term purchases:** Long term purchases are often breeding sheep which are purchased in the restocking phase and retained within the flock. Breeding animals include ewes and rams.

Long-term purchases will likely mix with the current flock and pose a greater risk of spreading pests and diseases. Before joining these animals with the existing flock more considered management practices need to be applied to minimise these risks.



In South Australia, it is mandatory that every sheep sold comes with an accurately completed National Vendor Declaration (NVD) and National Sheep Health Declaration (NSHD). It is preferable that you have received and read these documents before your purchase or on arrival of the purchased livestock to the property prior to unloading.

## STEP 2. DECIDING WHICH SHEEP TO PURCHASE AND WHAT MEASURES TO TAKE BEFORE INTRODUCING TO CURRENT FLOCK

When deciding which sheep to purchase, it is important to understand their health background by reading the paperwork and asking the vendor questions. This helps to identify potential biosecurity risks and inform decisions about actions to take when introducing these sheep to mitigate these risks.

### ***Investigating the Health Status of the Vendor's Flock***

- Have they had any significant health issues? Are you willing to invest in treating these issues?
- Are these sheep vendor or non-vendor bred? This information is on the NSHD. If non-vendor bred, can you determine their history?
- What region are they coming from? Is it a high-risk area for any pests, weeds or disease which could be introduced to the property? Are you willing to risk bringing animals from high-risk zones to your property?
- If the vendor is from South Australia, are they signed up to One Biosecurity? Can you access their profile to see their health status? If not, ask questions regarding the health status of the animals.

## STEP 3. WHEN PURCHASED/ INTRODUCED SHEEP ARRIVE ON-FARM

Prevention is better than cure so the most critical period for biosecurity is when purchased livestock arrive onto the property. The actions taken prior to the introduction of the new sheep to the existing flock will influence the future health, productivity and market access for the business.

### ***Q. Have the sheep been transferred on the Property Identification Code (PIC) on the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS)?***

- When livestock arrive to the buyer's property, it is the buyer's responsibility to record the livestock movement to their PIC on the NLIS database.
- Livestock agents will sometimes complete this transfer on the buyer's behalf however, it is the buyer's responsibility so it is best not to assume.
- In the case of a purchase through a saleyard, the saleyard must record the transfer on the NLIS database.

### ***Q. What should be done when the sheep are offloaded from the truck?***

- Undertake actions based on the information found in Step 2.
- Short-term trade livestock should be kept in separate paddocks from the existing flock on arrival. Monitor these quarantine paddocks, maintain fence lines and keep new animals isolated from the existing flock.
- Long-term breeding stock purchases should be isolated from the existing flock for a minimum recommended period of 28 days and monitored for signs of disease. They should also be vaccinated and drenched to align with the current animal health routine on-farm prior to being introduced into the existing flock.

### ***Q. Will you need to quarantine your livestock? And how long for?***

**Yes** - it is always best to quarantine stock which are being introduced onto the property. New stock should be treated as infected, as many health concerns are not always obvious and may have long-term implications to the productivity of the business. There should be stringent procedures in place for breeding ewes or rams which will remain on the property long-term. These procedures should be documented in a biosecurity plan.

### **Purchasing Interstate Sheep**

- All sheep entering South Australia must have:
  - A National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) ear tag
  - A National Sheep Health Declaration (NSHD)
  - A National Vendor Declaration (NVD) which includes the destination property
  - No obvious signs of virulent footrot

### **If any sheep are unwell or stock losses occur following the arrival on the property:**

- Contact a Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) animal health officer or a local vet to investigate.

## **ANIMAL HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS FOR PURCHASED SHEEP**

### **Drenching and Worm Management**

- When were the sheep last drenched?
- What actives were the sheep drenched with? Do different drench products need to be used to minimise resistance within the flock?

Actions to consider on farm:

- Always assume purchased sheep have worms with some degree of drench resistance.
- Undertake quarantine drenching where sheep are treated with a combination of at least four unrelated drench actives and retained in an identified quarantine paddock.
- After drenching hold sheep in quarantine for at least three days to ensure worm eggs have passed through the sheep. After this, keep the quarantine paddock clear of sheep for three months in warmer weather or six months in cooler weather.

- Complete a faecal egg test 10 to 14 days post treatment to ensure the drench has been fully effective.
- Check the [WormBoss website](#) for more information on quarantine drenching

### **Lice Management**

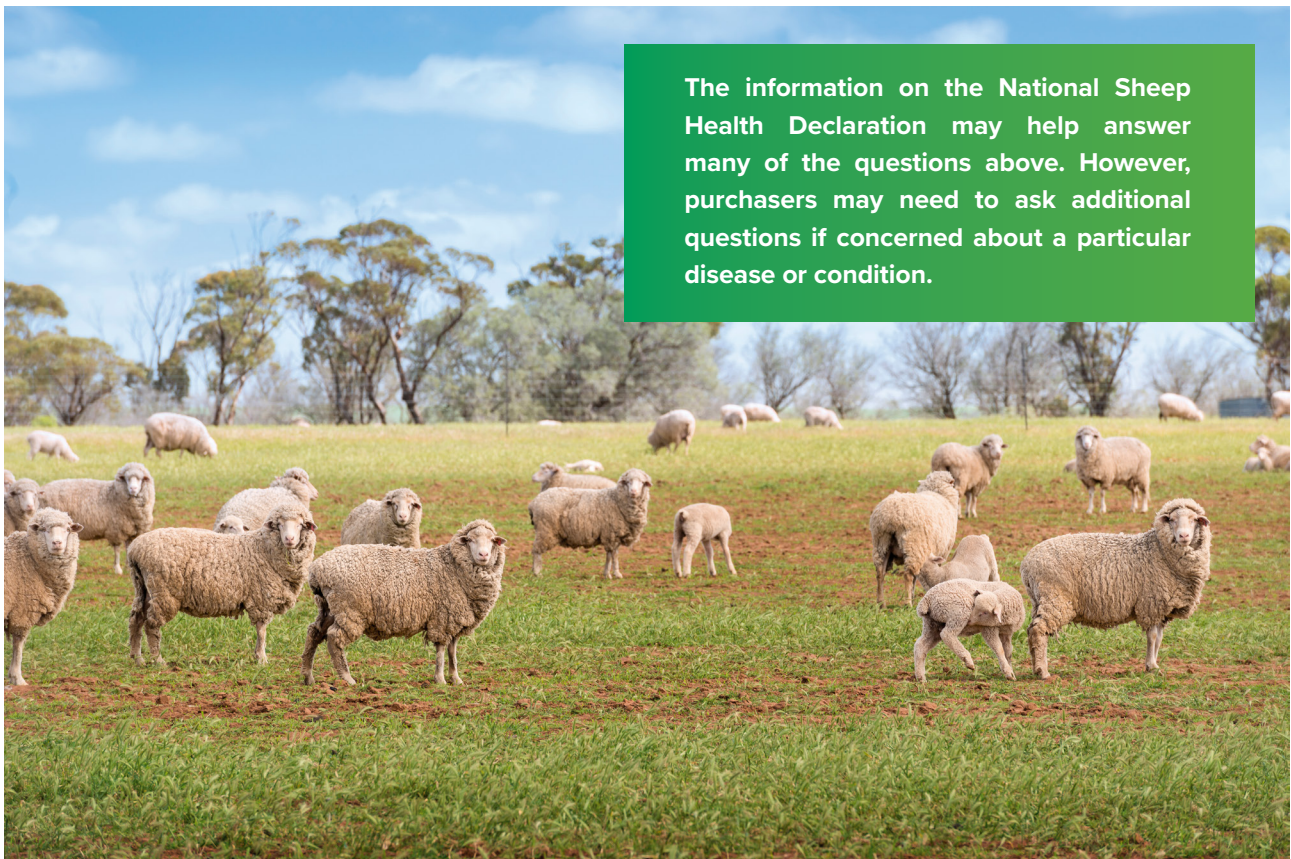
- Have the sheep been shorn and treated for lice recently? What lice treatment was used?
- Are all consigned sheep from a flock that is free of lice?

Actions to consider on farm:

- Sheep should be inspected for lice before being introduced to the mob. Check the animals frequently as it can take three to six months for an infestation to be obvious.
- To inspecting for lice, lay sheep on their side in a well-lit position. Part a 10-centimetre-long section of the fleece and check the skin for lice or eggs. Repeat this 10 times on each side of the animal. If you find at least one louse, the animals should be treated as lice will be present throughout the fleece and flock.
- If you are concerned or suspicious of lice, shear and treat the sheep with an effective lice treatment.
- Purchased rams are often overlooked, so make sure they are also checked and treated accordingly.
- Check the [LiceBoss website](#) for more information on lice treatment protocols

### **Vaccination and OJD Management:**

- Are the sheep up-to-date with their clostridial vaccinations? What clostridial vaccination have the vendor's used? Was it a broad-spectrum vaccination (e.g. 3 in 1, 5 in 1 or 6 in 1)?
- Have the sheep received any other vaccinations such as an Erysipelas arthritis or campylobacter vaccine?



The information on the National Sheep Health Declaration may help answer many of the questions above. However, purchasers may need to ask additional questions if concerned about a particular disease or condition.

- Do they have ovine Johne's disease (OJD)? Have they been vaccinated with Gudair®?
  - If the sheep have come from a high-risk area, ask whether the stock have been tested for and/or vaccinated against OJD before you buy them. You should purchase sheep with a National Sheep Health Declaration with this information recorded on it.

**Actions to consider on farm**

- Vaccinate sheep if required or if the current vaccination status does not meet the minimum requirement for your property e.g vaccinated with 3 in 1 vaccine, rather than 6 in 1. Do not forget the follow up booster shots as per label advice.
- For OJD, it is recommended that all high-risk sheep, such as lambs purchased from interstate, are vaccinated with Gudair® if they have not been previously vaccinated. If newly purchased animals are infected prior to vaccination, Gudair® will reduce the shedding of the bacteria and lessen the risk of contamination to your existing flock.

**Footrot**

- Are all consigned sheep from a flock which is free of virulent footrot?
- Are all consigned sheep from a flock which is free of benign footrot or scald?

**Actions to take on farm:**

- Inspect the feet of as many sheep as possible before purchase, and check for signs of lameness as they are unloaded off the truck. Consider foot bathing if there are signs of footrot. If you are worried about the footrot being virulent then seek veterinary advice.

- Quarantine newly arrived sheep and observe for signs of footrot emergence when conditions become warm and wet. Inspect and clear the new sheep before introducing them to paddocks containing existing sheep.
- Seek veterinary advice if lameness or foot lesions are observed. Quarantine any possibly infected mobs until the situation is properly investigated to minimise potential spread.

**Ovine Brucellosis (OB)**

- Are all consigned sheep from a flock which participates in the ovine brucellosis (OB) accreditation scheme?

**Actions to consider on farm:**

- Rams should be purchased from OB accredited studs only and inspected on arrival.
- When introducing purchased ewes to the property, do not immediately join with existing rams. Ewes which have previously been infected with OB can remain infectious for up to two cycles and pose a risk to existing rams.

**Weeds and Seeds**

**Actions to consider on farm:**

- Quarantine newly arrived sheep for at least three days to allow them to 'empty out' weed seeds. Complete their quarantine drench during this period.
- Consider contamination of weed seeds in the fleece. If there is high seed contamination, decide if shearing is necessary prior to releasing the sheep on your property.



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