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Aquaculture Waste – Restricted Animal Material (RAM)

You have responsibilities when using Restricted Animal Material (RAM)

Applying aquaculture (fin fish) by-product to pasture as a form of fertiliser provides an opportunity to transform waste into a valuable resource, reduce environmental pollution, promote sustainable practices and contribute to a circular economy. But there are rules!

FACT SHEET

Under the Biosecurity Regulations 2022, waste material comprising whole fin fish or parts of fin fish is specified as Restricted Animal Material (RAM). Feeding of RAM to ruminant animals (cattle, sheep, goats, deer, alpacas) is an offence under the *Biosecurity Act 2019* (the Act). Feeding is considered to have occurred if ruminants have access to RAM.

This fact sheet explains what RAM is, the consequences of allowing ruminants access to RAM, and the responsibilities that landowners and stock managers have when spreading aquaculture by-products (wastes) on their property.

What is Restricted Animal Material (RAM)?

Restricted Animal Material is defined as any material taken from a vertebrate animal, other than tallow, gelatine, milk products or oils. It includes products such as meat, meat and bone meal, blood meal, eggs, poultry meal, feather meal, fish meal, and animal manures. Compounded animal feeds made using these products are considered RAM, as are used, unfiltered cooking oils. Fish hatchery waste products, biosolids, and compost incorporating aquaculture or other animal wastes are also considered to be RAM.

Aquaculture (fin fish) by-products and wastes are RAM.

What is a Mandatory With-holding Period (WHP)?

When applying or spreading aquaculture wastes on pasture, there is a mandatory with-holding period (WHP) that applies before ruminants may be re-introduced to that pasture. The mandatory WHP is a minimum of 21 days or, if the product remains visible on the pasture's surface after 21 days, until the product is no longer visible on the surface (it has become incorporated into the soil). RAM will also be considered present when fodder is processed for hay or silage under the WHP of 21 days, or if it is visible during processing.

Why is feeding RAM illegal in Australia?

Feeding RAM to ruminants can lead to infection with the serious livestock disease known as Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE). In cattle, it is known as Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), more commonly called Mad Cow Disease. In sheep, it is known as Scrapie.

BSE is a very serious emergency animal disease. Outbreaks overseas have caused massive disruption to the cattle industry resulting in the wiping out of entire herds, mass culls, farm quarantines, damage to international reputation, trade bans and market closures.

Further, BSE can cause a human disease known as variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD), which is both incurable and fatal. Almost 200 people died of vCJD in the UK, as a result from the outbreak of BSE in 1996, with a smaller number of deaths reported in other countries.

Neither Tasmania nor mainland Australia has ever had a case of BSE and the Australian RAM rules are designed to keep it that way. Our strict RAM rules demonstrate to consumers, both domestically and overseas, that our meat products are safe.

What are your responsibilities when using aquaculture waste product that is RAM?

Aquaculture waste product can be used as fertiliser provided ruminants do not have access to the fertilised area for the entirety of the WHP and, once the WHP has expired, there is no visible material remaining on the land before ruminants are re-introduced.

For example, you may use it in your house or garden, vegetable patch, around fruit trees or on pasture as fertiliser, providing your fencing is adequate to ensure no ruminant animal can access the area where the product has been applied. Higher application rates will result in slower absorption of material, and the requirement for a longer WHP.

Ensure that all sheds, fencing and gates are secure.

What happens if ruminants access RAM?

Feeding or exposing ruminants to RAM is an offence under the Act. The owner or person responsible for the animals may be subject to enforcement action including, but not limited to, a monetary fine or prosecution. In addition, the animals will be identified as having been exposed to RAM and recorded in the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) for the rest of their lives. This can result in severe limitations on markets where the animals or their products may be sold and/or processed.

What are your responsibilities when you supply aquaculture waste products (RAM) as fertiliser?

If you supply (including giving away) product that includes RAM, it is your responsibility to ensure the person you are supplying it to knows that it contains RAM. The person receiving the material is responsible for its use where ruminants are concerned. Documentation must accompany the material with a written warning which states that the product **'contains restricted animal material and must not be fed to ruminants.'**

The ban on feeding RAM to ruminants applies to everybody. This includes hobby farmers – even those with just one pet cow, sheep, goat, deer or alpaca.

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For more information:

If you need more information about RAM or you would like to report a breach of the ban on feeding RAM to ruminant animals, please contact Biosecurity Tasmania on **1300 368 550**

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