



## **Inspection Frequency Guidance**

*Corresponds to AW3.1*

### **Different production systems**

Across the globe sheep are generally reared in extensive pasture systems, with only a tiny percentage of animals in intensive systems (e.g. feedlot finishing of lambs). However, although extensive, pasture or rangeland production is a common factor there are many differences in global production systems as follows:

- Farm size
- Flock size
- Breed of sheep
- Type of sheep/stage of production – e.g. wethers, ewes with lambs etc.
- Climate
- Farm topography
- Stocking rate
- Vegetation type and growth cycle
- Water availability – piped to troughs or natural sources
- Risk factors – e.g. predators.

These variants all impact on how often a farmer needs to check their sheep to ensure that their health and welfare is maintained and the fact there are so many variable make it difficult if not impossible to set a meaningful minimum frequency of inspection that can be practically achieved by farmers

### **What's the point of inspection?**

Before any comment can be made on how often inspection of sheep is necessary, the desired outcome of inspection must be understood. Farmers check their sheep to ensure the health and welfare of their animals is maintained. This is achieved by ensuring adequate feed and water are available, sheep have access to shelter as applicable to the local weather conditions, sick or injured sheep are identified and treated and predators and any other threats are monitored and action taken to deter/control these as necessary.



## How frequently should inspection be carried out?

Different systems of sheep production require different frequencies of inspection to deliver the desired outcomes noted above. Two examples from extremes of sheep production systems are shown below:

- In a system where sheep are dependent on human intervention to provide daily feed and water [for example in feedlot systems] they must be checked daily.
- In a system where the stage of production is unchanging [e.g. wethers], the stocking rate ensures that adequate grass/forage stocks are available for long-term grazing, there is a natural water source that is known to never dry up; topography ensures shade/shelter is available for expected weather conditions and predators are either unknown or excluded, frequency of checks could be every month or every two months with no ill effects being identified.

## Outcomes

As per the current wording farmers need to routinely inspect their animals. Farmers must also assess risk relating to their flocks and their farms and increase inspection as necessary. If negative outcomes are found, inspection frequency must be increased. Negative outcomes include:

- **Mortality** – if health or predation problems go unrecognized and unchecked, or ewes at lambing time are insufficiently monitored, mortality will rise
- **Body condition** – if there is insufficient availability of feed and water BCS will drop