

Transport and Care of Sheep

FACT SHEET – FOR SHEEP AT SALEYARDS

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Having bought sheep from the saleyard or through a private sale you need to ensure that you are prepared and able to provide adequate transport to the new property. It is important that you can care for the sheep and provide a healthy environment for them to graze. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals act 1986 clearly defines your responsibilities for the care and welfare of your sheep. The Code of Accepted Farming Practice for the Welfare of Sheep provides details on your responsibilities (www.dpi.vic.gov.au/animalwelfare). This brochure provides some basic information regarding your obligations towards your sheep.

Transporting sheep:

For small numbers of sheep/lambs (1- 10 head)

- A trailer or a ute stock crate is the preferred method.
- The front of the trailer/crate should be protected from the wind
- Lambs should have space to sit down without being crushed or stood on

For large numbers of sheep (>10 head)

- A livestock transport trailer/truck is the preferred method
- If possible, separate ewes and lambs and accommodate accordingly

DO NOT:

- Drag sheep by the horn
- Pick up sheep by their wool.
- Transport sheep in a car boot, sealed container or anything that restricts airflow



- Tie the legs of the sheep in order to restrain it
- Overload the transport vehicle – you may need to make two trips or find a bigger transport vehicle

Speak to your stock agent if transport is required for your new purchase.

Caring for your sheep:

Handling facilities:

It is important to make sure you have adequate facilities to unload the sheep when you get them back to your property. A set of yards or a small paddock to confine the sheep for the first couple of days is essential.

Holding the sheep in a small paddock or set of yards for the first couple of days will help to settle and calm the sheep, it will also help prevent the spread of weeds and disease to your property. This initial step is important for the biosecurity of your property.

Feed and water requirements on arrival:

The holding paddock or yard must have a supply of water that is accessible to all animals. It would also be a good place to introduce your sheep to some hay, in order to settle them after the transport.

When you finally introduce your sheep to the larger paddock, ensure that there is plenty of drinking water available. It is also best to continue giving hay for at least the first 2 days, so that their rumen (stomach) has time to adjust gradually to the pasture feed. If pasture quality or quantity is limited, you may have to supplementary feed your sheep, until adequate pasture is available.

Assessment of the health of the sheep:

While the sheep are being held in the yards/ small paddock use the opportunity to assess them (i.e., before you put them out on your paddocks). The most important things to look for are:

- any injuries that might have occurred during transport
- lameness or uneven gait
- making sure any suckling lambs are feeding on their mothers before you let them out into a paddock to graze.



Diseases of Sheep:

Table 1. Common diseases of sheep

Diseases	Description For more information go to www.dpi.vic.gov.au/farming , then click on 'Animals & Livestock' and then 'Sheep'
Clostridial (Bacterial) diseases	Clostridial organisms cause a variety of diseases including blackleg, pulpy kidney, blacks disease and tetanus. These organisms are found in the soil, where they can survive for a very long time. Clostridial diseases are usually fatal. Prevention is easily achieved by vaccinating the sheep. For more information please refer to Agnote: Clostridial diseases of sheep and cattle .
Liver fluke and worms	Liver fluke and worms are internal parasites that can cause severe production losses and death in stock. Control is achievable by conducting faecal egg counts and treating with target specific drench/s when required. Sheep drench can be purchased from your local livestock feed supplier or veterinarian. For more information please refer to Agnote: Control of liver fluke .
Footrot	Footrot is an infectious and contagious disease caused by the bacteria, <i>Dichelobacter nodosus</i> . It can result in sheep becoming severely lame and unable to graze. It is important to have an experienced person check the sheep before you buy them, and also make sure that they come with a signed declaration of freedom from footrot. For more information please refer to Agnote: Footrot in Sheep series .
Sheep Lice	Sheep body lice are biting insects that cause affected animals to become itchy. Signs of lice infestation include rubbing, biting and scratching. Lice can be a problem in sheep flocks, but most importantly are controllable, eradicable and preventable. Speak to your local DPI Animal Health staff for further advice. For more information please refer to Agnotes: Sheep body lice: control and eradication
Ovine Johne's Disease	Ovine Johne's Disease (OJD) is a bacterial wasting disease of sheep. Buying sheep that are vaccinated against OJD is a good way to protect your flock. For further information please refer to Agnote: OJD: What is Ovine Johne's Disease .

Property Identification:

All owners of sheep must register their property with Department of Primary Industries to receive a Property Identification Code (PIC). For more information please call 1800 678 779.

Please remember that sheep require ongoing supervision and maintenance to stay healthy. For further information about the management of a small sheep flock please refer to the *Agnote - Sheep care for new farmers*, which covers all facets of what to do, now that you have introduced sheep onto your property.



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 ISBN 978-1-74199-247-2
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For more information about transport and care of sheep contact: please consult your private veterinarian or local DPI Animal Health staff via the DPI Customer Service Centre on 136 186 or email customer@dpi.vic.gov.au, or visit www.dpi.vic.gov.au/animalwelfare and follow links to Animal Welfare information notes.