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1st November 2009

NEW ZEALAND'S POSITION WITH REGARDS TO SCRAPIE

As New Zealand's Director Post-Border I can confirm New Zealand's status with regard to scrapie is as follows:

1. New Zealand is free from scrapie.
2. The World Health Organisation has recognised New Zealand's freedom from scrapie when it stated "*the absence of BSE and scrapie from Australia and New Zealand makes the epidemiological surveillance of CJD an important source of information for assessing the zoonotic risk of these diseases*".
3. New Zealand's scrapie free status was recognised by the USA when they used New Zealand sheep in a major study of the epidemiology of natural scrapie. Numerous other researchers have used New Zealand sheep for the same reason. New Zealand and Australian sheep are the first choice for control material in scrapie research because of generally recognised freedom from this disease.
4. Whereas New Zealand is free from Scrapie, two incidents in sheep imported into New Zealand have sometimes led to a misunderstanding of the situation.
5. The first occurrence of scrapie in New Zealand was in sheep imported from the United Kingdom in 1952. This outbreak was stamped out by 1954. New Zealand has been free from scrapie since then. The 1952-54 outbreak was successfully eradicated by the slaughter and disposal of all in-contact sheep and resting or destocking pastures.
6. In 1976-77 there was a second incident. Scrapie was detected in imported sheep while they were still in quarantine on an off-shore island. This outbreak was eradicated by stamping-out and total de-stocking of the island. It has never been restocked.
7. Passive surveillance for scrapie has been maintained since 1952. Between 1955 and 1962 1,700 ovine brains were submitted for laboratory examination. They were collected from sheep exhibiting signs of central nervous disease, neonatal deaths and abortions. With the emergence of BSE in Europe, New Zealand adopted a targeted surveillance program for TSEs. This commenced in 1989. Scrapie is a notifiable disease.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Thomson", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Peter Thomson
Director Post-Border



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