



Vaccination decisions

The key to making vaccination decisions is knowing your disease risk. By understanding the common diseases in your region, risk factors and property and flock history you can determine if the potential return outweighs the cost of vaccinating.

Some key factors to consider when deciding whether and when to vaccinate are:

- Disease prevalence: how likely is the disease in your area?
- Cost and impact: would an outbreak cause major losses or only minor issues?
- Animal class: which sheep (lambs, ewes, etc.) are most at risk, and what is their intended use (breeding, trade, slaughter)?
- Vaccine cost and efficacy: do the benefits of vaccinating outweigh costs in terms of money, time and welfare?
- Your risk tolerance: how much risk can you accept?

Remember to always read the manufacturer's instructions carefully and adhere to the directions of use.



Vaccine	Main protection and causes	Risk factors	Key timing
Clostridial diseases (3 in 1, 5 in 1, 6 in 1, 8 in 1)	Base of clostridial vaccine • Tetanus • Pulpy kidney Extras (depending on vaccine) • Black leg • Cheesy gland • Black disease • Malignant oedema	• Widespread environmental bacterial exposure • Bacteria entering open wounds from injuries or husbandry practices (e.g. marking, shearing) • Dietary changes (e.g. break of season, containment feeding, etc.)	• Ewes 3-6 weeks pre-lambing - to get antibodies into colostrum for lambs • Lambs at marking and weaning • Annual booster for all sheep
Scabby mouth (Scabigard®)	• Scabby mouth • Causes: scabs in oral regions, difficulty eating/ drinking, infections on teats of ewes which may affect ability to rear lambs, industrial implications at shearing	• Previous outbreaks on property • Common in lambs under one years old • Intensive lamb production areas • High stocking rates • Rough grazing pastures that can lead to oral abrasions and give the virus opportunity to infect open wound.	• Live vaccine given once at lamb marking using Scabigard applicator • Boosters only needed in high-risk area
Erysipelas (Eryvac®, Eryguard®)	• Erysipelas infection • Causes: arthritis and joint infection	• Spread from ewe to lamb • Previous arthritis outbreaks • After docking or through umbilical infection	• Low incidence of arthritis - vaccinate at marking • High incidence of arthritis - pre-lambing vaccine • Vaccinate at weaning for long term protection
Campylobacter Ovis (Campyvac®)	• Campylobacter infection • Causes: late-term abortions, stillbirths and weak lambs	• Cool, wet environments • Abortion history/ lower than usual marking rates • First-time exposure in pregnant ewes	• Two vaccines in first year of life • Before breeding, especially in at risk flocks
Ovine Johne's Disease (Gudair®)	• Ovine Johne's Disease • Causes: ill thrift, poor condition, possible scouring, eventually death, loss of production • Restricted matter: clincial cases need to be reported	• Known high-risk OJD areas • QLD considered a low risk region • Stock start contaminating environment through faeces at approximately two years old • Purchased/ transported sheep • Cooler climates	• Risk based vaccination • Lifetime protection • Due to high cost per head, vaccinate keeper stock not slaughter stock (if at risk)





Vaccine selection based on farm risk

The following three scenarios illustrate how different risks may impact the recommended vaccine protocol. Keep in mind a property may be high risk for one disease and low risk for another.

	Farm 1 (low risk)	Farm 2 (moderate risk)	Farm 3 (high risk)
Characteristics	- No history of disease - Closed flock, self-replacing - Low stocking density - Dry environment	- History of disease outbreak - Occasional sheep purchases - Moderate stocking rates - Breeding enterprises - stud stock	- History of disease outbreak - Regular stock purchased - High stocking density - Cooler, wet region - OJD history in district
Recommendations	- Clostridial vaccine essential - OJD and campylobacter usually not required - Erysipelas and scabby mouth only if previous outbreaks	- Clostridial vaccine essential - OJD recommended for increased market access for stud rams - Campylobacter consider for breeding ewes - Erysipelas and scabby mouth only if previous outbreaks	- Clostridial vaccine essential - OJD and campylobacter likely required - Erysipelas and scabby mouth only if previous outbreaks



Read the instructions for use carefully to get the most out of vaccinating, as these may vary between manufacturers.

Using a risk-based approach can help you determine whether the benefits of vaccinating outweigh the potential costs of not vaccinating.

To achieve optimal success, it's also important that sheep are in good condition to form a strong immune response.

This fact sheet is based on an original article that appeared in the Winter 2025 edition of AWI Beyond the Bale magazine. To read the full article scan the QR code below!



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