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Tempers flare over sheep trade restrictions

At the state border between Apsley in western Victoria and Hynam in south-east South Australia, there's a big 'Welcome to Victoria' sign that's been vandalised.

Someone has also taken a spray can to the 'Welcome to South Australia' sign on the opposite side of the road.

The sheep, grazing on either side of the fences, certainly aren't aware there's anything different between one green paddock and the next.

But new rules mean sheep can't pass from one side of the fence to the other, unless they test negative for sheep wasting disease, ovine Johne's.

Ovine Johne's disease has slowly spread across all southern states since it was first detected in NSW nearly 20 years ago.

The South Australia OJD committee chair Peter Altschwager says the state has worked hard to control the disease and its borders now need to be protected.

He says the rules had to change.

"The new rules in SA require that you demonstrate, that if you want to bring sheep in from interstate, that you demonstrate that the sheep are free from disease.

"Under the old scheme if the sheep were vaccinated, with approved vaccinates, that was sufficient to get them into SA.

"The industry has learned since the old plan was devised, that vaccination alone won't stop the spread of the disease.

"It will stop deaths but it won't stop the spread of the disease."

The South Australian sheep industry is holding road shows explaining to farmers on its side of the border what the new rules are.

Semi-retired vet Jack Reddin has a long history of being involved in OJD management in SA.

He says in South Australia there are 50 flocks quarantined for OJD.

"The prevalence in SA across the whole state is probably about half a per cent. Across the whole of Victoria, I don't really know but I understand it's around 20 plus per cent."

Victorian and South Australian sheep producers are at loggerheads over the changes.

While many South Australian farmers say they need to protect their low prevalence status, Victorians say it will affect trade.

Victorian Poll Dorset Association chair Jessica Sutherland says it will hurt stud breeders the most.

"It will mean there will be an oversupply of rams on this side of the border.

"The South Australians will be denied access to the genetics available on our side of the border.

"From a flock ram point of view, it means studs that traditionally sold into South Australia will be selling rams to the east of us which will push numbers up right around the state."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-08-02/border-tension-over-sheep-trade/4861070>