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THE RISK OF IMPORTING SCRAPIE WITH EXOTIC BREEDS OF SHEEP

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Scrapie was first detected in New Zealand in 1952 in a flock of Suffolks in South Canterbury. The disease was traced through 13 lines of related animals and resulted in the destroying of 166 sheep.

The next reported outbreak was in 1954 in Southland. One hundred and ninety-one farms were affected and 4339 sheep were slaughtered. The 191 farmers whose sheep were affected were restricted to sale of stock by slaughter for three years. The last outbreak occurred in 1976 in an East Friesian on Mana Island. This outbreak resulted in the slaughter of all the East Friesian sheep and all crossbreeds derived from them, a total of 700 animals.

Some of the risk factors associated with the import of sheep from known scrapie infected countries are:

- (1) The impossibilities of importing scrapie-free sheep as there is no method of correctly determining carriers of this disease until the disease manifests itself.
- (2) The high costs involved in containing an outbreak and eliminating the disease; other animals besides sheep can also be carriers.
- (3) Severe restrictions on the movement of the stock in the event of an outbreak; this would lead to curtailment of current breeding programmes.
- (4) The loss of export potential in New Zealand livestock.