

# The general biosecurity duty and sheep producers

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Animal Biosecurity and Welfare, NSW DPI

## What does 'general biosecurity duty' mean?

People are expected to have a basic level of knowledge about the biosecurity risks they might encounter in their normal work and recreational activities.

All community members have a responsibility to consider how actions, or in some cases lack of action could have a negative impact on another person, business enterprise, animal or the environment. We must then take all reasonable and practical measures to prevent or minimise the potential impact.

Everyone who works with or owns animals has a duty of care to take all reasonable measures to protect the health and welfare of those animals. See the [Factsheet](#).

## Managing sheep biosecurity

People who keep sheep are expected to be informed about the general requirements for feed, water, shelter and routine treatments such as worm control and vaccinations which are needed to keep all sheep healthy.

There are a range of parasites and diseases present in Australia which can seriously affect the health and productivity of sheep. Many of these conditions are infectious – meaning that they spread from sheep to sheep and from one flock to another.

All sheep owners have a duty of care to manage their own sheep so that health conditions do not adversely impact the welfare and health of the sheep, and they have a general biosecurity duty to prevent the spread of parasites and diseases from their sheep to anybody else's sheep.

Accurate and up to date information on sheep health and management can be found free of charge online and there are many Australian sources of training available from basic level to advanced.

The following sites are good places to start learning:

- [NSW DPI Sheep health and production resources](#)
- [Making More from Sheep](#)
- [Meat and Livestock Australia – Tools & Calculators](#)
- [NSW DPI ProFarm courses](#)
- [Parasite management with Paraboss](#)

## Farm biosecurity plans

NSW DPI strongly recommends that all people who own or manage livestock develop a biosecurity plan for their own property. These plans should also include arrangements for how you will prepare for and respond to an emergency situation, such as a bushfire or flood, which would affect your livestock.

Information to assist you to develop a farm biosecurity plan can be found online. Some good sources are:

- [Farm Biosecurity Australia](#)

- [Farm FireWise](#) (NSW Fire Service)

## Good biosecurity in practice

The *Biosecurity Act 2015* requires everyone to take reasonable and practical measures to prevent, eliminate or minimise the impact of biosecurity risks. This is your general biosecurity duty. For sheep owners, listed below are some examples of ways you can fulfil your general biosecurity duty include:

- Ensure stock have adequate feed, water and shelter at all times.
- Have current biosecurity and emergency plans for your property – and follow them.
- Maintain stock proof boundary fences to prevent animals straying from or onto your land.
- Develop and implement a calendar of routine health and management procedures for your sheep to maintain them in good condition.
- Inspect your stock regularly and know what is normal behaviour and appearance of sheep.
- Investigate any signs of ill health or unusual behaviour seen in your sheep. Most cases will require a veterinary diagnosis to ensure you receive the correct advice and apply the most effective treatment. Do not delay seeking advice.
- Be aware of the important diseases of sheep in Australia.
  - Some pests and diseases are notifiable, meaning you must report them to a government veterinarian within one working day of suspecting sheep are infected. See the [Primefact Notifiable pests and diseases of animals in NSW](#)
  - Some pests and diseases are classed as prohibited matter because they have severe consequences in terms of livestock productivity, trade or human health. See the [Primefact: Prohibited matter animal pests and diseases](#)
  - Other diseases are important because they spread easily and have a major impact on commercial sheep production. See the [DPI sheep resources](#) and [MLA's Priority list of endemic diseases for the red meat industries](#)
- Keep a record of important contact numbers including:
  - your local private veterinarian
  - your closest [Local Land Services](#) office, and
  - the [Animal Biosecurity Emergency Hotline 1800 675 888](#)
- Always consider the risks of introducing disease when bringing livestock onto your property. Request a [National Sheep Health Declaration](#) prior to purchasing or agisting stock and discuss any concerns with your veterinarian or livestock advisor before making a decision.
- Keep introduced stock separate from your existing flock for as long as possible after arrival and monitor them closely for signs of ill health. Do not delay in seeking advice if you have any concerns about their health status.

For updates go to [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/factsheets](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/factsheets)

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