

Footrot in NSW in 2017 – Key Facts

- Detections of footrot have been increasing in NSW in 2017. This is occurring in all sheep raising areas of NSW.
- Sheep with footrot are not necessarily “on their knees” with lameness.
- The major way footrot is spread is through contact with infected sheep and goats.
- Animals from infected flocks that appear normal can still be carriers of footrot and can spread the infection to other flocks.
- Footrot infection can lie dormant in a flock when conditions are cold or dry, only to reappear when the environment is right for expression of disease – this is what is known as a ‘spread period’.
- Because footrot can be dormant at certain times of the year, it may take more than one veterinary inspection to determine if a flock is infected with virulent footrot.
- In NSW laboratory tests (swabs) for footrot are not used to diagnose virulent vs benign footrot. They may be used at the government vet’s discretion as **an aid** to the clinical examination and **field diagnosis** required under state policy.

What does this mean when trading sheep?

- The early stages of ‘scald’, interdigital dermatitis, benign footrot and virulent footrot look identical – they must be mentioned on your assessment if present.
- Whenever lame sheep are seen, it is vital that a number of them are caught and examined properly so the true cause can be found. Any condition that stops sheep being able to feed will limit their production and may even cause deaths, as in the case of pregnancy toxaemia.
- Some conditions such as foot abscess or strawberry footrot may be obvious on examination, but any condition where there is reddening of the skin between the claws of the foot, or under-running of the soles of the feet should be investigated by a veterinarian as soon as possible.
- In NSW footrot is a notifiable disease and should be reported to a Local Land Services vet within 24 hours of being noticed.
- A negative swab for footrot does not mean a mob of sheep or goats are free from footrot.
- A single inspection of a mob of sheep does not guarantee freedom from footrot.

How can vendors provide assurance that their sheep are footrot free?

- Vendors should use the National Sheep Health Declaration to provide information about the health and treatment history of their sheep. Make this easily available to buyers pre-sale by attaching it to your assessment.
- Completing an additional voluntary Footrot Vendor Declaration is optional but provides strong assurance that the sheep are footrot free. The onus is on the buyer to carefully examine and monitor purchased sheep after arrival and have any problems investigated by a veterinarian within 14 days. This provides protection to both the vendor and buyer.
- Before offering sheep for sale ask yourself – Would I buy these sheep?

More information on footrot in NSW

<http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-and-livestock/sheep/health/footrot/footrot-sheep-goats>