



Department of  
Primary Industries and  
Regional Development

GOVERNMENT OF  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



# WA livestock disease outlook

Producer edition | April 2019

## Recent livestock disease cases in WA

### Mouth lesions in feedlot cattle test negative for foot-and-mouth disease (FMD)



Figure 1: Cow with nasal erosion

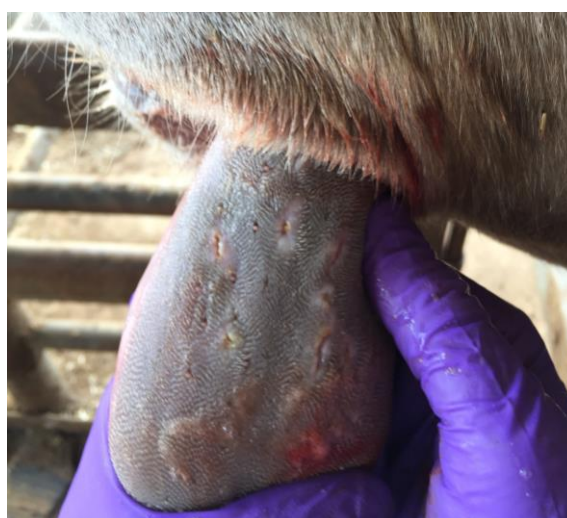


Figure 2: The tongue of the same cow, showing erosions

- Western Australia's access to livestock and livestock product export markets, worth about \$2 billion annually, relies on Australia being free of FMD. [Signs of FMD](#) may include: blisters in the mouth, nostrils, teats or feet; drooling; lameness; depression; loss of appetite; drop in milk yield in dairy cows; sudden death in young animals and abortion in pigs.
- Always report signs that could be FMD to a [DPIRD vet](#) or the Emergency Animal Disease hotline on **1800 675 888**. **Early detection = faster eradication = less impact on your business and community.**
- In April, in a group of 300 18-24 month-old feedlot cattle, eight died and three more were affected over a one-week period.
- Disease signs included depression, runny nose, slobbering and open mouth breathing. Some animals had nervous signs including an uncoordinated gait and head pressing. Staff at the feedlot noticed one animal had healing erosions on the tongue and nose (see Figures 1 and 2) and reported this to the local [DPIRD field vet](#), demonstrating the benefits of previous training in emergency animal disease signs and willingness to report a suspect [reportable](#) disease.
- The [DPIRD field vet](#) conducted an on-farm investigation and post-mortem examination, and submitted samples to the DPIRD laboratory. The vet suspected the deaths were due to a

bacterial infection with *Histophilus somni*, [polioencephalomalacia](#), bacterial pneumonia or [acidosis](#).

- While FMD was considered unlikely to be the cause of the disease in this group of cattle, the presence of oral and nasal erosions in one cow warranted exclusion testing. All samples tested negative for FMD.
- Testing at the DPIRD laboratory showed the illness and deaths were caused by an infection with the bacteria *Histophilus somni*. This diagnosis allowed the producer to instigate a prompt treatment plan with their private vet to prevent further losses. All laboratory fees were paid by DPIRD.
- The oral lesions were suspected to be due to grass seeds in rough feed.
- **The most likely way FMD could occur in Australia is through the illegal feeding of meat products to pigs.** Pigs infected by FMD produce great volumes of virus, which can spread to neighbouring properties via wind or by people or equipment movement, and can then infect other cloven-hooved animals including sheep and cattle.
- To find out more about FMD, see our [FMD webpage](#) or watch our [video on the key signs of FMD](#). For information on safe feeds for pigs, see our [pig feed webpage](#).
- If you suspect that anyone is supplying meat products for pig feed or feeding pigs with meat products, protect your business and your industry – contact **1800 675 888** or your nearest [DPIRD vet](#).

### **An unusual presentation of pulpy kidney in Merino ewes in the Midwest**

- In a flock of seven-year-old Merino ewes, four died and two were unwell from a flock of 340.
- Affected ewes were found down in the paddock with tremors, difficulty breathing and diarrhoea. All affected ewes were twin-pregnant. The flock was grazing a cereal rye paddock supplemented with lupins, and calcium licks were available.
- The producer contacted a [DPIRD field vet](#), who visited the property and conducted a post-mortem examination on one ewe. This ewe had a full rumen, a pale, swollen liver and was in body condition score of 3. The [DPIRD field vet](#) suspected [milk fever](#) (hypocalcaemia).
- Testing at the DPIRD laboratory showed that calcium levels were normal, and that milk fever was therefore not the cause of disease. Pulpy kidney (enterotoxaemia) was diagnosed.
- Pulpy kidney is a disease of sheep, goats and cattle. It occurs in sheep when a bacterium that normally inhabits the animal's intestines without causing problems begins to multiply and produce a toxin that poisons the animal. Pulpy kidney most commonly occurs in rapidly growing lambs on lush pasture or grain. In older sheep, pulpy kidney is most likely to occur just after they are moved to good feed from poorer feed. However, the disease can occur at any time.
- This diagnosis was reported to the producer, who was able to prevent further losses in the flock. Read more on our webpage about [pulpy kidney](#).
- As the affected ewes showed tremors, samples were also collected to exclude transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). These samples tested negative for TSEs.
- The [National TSE Surveillance Program](#) conducts surveillance for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or mad cow disease) in cattle and scrapie in sheep. Producers with cattle or sheep with neurological signs or sheep with persistent itchiness not caused by lice should contact their [DPIRD field vet](#) to discuss the inclusion of the animal in the program. Producers and vets who have suitable cattle and sheep autopsied under the program may claim a [rebate](#). The program supports our continued access to markets by proving we are free of TSEs.

## In autumn, watch for these livestock diseases:

Disease	Typical history and signs
<p><b>Calf scours</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read more on <a href="#">calf scours</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affects young calves in autumn and early winter. Newborn calves that received a good supply of colostrum from their dams will be better protected.</li> <li>Signs include depressed appearance, diarrhoea, lying down and death.</li> <li>Calf scours may be caused by single or multiple organisms. Some common organisms include coronavirus, rotavirus, <i>E. coli</i>, <i>Salmonella</i> and <i>Cryptosporidium</i>.</li> <li>Cows can be vaccinated against a number of these prior to calving with immunity transferred to the calf.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pregnancy toxæmia in ewes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read more on <a href="#">pregnancy toxæmia</a> including prevention and treatment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pregnancy toxæmia occurs most commonly in late pregnant/early lactating ewes. Signs include depression, lack of appetite, weakness, lying down, neurological signs, and death. Signs may be worse following stress. Affected ewes may separate from the mob.</li> <li>Ewes carrying multiple lambs are at higher risk; if identified early (at scanning) these ewes can be separated and fed carefully.</li> <li>Pregnancy toxæmia can be avoided if producers provide adequate nutrition to the ewes and minimise stress (e.g. avoid moving and yarding of ewes in late pregnancy and early lactation).</li> <li>Early diagnosis and treatment by a vet and supplementary feeding of good quality hay and oats can halt deterioration.</li> <li>Any adult sheep showing nervous signs should be tested for reportable diseases such as <a href="#">scrapie</a>. Speak to your <a href="#">DPIRD field vet</a> about subsidised investigations.</li> </ul>

## Joint approach to prevent African swine fever



DPIRD and the WA Pork Producers Association have been working together to ensure WA commercial producers are well informed about mitigating the risks of African swine fever as well as increasing preparedness for a potential outbreak. Pictured above are some of the industry and DPIRD attendees at the African swine fever workshop facilitated by DPIRD in April. Read an update on African swine fever from the WA Chief Veterinary Officer on the [DPIRD website](#).

---

---

## WA Livestock Disease Outlook highlights benefits of surveillance

Australia's ability to sell livestock and livestock products depends on evidence from our surveillance systems that we are free of livestock diseases that are reportable or affect trade. The *WA livestock disease outlook – for producers* summarises recent significant disease investigations by Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development vets and private vets. Data from these investigations provide evidence that WA is free from these diseases and supports our continuing access to markets.

**We welcome feedback.** To provide comments or to [subscribe](#) to the monthly email newsletter, *WA livestock disease outlook*, email [waldo@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:waldo@agric.wa.gov.au)

---

---

### Important disclaimer

The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from the use or release of this information or any part of it.

© State of Western Australia (Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development), 2019