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Outback OJD-security

The principles and practises of farm biosecurity have been taken to new heights in the pastoral zone of western NSW.

The Flockowners of Broken Hill Rural Lands Protection Board* were able to turn the threat of an Ovine Johnes Disease incursion into an opportunity, and received due recognition in the Australian Rural and Outback Awards.

According to Industry & Investment NSW Regional Veterinary Officer, Dr Greg Curran, producers have worked together to keep the insidious disease out of the region.

“The trigger was that producers in the Board area firmly believed they had little or no OJD, and wanted to avoid the disease, its control costs and the production difficulties it causes.



“They had something to protect and secure, and asked the sheep industry to respect their intention to keep Ovine Johnes Disease (OJD) out.”

Before the word ‘biosecurity’ even entered farming lexicon, a series of initiatives were underway around Broken Hill.

Meetings were held to form a steering group, assess the OJD risk and consider how it could be minimised. A census of all sheep introductions over a ten year period was run, testing of some higher risk introduced animals occurred (found to be negative) and approval was sought for a ‘Protected Zone’ status.

Western NSW Pastoralist, Max Hams, says momentum built even further.

“Booklets were provided for Flockowners to keep stock introduction records, and a plebiscite was held on establishing an OJD Exclusion Area - by law.

“The vote was affirmative and was approved, and it is believed this was the first democratic vote on a large-scale disease control program!

For more information on Farm Biosecurity visit www.farmbiosecurity.com.au



“And Flockowners have benefited from the ongoing efforts to retain a regional OJD freedom status.”

Premiums are paid for sheep, with a low OJD risk, there are cost savings in not having to vaccinate for OJD, and each flockowner can be confident that neighbouring sheep don't pose a threat.

Also, the region has built a reputation for disease-free sheep and a precedent has been set for community action in dealing with a biosecurity issue.

In analysing how this success was achieved, key success measures were identified:

- a clear goal and a broad commitment
- regular and open communications
- simple and effective record keeping
- strong research and technical support
- having a market focus
- ensuring minimal costs
- realistic disease risk reduction measures for the farm business operation

The Flockowners of Broken Hill were finalists in the Farm Biosecurity category in the inaugural Australian Rural and Outback Awards 2009.

Animal Health Australia's Duncan Rowland maintains the approach used by the Broken Hill Flockowners can be duplicated in most industries, in most regions.

“The basic principle of working with neighbours on biosecurity measures is a good way to ensure farms and livestock are fully protected - from both sides of the fence.

“And working collectively on a regional scale clearly extends the disease control effort and provides a higher level of protection, though it also means more people become aware of the need for, and benefits, of biosecurity.”

*The Broken Hill RLPB is now part of the Western Livestock Health and Pest Authority.

For more information on biosecurity and a range of tools to help you secure your farm and secure your future, visit www.farmbiosecurity.com.au



If you see anything unusual on your property call the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888 or the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.

The Farm Biosecurity program is a joint initiative of Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia.