

SHEEP MEASLES (TAENIA OVIS) IN AUSTRALIA IS WIDESPREAD AND DOING WELL!

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Introduction

The taeniid cestodes (*Taenia* and *Echinococcus* species) are a group of tapeworms of human health and veterinary importance. As with all members of this group of tapeworms, *Taenia ovis*, the sheep measles tapeworm, has a two host lifecycle, the definitive host being a carnivore, commonly domestic dogs, and the intermediate host, herbivores, commonly sheep.

The importance of sheep measles has nothing to do with sheep or dog health, it is concerned with aesthetics and economics! The parasites develop in cysts in muscles of sheep, these cysts eventually die, leading to the formation of small pus-filled abscesses in the muscles, eventually mineralising into small gritty masses.

From a consumer's point of view, abscesses and/or gritty masses in the Sunday roast is not popular! The presence of sheep measles is also a potential impediment to international trade of sheep meat.

T. ovis transmission

Using data from the National Sheep Health Monitoring Program, co-ordinated by Animal Health Australia, *T. ovis* has been shown to be common and wide spread in Tasmania, New South Wales, Victoria and south Australia and southern Western Australia.

Anecdotal evidence from processors suggests *T. ovis* is causing important financial losses to the Australian sheep meat industry. Meat and Livestock Australia has acknowledged the importance of *T. ovis* and funded a study to revisit the epidemiology of *T. ovis* in Australia, including the role of wild dogs and foxes, and assessing its financial impact on the Australian sheep meat industry. Data collected during the initial stages of this study will be presented and discussed.