

# Sheep measles

(*Cysticercus ovis*)

Connecting people in the business of sheep

## KEY MESSAGES

- Sheep measles can cause significant economic impact with lost yield due to carcase condemnation.
- Dogs are the primary host for tapeworms, which are the primary disease agent. Dogs infected with adult tapeworms excrete eggs, which can be ingested by sheep.
- Eggs can be swallowed during grazing and hatch inside sheep where the immature larvae form cysts in the organs of infected animals.
- Worm dogs monthly with praziquantel to break the parasite life cycle and burn or bury any of offal and livestock carcasses

intestine into the bloodstream and lodge in muscle tissue. Here they develop into oval-shaped cysts, especially in the skeletal muscles, heart, diaphragm, cheek muscles and oesophagus

### Diagnosis

There are no outward signs of infection in sheep or goats — cysts are found after slaughter or death.

Unusually oval cysts up to 12mm long are usually detected in sheep and goats during meat inspection.

Tapeworm segments or eggs are detected in dog faeces and can be up to 3–5mm long, white and flat in appearance.



### What are sheep measles?

Sheep measles, also known as *Cysticercus ovis*, is the cystic stage of the dog tapeworm (*Taenia ovis*). Despite a similar name and life cycle, this parasite is not the same as bladder worm (*Taenia hydatigena*) or hydatids (*Echinococcus granulosus*).

The cysts form in the organs of intermediate host animals — sheep and goats.

### Economic considerations

If there are more than five cysts in the sheep carcase, the whole carcase is condemned at the abattoir. If there are five or less cysts, processors will trim the carcase as required, reducing profits.

Infected offal (liver heart lungs) is condemned.

### Parasite lifecycle

The adult dog tapeworm lives in the intestines of dogs. Worm eggs pass out in the dog's faeces onto pasture and are ingested by sheep during grazing.

The larvae burrow through the wall of the sheep's

### Treatment and prevention

Worm dogs monthly with praziquantel to break the parasite life cycle.

There is no practical treatment for cysts in sheep or goats.

Carry out any home killing of sheep or goats in a dog-proof enclosure. Burn or bury offal so dogs cannot eat it.

## CONTACT

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Do not feed raw sheep or goat to dogs — feed commercial dry dog food or deep freeze meat for 21 days before feeding it to dogs.

Prevent dogs from wandering and scavenging carcasses and dispose of livestock carcasses by burial or burning.

Ensure all dogs entering the property have been treated with a tapeworm-killing drug in the past month. This should include dogs belonging to friends, shooters, contractors, casual staff or tenants.

Ensure water used for livestock purposes, such as drinking and pasture irrigation, is free of contamination from dog droppings.

#### For further information

Contact the Enhanced Abattoir Surveillance (EAS) Program Manager Dr Elise Matthews, your local veterinary practitioner, livestock consultant or local PIRSA Animal Health Officer.

FOR ANY SIGNS OF UNUSUAL OR SERIOUS ANIMAL DISEASE, PLEASE CALL THE 24/7 DISEASE WATCH HOTLINE: 1800 675 888.

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