



10 March 2004

Your chance to vote on OJD

Sheep producers in OJD low prevalence areas are being encouraged to have their say on the future management of ovine Johne's disease (OJD) by voting on whether they want to establish an "Exclusion Area" (EA) for sheep trading.

The NSW Farmers' Association says OJD has caused more division and frustration in the industry than any other issue, and this is the first time producers have been able to have their say by direct vote.

Chair of the Association's Sheepmeats Committee, Chris Groves, says all OJD zoning controls in NSW will cease on 1 July 2004 and future trading will be on a risk-based approach, where farmers will have to decide for themselves how safe the sheep are they want to buy.

"However, farmers who are not fully satisfied with this approach have the opportunity to vote on establishing an Exclusion Area, which could provide them with some extra assurance of keeping the disease off their farms.

"Regardless of whether you agree with an EA or not, it is important that you vote so that your Rural Lands Protection Board (RLPB) knows exactly what its producers are thinking.

"For an EA to be established, more than 50% of sheep producers in the particular RLPB must vote and a majority of those voting must be in favour.

"It is important for producers to remember that the extra assurance associated with an EA will come at some cost to producers in the EAs.

"This is due to the extra administration involved and the possible subsidisation of producers within the RLPB that later may become infected with OJD or are considered at risk.

"Voting packs have been sent to the relevant producers and it is essential that they take the time to vote, because it will be a market signal to the rest of the sheep industry," Mr Groves

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