

SHEEP MEASLES (*TAENIA OVIS*) IN AUSTRALIA

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Aim. Sheep measles is caused by infection with the larval stage of *Taenia ovis*. Financial losses fall on both processors and producers through condemnation or down grading of carcasses and potential impediment to international trade. From Animal Health Australia's National Sheep Health Monitoring Program (NSHMP) *Taenia ovis* is regularly found despite feedback from abattoirs to producers and information to producers on prevention. Therefore, late 2011 Meat and Livestock Australia decided to support a two-year project with the aims to identify on-farm risk factors, revisit the life cycle and assess the financial losses from *Taenia ovis* infections. This presentation will include the study design and the initial results.

Method. To examine the on-farm risk factors a questionnaire including 'human and husbandry related factors', 'climate and environment related factors' and 'communication and awareness' was sent out to 225 farms in New South Wales, Tasmania and Western Australia, early 2012. Farms were randomly selected from the NSHMP coordinated by Animal Health Australia belonging either to a negative or positive cohort with an animal prevalence >2%. For the economics study, the number of condemned hearts and carcasses and the time input for carcass trimming are currently assessed. For the life cycle, foxes were examined for their role in the transmission of *Taenia ovis*.

Results. Between 2006 and 2012, an average of 3.4% of the sheep were found positive for *Taenia ovis*. For the three states included in this study, the animal prevalence varied between 2.8% (Tasmania) and 5.2% (Western Australia). From 47 foxes collected, 16 were infected with one or more *Taenia* tapeworms and one closely matched the *T. ovis* sequence. Results on financial losses and the risk factor study will be available early 2013.

Conclusion. *Taenia ovis* is still a serious loss to producers and abattoirs and foxes might be playing a role in the transmission.