



Victorian
Farmers
Federation

Livestock

the Stock Standard

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Livestock producers cheer for transparency in sector

VICTORIAN cattle producers have welcomed recommendations to crack down on anti-competitive behaviour across the livestock supply chain in a landmark report released last week by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

Victorian Farmers Federation Livestock President Leonard Vallance said the organisation broadly supported the 15 recommendations handed down by the competition watchdog.

"The ACCC has made it very clear the industry is on notice and now it's up to us to work with the Federal and State Governments to make sure these recommendations are followed," Mr Vallance said.

Mr Vallance said the VFF was disappointed issues around pre- and post-sale weighing at saleyards, which had been a significant issue in the lead up to the inquiry, was not recommended in the report.

"Pre-sale vs post-sale weighing was the catalyst for the whole investigation, but it has been diluted by a myriad of supply chain issues," he said.

"We have always said the industry needs to adopt pre-sale weighing of cattle to increase competition and transparency in transactions, and it's frustrating the ACCC hasn't given us a resolution on this matter."

Transparency and accountability were major themes throughout the report, with the VFF applauding recommendations that industry prioritise implementing objective carcass measurement technology in abattoirs.

"Objective carcass measurement will help increase trust between processors and producers and achieve farm production benefits with precise carcass feedback," Mr Vallance said.

"We fully support this recommendation subject to the funding structure because all supply chain participants will reap the benefits.

"We've already engaged Meat and Livestock Australia to partner in forums across Victoria to expose producers to this industry changing technology and how it can help boost returns to the farm gate."

Mandatory price reporting was not recommended in the final report but improved voluntary market reporting was encouraged.

Mr Vallance said the VFF supported improved voluntary price reporting to give added transparency and improve decision making

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on farm, but stressed the need for MLA to conduct a cost benefit analysis on the proposal.

"It sounds great but we need to see the figures to show producers that the extra cost to industry is worth it," he said.

The VFF thanked the ACCC for recommending that all livestock agents across the country be licensed.

"The ACCC has made it clear; there is no room for underhanded behaviour in this industry," Mr Vallance said.

The Red Meat Advisory Council (RMAC) has been charged with overseeing the implementation of the recommendations, and must report to State and Federal agriculture ministers on its progress.

"The VFF will work with RMAC to ensure the recommendations that are implemented will benefit Victorian livestock producers," Mr Vallance said.

"We've been fighting for more transparency in the livestock industry for two years now and there's still some way to go, but this report shows we are having an impact."

Media Contacts:

Leonard Vallance, VFF Livestock President:
0417 551 547

Ashley Mackinnon, VFF Public Affairs
Officer: 0417 165 784



Electronic identification for sheep and goats

From 1 January 2017, all sheep and goats born in Victoria will require an electronic identification tag, linked to the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS), before being dispatched to a saleyard, abattoir or another property.

From 1 July 2017, all saleyards, abattoirs and knackeries must commence scanning electronic tags of sheep and goats and uploading the information to the NLIS database.

Funding applications open 14 November 2016 and will remain open until the specified closing date, or the funding allocation is exhausted, whichever occurs first.

Producers, stock agents, transporters and EID scanning contractors, applications close - 31 December 2017

For further information visit agriculture.vic.gov.au/sheepEID

Sector	Producers
Eligible optional infrastructure	Wand and panel readers Weighing equipment with EID reader fittings Manual drafting crates with EID reader fittings Lamb marking cradles with EID reader fittings Software to collect and manage performance data and/or to record movements on the NLIS database Magazine tag applicators (if included as part of an application)
Exclusions	Auto-drafter Computers, laptops, phones and tablets Electronic NLIS (Sheep) tags
Maximum amount per applicant and co-funding	\$3000 Applicants must fund a minimum of 50 per cent of costs
Additional support	Agriculture Victoria will: deliver regional workshops for producers on the implementation of electronic tagging and the associated productivity benefits provide access to information on equipment selection and installation design
Total package available	Up to \$750,000

Footrot - Making a comeback

A number of areas around Australia have been free from footrot for over 20 years, however recent outbreaks have been an unfriendly reminder for producers to not get too comfortable.

Footrot is recognised among the most significant animal health issues for Australian sheep producers in high winter rainfall areas.

It is a highly contagious disease, and research by the Mackinnon Project has revealed the cost of footrot can be as much as \$7.64 per head, resulting in a national cost of \$12.4 million each year.

Footrot is an infectious disease that can range from a benign strain, often referred to as scold, to an aggressive virulent strain. The infection spreads in warm wet conditions typically associated with spring and the bacterium is able to survive seven days off the sheep. Warmer dryer months see no spread, with the bacteria dying rapidly.



A healthy foot (left) compared to a foot with score 3 footrot (right). Source: Coopers Animal Health.

Make a plan!

Successful eradication of footrot will happen if you develop a plan with your local sheep vet and an experienced accredited footrot contractor.

It is important to diagnose the strain of footrot so that appropriate steps can be put in place. Once identified, it can be controlled in a variety of ways including foot-bathing, quarantine and, if necessary, antibiotics.

Managing the spread of disease over winter and spring will limit the damage and an eradication program revolves around the non-spread period, summer, and may include culling affected sheep.

Keep checking

Don't assume that your eradication process has you free of footrot indefinitely.

Consistent inspections of your mob's feet along with appropriate biosecurity procedures are essential in the fight against footrot.

Strategies to prevent footrot entering your property include:

- purchase sheep from clean flocks and examine feet for lesions, lameness and signs of treatment before purchase
- request a Sheep Health Statement stating with the property's footrot status
- when transporting stock ensure the truck is clean
- footbath sheep on arrival and quarantine them from other sheep for an adequate period
- reduce the chance of strays bringing in infection by ensuring boundary fences are sheep proof
- don't move sheep along roads that have been used by other sheep in the previous seven days.

For more information, contact Livestock Health & Biosecurity Victoria's Catherine James or Kimberley Henman on 5444 9777 or email lhbv@vff.org.au.

Visit www.lhbv.org.au for a range of animal health and biosecurity resources and follow along on Twitter or Facebook @vff_LHBV.

Would you like to receive your newsletter via email?

Contact Kate Phillips to update your contact details: (03) 9207 5606 or kphillips@vff.org.au



Decisions are the key

There was standing room only at VFFs Livestock Health and Biosecurity Victoria event, held in conjunction with the Loddon Valley Stud Merino Field Day at Serpentine in early March.

95 producers braved the heat and took the opportunity to get the latest tips and tools on making the most out of their sheep enterprise.

Achieve Ag's Nathan Scott put the point to producers that now is an exciting time to be in the sheep industry, with eID technology opening up opportunities to collect and use information like never before. He encouraged producers to only collect information that would be useful when making decision for their enterprises because 'Tags don't make you money – decisions do'.

Jason Trompf spoke passionately about producers having a clear breeding objective. His take home message was for everyone to complete a bredwell-fedwell commercial ram buying tool which steps

producers through production goals, enterprise priorities and corresponding these to ASBVs.

Jason emphasised the importance of using all the tools available to make the best possible decision when buying rams, and ensuring breeding flock fitness was more like an off-road rally car, not an F1 racer.

Bringing everyone back to basics, Heidi Sutherland from Zoetis reminded producers about the importance of getting their vaccination technique on point. Producers enjoyed being reminded about the need for two doses of vaccine with Heidi using the analogy of the first primer dose being like the army general who has the instructions, but the real work only gets done when the soldiers arrive, aka, the booster dose.

A big thank you to all who helped put on a great event and you can head to our website to see if we're holding an event near you: www.lhbv.org.au

Note: You can visit www.sheepgenetics.org.au for further information on ASBV's or get in touch with us and we can get you a bredwell-fedwell ram buying tool.



Events

Your cattle: a seasonal guide to what's next

Location: Merino
Date: Tuesday 28 March

Your goats: a seasonal guide to what's next

Location: Horsham
Date: Friday 31 March

Your stock: a seasonal guide to what's next

Location: Bairnsdale
Date: Wednesday 10 May

Your cattle: a seasonal guide to what's next

Location: Yea
Date: Wednesday 24 May

Your stock: a practical guide to farm biosecurity

Location: Meredith
Date: Wednesday 31 May

Visit lhbv.org.au to register and find out more.

Vic farmers urged to make most of wild dog bounty

FARMERS can now help to wipe out one of Victoria's major menaces with the State Government this week restarting its bounty on wild dogs.

The Victorian Farmers Federation won support for the renewed bounty in last year's State budget after the program was scrapped in 2015, with eligible hunters able to claim a \$120 reward for each wild dog killed.

"Producers have an ongoing battle with wild dogs attacking new-born lambs, attacks which are not only cruel but reduce the ability of producers to run livestock," VFF Land Management Committee Chairman Gerry Leach said.

"This bounty will help farmers and professional shooters reduce the impact of this menace."

The programme last ran in 2013-14, when 587 pelts were claimed on top of the 480 dogs caught by the Government's wild

dog collectors. Mr Leach said the VFF hoped the new program would see a similar result.

"We're pleased to see the program has come back because last time it ran it was very successful at little cost," he said.

This week also saw the Government kick off its successful fox bounty scheme, which last year saw 85,500 fox scalps collected, with hunters able to claim \$10 per scalp.

The collection period for the fox and wild dog bounty will run from March through to October, with hunters encouraged to look out for minor scheduling changes due to public holidays.

More information is available on the scheme at: www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/bounty

Media Contacts:

Gerry Leach, VFF Land Management Committee Chair: 0429 941 235

Ashley Mackinnon, VFF Public Affairs Officer: 0417 165 784

New rabbit calicivirus released

In the first week of March 2017 a new virus known as RHDV1 K5 will be released at more than 600 sites across Australia.

With funding from AWI and the Invasive Animals CRC, community organisations, Landcare groups and government land managers will participate in the national roll-out of the virus. The new virus will enhance conventional rabbit control activities.

AWI has also funded the production of ten new instructive videos to help woolgrowers with biocontrol and conventional control of rabbits. These short videos of only a few minutes each will be helpful for your members who have issues with rabbit control or who have an interest in this area.

If you have any questions, please contact Emma Gittoes, 0428 107 479 or Ian Evans, 0427 773 005.

Release site locations of the new RHDV1 K5 virus



Farmers urge Agriculture Victoria to take animal welfare role from RSPCA

VICTORIA'S peak farm lobby has warned the State Government needs to act swiftly to stop animal activist groups from seizing the power to police farm practice, in its submission to a parliamentary inquiry into the Victorian branch of the RSPCA.

The Victorian Farmers Federation has urged the Government to sign into law a provision that would give Agriculture Victoria the undisputed authority to regulate commercial farming zones and confine the RSPCA to watching over domestic animals.

"The State Government is getting closer to unveiling its Animal Action Plan, and this is a perfect opportunity for the Government to give Agriculture Victoria the definitive authority to regulate livestock under legislation," VFF President David Jochinke said.

"RSPCA Victoria does a fine job protecting and investigating cruelty towards domestic animals, but that role shouldn't extend to farm animals.

"The feedback we've received from farmers is that RSPCA inspectors are aggressive, demanding, and less willing to work with farmers to improve animal welfare."

Mr Jochinke chalked this attitude up to the RSPCA's history of activist campaigning against commercial farming, which has led to an increasingly strained relationship with the farm sector.

RSPCA Victoria earlier this year pledged to cease all activism following an internal review of its operations, but Mr Jochinke flagged concerns the group was circumventing this commitment by using the national RSPCA to campaign on its behalf.

"There is a clear conflict of interest when you have RSPCA Australia actively campaigning against farming practices while RSPCA Victoria is being used to regulate the law for farms," he said.

"RSPCA Victoria wants to be taken seriously as a regulator, so they have agreed to give up their activism, but their website still promotes campaigns by their national body to shut down the live export trade and to end the legal sport of duck hunting.

"This is clear proof that the Victorian branch is relying on the national branch to do its campaigning, and this is unacceptable for the farming community."

Mr Jochinke said farmers cared about their animals' welfare and the State Government needed to recognise the good work of the agriculture sector.

"Farmers recognise that to get quality produce from their animals they need to provide good care of their animals and as such many have undertaken their industries relevant quality assurance program," he said.

A copy of the VFF's submission to the inquiry can be found on our website: vff.org.au/vff/policy/submissions

New program provides innovation fast-track for cutting edge producers

PRODUCERS looking to grow their business and gain a competitive edge through accelerated innovation and adoption of new technologies will be able to access greater expertise and support to achieve their goals as part of a new MLA Donor Company (MDC) pilot program.

The Producer Innovation Fast-Track program is an MDC initiative designed to accelerate the adoption of innovations that have the potential to significantly improve farm and value chain performance.

Under the program, producers who are innovators, early adopters, AgTech entrepreneurs or future value chain leaders will be provided with the expertise, co-funding and support to take their business to the next level.

Innovation Fast-Track is open to working together with producers and producer groups on projects in three key areas:

Innovations to improve on-farm performance, such as:

- digital agriculture, including remote sensing technologies, smart ear tags, drones and data analytics

- rumen energy capture and greenhouse gas reduction
- accelerated genetic gain - northern beef, southern beef, sheep and goats
- integrated parasite management
- next generation grazing and nutritional management, including dual purpose crops
- beyond best practice animal welfare
- soil health and farm innovation networks

Insights and innovations that lead to new products, brands and value chains, including:

- new value chain design enabled by access to new technologies such as mobile abattoirs
- new business models for innovative products

New ventures and start-ups:

- designed to support entrepreneurial producers who see opportunities to launch new business ventures in the AgTech space

MDC CEO Dr Christine Pitt said the program aims to identify the industry trailblazers and provide the support and expertise

required for them to grow their business by innovating faster.

"Producer Innovation Fast-Track can help you take the next big step by combining your aspirations with our expertise to drive innovation adoption that benefits your business," Dr Pitt said.

"We will work with producers to refine their objectives and identify the resources, expertise and investment required to develop a strategy to achieve real outcomes.

"As well as the ability to co-invest up to 75% of project costs, MDC can offer future-focussed producers access to the latest research and development and innovations in livestock production; the technical and business expertise that will make it happen; market and global insights to underpin new high value product development; in-market immersion study tours; additional resources; and participation in networks of like-minded individuals."

To find out more about the program, please visit www.mla.com.au/fasttrack or email fasttrack@mla.com.au.

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VFF Livestock Group

Farrer House 24-28 Collins Street Melbourne 3000 | ABN 67 079 980 304
Ph. 1300 882 833 | Fax. 03 9207 5500 | E-mail. vff@vff.org.au | www.vff.org.au

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