

## **Brucellosis in Rams**

Brucellosis is a zoonotic bacterial disease of affecting multiple species. Brucella Ovis is the organism that affects sheep and is spread by sexual activity – ram to ram or ram to ewe at mating time. The bacteria localises in the testicles causing inflammation and damage. The consequence is low sperm counts and reduced fertility. Consequently a Brucella Ovis outbreak can drastically affect lambing performance for the year. There is no treatment and once infected a ram will be infected permanently.

### **Screening**

Brucella Ovis is endemic in New Zealand. Those with breeding rams should have them screened once a year before mating. Screening involves testicular palpation (looking for characteristic gross enlargement of the epididymal head) and a blood test.

Screening should be done well in advance of mating so that if a problem is detected rams have time to undergo multiple testing and culling to prevent rapid spread during tupping.

### **Other control measures**

Practice good bio security – do not share/loan rams to neighbours

Buy rams from Brucella free flocks

Get rams checked pre-breeding every year