

OVERVIEW OF THE INQUIRY

Previous Inquiry and Report

On 19 November 1997, the Senate referred the issue of Ovine Johne's Disease (OJD) in the Australian sheep flock to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee. The Committee presented its first report to the Senate on 2 July 1998.

In that report, the Committee stated that its inquiry was limited to observations regarding the various measures that might be applied to control OJD in the future and that it was premature to make further comment until the national program to combat OJD had been determined.

The Committee noted in its first report its concerns about the extent of economic and social dislocation experienced by producers affected by OJD and the need for further assistance to be provided to producers affected by the disease.

The Committee also indicated the requirement for a further Inquiry, which would conduct a further examination of the National OJD Program.

Current Inquiry

On 9 December 1998, the Senate again referred the issue of OJD in the Australian sheep flock to the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee. No reporting date was set down at that time. The Committee commenced its second Inquiry in April 2000.

The Committee's second Inquiry involved an examination of the conduct of the National Ovine Johne's Disease Control and Evaluation Program (NOJDP), including an update on programs introduced at both federal and state levels since 1998 and developments in research to either eradicate or control the disease.

The Committee considered the following issues in its second Inquiry:

- a) the timetable for the National OJD Program to combat OJD;
- b) the likely cost of the isolation and elimination of OJD from the Australian sheep flock;
- c) the extent and nature of any research being conducted in relation to OJD testing techniques and/or possible vaccines to treat OJD; and
- d) the respective contribution of government and industry that will be required to fund the National OJD Program.

Conduct of the Inquiry

During April and May 2000, advertisements calling for submissions to the Inquiry were placed in *The Australian*, *Melbourne Age*, *The Weekly Times*, *The Land, Stock and Land*, *Goulburn Post*, *Shepparton News*, *Adelaide Advertiser*, *Launceston Examiner*, *Armidale Express*, *Orange Central West Daily*, *Tamworth North Daily*, *Wagga Daily Advertiser* and *Hamilton Spectator*.

A total of 95 written submissions, (including 12 supplementary submissions) were received. A list of the submissions is provided at Appendix 1.

The Committee held eight public hearings in the following locations:

Kangaroo Island	20 July 2000
Melbourne	21 July 2000
Orange	18 September 2000
Goulburn	19 September 2000
Canberra	13 October 2000
Canberra	4 December 2000
Canberra	9 February 2001
Canberra	2 April 2001

The Committee took evidence from 111 witnesses, including individual producers, representatives of producer and industry groups, veterinarians and action groups. The Committee also took evidence from government bodies, both Commonwealth and State. A list of witnesses is at Appendix 2. The *Hansard* of the hearings is available on the Hansard website at www.aph.gov.au.

The Committee acknowledges the contribution of all those individuals and organisations who prepared written submissions and those who appeared as witnesses.