



**Media Release**

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### **New Alpaca Industry Health Initiative**

**An Australia-first bio-security program has been implemented throughout the country's alpaca industry to assist in the prevention of Johne's Disease (JD).**

The program, named 'Q-Alpaca', works in conjunction with the current Alpaca Market Assurance Program (AlpacaMAP) to minimise the chance of undetected serious diseases such as JD. The program requires alpaca owners to keep a register of animal movements onto or leaving their property.

"The Q-Alpaca program provides major benefits to the industry by enabling alpaca owners to monitor the absence of a number of potentially fatal diseases," said Dr Richard Dixon, Q-Alpaca Registrar. "It also allows the maintenance of MAP status much more cheaply and conveniently as alpaca owners are no longer required to undertake periodic and expensive JD testing on their herd", he said. Animals can also be moved easily to other herds that have the same or higher MN (Monitored Negative) status.

"Breeders who currently do not participate in the MAP program can now join Q-Alpaca and be recognised as holding a 'protected' status at much less cost compared to the JDMAP. "And breeders who are currently in the MAP will be able to retain their MN status indefinitely without further expensive laboratory testing," said Mr Bob Richardson, Vice President, Australian Alpaca Association Inc (AAA).

Run by the AAA for the Australian Alpaca industry, the Q-Alpaca herd risk management program has the full support of Animal Health Australia (AHA) and has been approved by its Bovine Johne's Disease Technical Advisory Group. As part of the Australian alpaca industry's aim to be a world leader in all aspects of alpaca breeding, there are five key components of the Q-Alpaca program:

- Herds in the program must not be suspected of JD.
- A written agreement between the alpaca owner and an approved veterinarian confirming that all animal deaths will be further investigated.
- Owners must have a Herd and Property Management Plan or AlpacaMAP plan.
- All animal movements into or out of the herd must be recorded.
- A compulsory post-mortem examination of any animal over 12 months that dies or is euthanased, and younger alpacas with particular symptoms causing concern.

The post-mortem examination by an approved veterinarian will visually check for the absence of JD lesions, intestinal parasites, liver fluke, Coccidiosis, liver disease and any signs of stomach ulcers.

Another advantage of the new Q-Alpaca program is the longer-term flexibility it offers the industry in terms of health quality assurance. For example, if there is very little or no evidence of Coccidiosis after performing many routine post-mortems this disease might be removed from the list of diseases to check. Conversely, if another disease becomes more prominent in alpacas it could be added to the list.

“As an Australia-first animal industry initiative, Q-Alpaca is viewed as an important test. If it continues to be a success, this program might be considered for voluntary implementation by other livestock industries,” said Dr Dixon.

Over 50 AAA alpaca studs have already joined this unique biosecurity program in the few weeks since it was introduced. The effectiveness of the JDMAP has already been proven by the absence of any JD diagnosed in alpacas since 1996, but its testing costs have been of concern as herd numbers increase.

The Association is determined to continue its strong stance against the infiltration of exotic diseases. “Q-Alpaca represents another example of responsible leadership developed and implemented by the Australian Alpaca Association. It is this continued innovation and commitment that has developed this unique agribusiness into one of the fastest growing industries in Australia,” said Mr Richardson.

To find out more about the Q-Alpaca program contact Dr Richard Dixon on 02 6456 3676 or email [galpaca@optusnet.com.au](mailto:galpaca@optusnet.com.au). For further information about the alpaca industry or alpacas in general, contact the AAA on 03 9873 7700 or visit [www.alpaca.asn.au](http://www.alpaca.asn.au)

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