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Sheep Producers Australia Update

Impacts of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) for the Sheep Industry 28 March 2020

[Sheep Producers Australia](#) (SPA) is the peak industry organisation for sheep and lamb producers. It works to represent and promote producers' interests and view to position the Australian sheep and lamb industry for future success.

Sheep Producers Australia (SPA) is committed to [supporting the sheep and red meat industry](#) throughout the COVID-19 response and recovery, to help producers work safely and plan business operations in the changing environment.

The situation is constantly evolving, and we understand these are uncertain times. As an industry we are committed to continuing to support our sheep producers and broader agriculture industries, whilst upholding the highest standards of health, biosecurity and animal welfare throughout the supply chain.

This update will focus on 3 key areas:

- **On Farm Health**
- **Livestock and Agricultural Businesses**
- **Red Meat Supply Chain**

SPA COVID-19 Priorities

- The health of producers and people in the industry and rural communities
 - Business and supply chain continuity
 - Identifying supply chain interruptions
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On Farm Health

About COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

- [Understand the virus symptoms](#)
- [How to protect others and stop the spread](#)
- [Find the Facts – Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- Keep up to date with the [Current Situation in Australia](#)

On Farm COVID-19 Management

Protection the health and welfare of our people is critical – family, staff, contractors, suppliers etc

Please refer to these handy guides:

- [Keeping Healthy During Covid, Cattle Council Australia,](#)
 - [Planning for Shearing during COVID](#)
 - [Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health](#) or [Beyond Blue](#)
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Livestock and Agricultural Businesses

Agriculture and Food Supply Essential Services

- The Federal Government has [reassured industry that their priority is to ensure food security](#) of Australia and that agriculture will be recognised as an essential service (26 March). Minister Littleproud notes:
 - Australia's food production and supply chain will not be affected by coronavirus shutdowns.
 - As far as the Commonwealth is concerned, food production and supply is an essential service.
 - That means State-imposed border shutdowns will not affect agricultural supply chains.
- Each State Government will determine the essential services classifications and border requirements for their region as new public health measures are introduced. The situation in each state is different, so while national consistency is preferred, it may be appropriate for different measures. States are currently working through this and may take some time to clarify.
- A letter from RMAC on behalf of members has been sent to State Ministers outlining the need for the scope of supply chain services to be classified, and seeking assurance that at a local level there is the capacity to allow those supplying goods and services to the red meat and livestock sector be given free passage through any border restrictions as part of any essential services exemptions.

Agricultural Business Management and Planning

- The situation is constantly evolving, and we recognised that these are unprecedented circumstances with many questions as to how COVID-19 will impact producers, businesses and the wider industry. SPA is working on information and resources to assist sheep producers managing changing conditions.
- Sheep producers should consider options to prepare their businesses and make contingency plans. This could include:

- Reviewing the farm biosecurity plan procedures around farm visitors and hygiene practices for staff. This should include enacting measures to reduce the risk of exposure to families and staff. Consider international visitors or people returning from overseas, and implement self-isolation procedures if family or staff are unwell.
- Consideration of potential impacts on the business and ability to operate, such as reduced or limited labour. This should include:
 - An assessment of any contracted services and workers who may have to modify their operations to comply with government requirements.
 - Contingency planning for managing livestock if you or other people who care for your livestock become sick, or restrictions make it difficult to maintain existing arrangements to manage them.
- Maintain a good dialogue with suppliers of farm inputs to understand their ability to supply product during this time.
- Read up on the [Fair Work Ombudsman](#) resources about COVID-19 and Australian workplace laws.
- AgVet chemical availability
 - While many Australian production systems rely on imported chemicals, COVID-19 is not currently impacting access for the horticulture and grains sector. This may change if international trading arrangements slow as would be the case for other imported commodities.
 - While some sectors of the market are experiencing a shortage of some chemicals, the herbicide glyphosate is the most topical, this is due to low stock levels on hand during the drought coupled with the significant spike in demand from the unexpected but welcomed recent rain events.
 - There are some short-term issues in accessing raw materials from China but these are expected to resolve as international trade stabilises.
- [Coronavirus and corporations – what you need to know](#)

- Other [COVID 19 Resources \(by state\)](#) RMAC

Economic Support and Stimulus

- [The Federal Government's Economic Response to the Coronavirus](#)
 - [The ATOs 'one-stop shop' for tax and super COVID information](#)
 - Link to [State Support and Stimulus Packages for COVID-19](#)
 - Get financial support through your local [Rural Financial Counselling Service](#)
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Red Meat Supply Chain

Supply chain continuity

The Federal Government has reassured industry that inputs are being given equal consideration regarding availability and transport of agricultural products.

SPA and the Red Meat Advisory Council ([RMAC](#)) are working to mitigate interruptions to inputs to the sheep production. These include inputs (eg. feed, feed inputs, animal health products, parts for repairs) and services (eg. shearers, pregnancy scanners, lamb marking and dipping contractors and stockwork contractors and veterinarians), as well as the movement of livestock and meat products.

Identifying supply chain interruptions Road Transport and Borders RMAC members have been working to ensure that components of our supply chain can continue to trade across borders to ensure business continuity.

- [State-imposed border shutdowns will not halt agriculture](#)
- [Border Control Arrangements for Red Meat and Livestock](#), RMAC
- [Current Border Control Arrangements](#), NFF Farm Hub.

COVID-19

RED MEAT + LIVESTOCK FREIGHT EXEMPTIONS



BORDER CONTROL
PROCESSES APPLY
IN NT, QLD, SA,
TAS + WA

All freight movements exempt



All freight exempt including
livestock, fresh food and
other agricultural inputs
across all borders



www.rmac.com.au | @redmeatcouncil | RMAC Current: 25 March 2020

- Saleyards

[Keeping COVID out of saleyards](#), SPA/CCA/WPA, 27 March

[Agriculture saleyards and wool auctions can continue](#), David Littleproud, 27 March 2020

- Air and Sea Freight

SPA is seeking to further understand shipping and air freight constraints regarding supplying international markets. This has been largely affected by the reduction in passenger flights that would normally be carrying cargo. The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) is currently in discussions with operators to identify a solution. The Australian Meat Industry Council, the peak body for meat processors, is also in consultations with the Australian Peak Shipping Association to try and work out solutions to air and sea freight issues.

- Other Issues?

If there are further issues affecting your sheep business, please contact

admin@sheepproducers.com.au.

Market Impacts

Domestic Markets

Producers will have noted the large increase in supermarket and butcher shop sales with the disruptions in the international markets there is no doubt some product is being diverted to the domestic sector. The food service sector will be suffering but the overall picture is of an increase in domestic sales, at this point. Pricing, whilst remaining strong, may be volatile due to the competing market forces.

- [Lamb yardings increase as prices slide](#), MLA, 26 March 2020

International markets

Volumes to international seem reasonably consistent, even with consumers switching from food service purchases to supermarket. The current bottlenecks for Australia will include shipping arrangements with both shipping and air freights experiencing disruptions due to cargo and passenger flows. The briefing this morning indicated that sea freight should be recovering relatively quickly, however air freight arrangements are still under review with the department in discussions with operators.

- [Flight groundings squeeze air-freight capacity](#), MLA, 26 March 2020
- [Wool Selling During COVID FAQs, WPA](#), 23 March 2020

Live Export

The Australian Livestock Exporters' Council ([ALEC](#)), exporters and the Department are working to [ensure live export trade can continue](#) as measures are put in place to manage the daily change of COVID-19.

Australian port restrictions for people disembarking and the need for two-weeks of self-isolation, is limiting the availability of Australian Accredited Veterinarians (AAV) and accredited stock-people to keep the trade operating at the standard we pride ourselves on. To assist with workforce supply, [LiveCorp has made arrangements](#) for an alternative pathway to accelerate stockperson accreditation, where appropriate skills and

experience are demonstrated.

The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) has also announced it will fast-track accreditation for AAVs to ensure animal welfare is upheld on vessels.

Livestock Industry Collaboration

Sheep Producers Australia is working with industry stakeholders, State and Federal Governments, [RMAC](#), [NFF](#), [CCA](#), [WPA](#), [AHA](#), [MLA](#), State Farming Organisations and others to develop guidance and advice on COVID-19 for industry and government.

- RMAC's priority is to ensure that red meat and livestock businesses are enabled to get on with the business of efficiently delivering safe, nutritious and high quality Australian red meat.
- Red meat supply chains stronger together in fight against COVID-19 [here](#)



The COVID-19 situation is changing rapidly, be aware information presented here may change.

SPA is following the advice of the Australian Government Department of Health and the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment as the situation develops. Current as of 27 March 2020.

How can SPA Help?

If you are dealing with or predicting any issues that require escalation to a national approach, please Contact Bonnie Skinner on 0412 472 710 or via email

bskinner@sheepproducers.com.au.

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