

## ***Salmonella* Brandenburg**

### **Introduction**

The Occupational Safety and Health Service (OSH) is concerned over the danger to human health following the spread of the sheep disease *Salmonella* Brandenburg.

The disease is potentially fatal to sheep and has now spread to dairy herds causing diarrhoea and abortions in cows and diarrhoea, dysentery and deaths in young calves.

The disease can also cause serious illness in humans with victims laid low for up to six weeks with severe diarrhoea, stomach cramps and fever, with periodic relapses for months after.

### **What is *Salmonella* Brandenburg?**

*Salmonella* Brandenburg is a bacterial disease affecting the intestinal tract of animals. Those animals that survive become carriers. Salmonellae can survive for nine months or more in the environment in sites such as moist soil, water, faecal particles and animal feeds. The disease can be spread by anything that takes mud and faeces from paddock to paddock, like gumboots and vehicle tyres.

### **How Can It Affect You?**

Symptoms of the disease in humans include:

- abdominal pain;
- diarrhoea;
- nausea, and
- vomiting.

### **Who is Most At Risk?**

People most at risk from this disease include:

- children and the elderly;
- those with compromised immune systems;
- vets;
- farmers and their families, and
- farm workers.

### **How Can I Catch It?**

The disease can persist in the soil, water, faecal particles and animal feeds. Sheep yards are a common source of infection. The disease can also be caught from handling aborted lambs and calves, and sick ewes or cows.

## How Do I Protect Myself?

Both employers and employees should identify and assess the potential hazards associated with *Salmonella* Brandenburg, in particular, the handling of disease-affected stock, and adopt appropriate control measures to ensure their safety and health such as:

- Maintaining all basic hygiene precautions such as good hand washing after handling infected stock, and
- Diligently using appropriate personal protection equipment, such as impervious gloves and overalls, etc. to prevent contact with infected stock or carcasses.

## What Can I Do to Prevent the Spread of the Disease?

Steps that can be taken to prevent the spread of *Salmonella* Brandenburg include:

- Ensuring that dogs do not wander between properties and spread the bacterial disease further afield from eating aborted lambs or afterbirth;

- Disinfecting boots and other equipment used in the handling of infected stock;
- Cleaning down vehicles;
- Immediate burial or burning of infected carcasses;
- Isolating affected herds from contact with other stock, and
- Limiting the scope of the grazing area.

The potential impact of the disease on the farming community is considerable and appropriate control measures should be taken as soon as possible. If an employee contracts *Salmonella* Brandenburg through their work, the employer is required to notify OSH as soon as possible after the diagnosis is confirmed. OSH will then enter the information on the national database, and if appropriate, conduct an investigation. A copy of this investigation can be requested from OSH.

If you have any further enquiries about this matter, please do not hesitate to contact your Regional OSH office.