



Vaccinating sheep against ovine Johne's disease

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The vaccination of sheep provides a useful tool to assist protect flocks from the effects of ovine Johne's disease (OJD).

Why vaccinate?

Sheep owners may choose to vaccinate their flock to:

- assist control OJD if the flock is infected,
- assist prevent the introduction of OJD into an unaffected flock, and/or
- provide extra assurance to purchasers of sheep (including rams) that they are low risk of being infected.

Trials conducted under the national OJD program have produced data on the effectiveness of the Gudair™ OJD vaccine, the only OJD vaccine currently available for use in sheep in Australia. Recent trial results indicate that Gudair™ vaccine can reduce the number of deaths due to OJD by 90%, and reduce the amount of OJD-causing bacteria excreted in sheep manure by 90%.

All flock owners should aim to purchase sheep with a low risk of being infected with OJD. The Assurance Based Credit (ABC) Scheme provides credit points for sheep vaccinated against OJD. These points contribute towards the ABC Score of a mob of sheep. Purchasing sheep with a higher score will decrease the chance of purchasing infected sheep. (Refer to Agriculture Note: *Assurance Based Credit (ABC) Scheme and Animal Health Statements*).

Who should vaccinate?

Vaccination is recommended for most infected flocks. Owners of infected flocks should discuss the strategic use of vaccine with their veterinary consultant or Department of Primary Industries (DPI) animal health staff.

Flocks are classified as 'Suspect' if the owner has been officially notified his/her flock is considered to be high risk of being infected with OJD. Flocks may be considered high risk because they neighbour an infected flock, sheep have been purchased from or sold to an infected flock, or infected sheep have been detected during abattoir monitoring. Owners of these flocks are also

encouraged to discuss their individual situation with their veterinary consultant or DPI animal health staff.

Most flocks in Victoria are classified as 'Nil Assurance'. This means they are not known or suspected to be infected with OJD. Owners of 'Nil Assurance' flocks should consider a number of factors prior to embarking on an OJD vaccination program. These include:

- the type of sheep enterprise they run (eg wool, meat, stud),
- how often sheep are introduced into the flock, and the number of different source flocks sheep are purchased from,
- whether they sell store sheep,
- whether store sheep are sold or moved interstate,
- whether OJD has been detected in their district,
- the condition of boundary fencing,
- local topography and drainage onto their property,
- the cost of the vaccine, and
- safety issues associated with vaccine use.

Vaccine, and relevant advice, can be obtained from SheepMAP approved veterinarians.

SheepMAP flocks are those that have tested with negative results and have management in place to assist prevent the introduction of OJD into their flock. Many of these flocks are also choosing to vaccinate in order to provide extra assurance that OJD is not present in their flock.

How do I vaccinate my sheep?

It is recommended that sheep are vaccinated as lambs, between 4 to 16 weeks of age. All lambs vaccinated between 4-16 weeks of age are considered 'Approved Vaccinates' and are eligible for a credit point towards their ABC Score. Sheep only require one vaccination for their lifetime.

Sheep over 16 weeks of age can also be vaccinated. However, if they are vaccinated to increase their ABC Score, a SheepMAP veterinarian must certify they were vaccinated prior to exposure to the OJD bacteria for them to be considered 'Approved Vaccinates'.

The only recommended site for vaccination with Gudair™ vaccine is under the skin (not in the muscle), high on the neck, behind the ear. Gudair™ vaccine may cause a nodule at the site of vaccination in some animals. Vaccination at this site reduces the risk of this nodule downgrading the value of the carcass at slaughter.



Gudair™ is administered high on the neck, just behind the ear

Do I have to ear tag vaccinated sheep?

All sheep vaccinated against OJD must be identified with a National Livestock Identification Scheme (Sheep) (NLIS - Sheep) ear tag with a capital 'V' in a circle (V) on the

opposite side of the ear tag to the Property Identification Code (PIC) and NLIS logo. (Vaccinated sheep may previously have been identified by a three hole ear punch in one ear. This form of identification is no longer recommended.)

Is the vaccine safe to use?

Accidental self-injection with Gudair™ vaccine may result in side effects and a local inflammatory reaction in some people. To reduce the risk of accidental self-injection, sheep should be suitably restrained. The product leaflet should be read carefully before use.

Where can I obtain vaccine?

Vaccine for 'Nil Assurance' and SheepMAP flocks can only be obtained through SheepMAP approved veterinarians. Vaccine for 'Infected' or 'Suspect' flocks can be obtained through either SheepMAP approved veterinarians or DPI animal health staff. A list of SheepMAP approved veterinarians is available on the website (below) or from local DPI animal health staff.

For further information

Further information about OJD can be obtained from animal health staff at your nearest DPI office or on the DPI web site: <http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/farming/OJD>

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