

KEEPING FOOTROT OUT

What to do when purchasing stock.



Every time you bring sheep onto your property there is a risk of introducing footrot (as well as other endemic conditions such as lice and internal parasites). Every producer should have a biosecurity plan in place which mitigates the risk of introducing disease onto their property.

This handout details the steps you should take when buying sheep and cattle to prevent footrot coming onto your property. Ensure that your agent, or any external party purchasing sheep on your behalf are aware of the steps that need to be taken.

Whilst the same steps should be taken for sheep purchased from sale yards as on-farm, there is greater risk associated with the purchase of sheep from saleyards as they have greater exposure to disease (use of shared loading ramps, trucking to yards, use of pens previously inhabited by other sheep).

Rams- Ensure you remain vigilant when purchasing rams. Rams can pose a significant threat to footrot introduction as they are often purchased in late spring and enter the flock in summer/autumn (without being quarantined through a spread period). The '5 step guide' should be applied to rams, as with other classes of sheep. In addition, it may be advised to examine the feet of introduced rams on removal from the ewe flock to alert you of any potential disease spread during the joining period.

Use this 5-point guide to reduce the risk of 'buying in footrot'.

DOCUMENTS

Check National Sheep Health Declaration, Section B, question 3 & 4.
Beware that a declaration of scald could be footrot.



INSPECTION

Inspect sheep pre-purchase or on arrival to the property.
Ideally, tip over and inspect all sheep.
At minimum tip over and examine any lame sheep.



FOOTBATH

Footbath sheep on arrival.
Footbath in 10-20% zinc sulphate.
Stand on dry ground for 1 hour after bathing if paddock conditions are wet.
NOTE: the footbath is a surface disinfectant, it will not cure chronically infected sheep.



QUARANTINE

Keep purchased sheep separate until they have been through a spread period (Spring). The time period you need to keep them separate for will depend on when you buy them.
Footbathing off the truck will not prevent footrot expression later if environmental conditions become favourable when sheep are in quarantine.
Paddock rotations/yarding/laneways: Allow 1 week (Summer) and 2 weeks (Winter/Spring) between introduced sheep and home flock.
Handle introduced mobs last or keep isolated (lamb marking in paddock etc).



SURVEILLANCE

Monitor mobs closely.
Investigate lameness as soon as it appears.



Purchasing Cattle

Cattle can harbour both benign and virulent footrot bacteria, with no clinical expression of disease (feet look normal). The following steps should be taken when buying and managing cattle to reduce the risk of them introducing footrot.

- **Cattle only property:** cattle are lower risk if they are from a cattle-only property or have not been co-grazing with sheep. Ask the question... 'have these cattle been co-grazing with sheep?'
- **Keep cattle separate from sheep:** when introducing cattle, refrain from co-grazing cattle with sheep.
- **Keep paddocks and laneways clean:** Use the following guide to dictate rest periods between cattle and sheep.
 - Paddocks: 1 week in summer, 2 weeks in winter/spring.
 - Laneways: 1 week if dry, 2 weeks if wet.
- Areas around water troughs should be maintained and kept hard and dry to reduce the length of time bacteria can survive around these communal points.
- **Remember when spread occurs:** footrot spread occurs in winter/spring when paddock conditions are moist. During non-spread periods (dry summers) cattle and sheep can be co-grazed with minimal risk of disease spread.