



Animal Health Committee communication and engagement strategy for consulting with key stakeholders

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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Introduction

The Animal Health Committee (AHC) '*Communication and engagement strategy for consulting with key stakeholders*' is a subordinate document to the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC) *Communication and Engagement Strategy*. It outlines how AHC currently communicates and how it will enhance communication and engagement with key stakeholders on issues related to animal biosecurity.

The development and implementation of this strategy is aligned with the principles for engagement and communication set out by the NBC. These include establishing appropriate and timely stakeholder forums where:

- stakeholders have a say in decisions about actions that could affect their lives
- stakeholder contributions can influence decision making
- stakeholder engagement promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers
- stakeholder engagement seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision
- stakeholder engagement seeks input from participants in designing how they participate
- stakeholder engagement provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way and
- stakeholder engagement communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

AHC has a role to provide strategic scientific and policy advice to government on terrestrial and aquatic animal biosecurity, including due consideration of environment and social amenity policy and operational issues, through the NBC, the Agricultural Senior Officials Committee (AGSOC) and the Agricultural Ministers Forum (AGMIN), and prioritise and coordinate national animal health and veterinary public health activities by:

- leading strategic policy development, operational strategies and standards for government in animal health, domestic quarantine and veterinary public health, using appropriate technical and operational support
- making optimum use of scientific capacity nationally and in jurisdictions to inform animal health policies, strategies and standards
- delivering on priority areas as determined and/or tasked by NBC and the policy areas outlined in the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity, including providing advice on animal health resourcing requirements
- assessing the need for and developing national animal on-shore biosecurity standards and animal health laboratory standards and guidelines
- engaging stakeholders in the strategic planning, policy and standards development and implementation of government processes

- collaborating with Animal Health Australia (AHA) in the development and delivery of priority national animal biosecurity programs, focusing on disease surveillance and emergency animal disease preparedness
- coordinating state and territory delivery of national animal health policies and programs across governments, industries and state and territory boundaries, particularly in support of safe international and domestic trade in animals and animal products and,
- providing an annual work plan and regular reporting, including details of outcomes and achievements for the preceding year, through NBC.

Current communication methods

In fulfilling its role, AHC engages and interacts with a number of key stakeholders in animal production, processing and associated industries, animal users, and stakeholders involved with wild animals and environmental animal issues.

Decisions made by AHC feedback through NBC or jurisdictional governments for implementation. While communication and engagement at the operational level is best addressed through the communication and engagement plans of these operational entities, there is a need to ensure that AHC is aware of affected stakeholders' views and that these views are taken into consideration in the decision making process.

The membership of AHC ensures that there is full involvement of senior animal health and biosecurity staff from the Commonwealth, states and territories and CSIRO/AAHL. Any further communication with these bodies to inform AHC decision making is done through the representative member.

As animal industry stakeholders are a large and diverse group, AHC has relied on established representative bodies, principally AHA and peak industry and associate bodies represented on AHA. AHA is an observer on AHC. Recently, improved engagement with the animal wildlife sector has been established by making Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) an observer on AHC. As with AHC members, AHA and WHA observers on AHC can act as a channel for direct communication with their constituent groups.

AHC papers and OOS papers are generally confidential so AHA and WHA often cannot share these directly with industry and stakeholder members. They are however in a position to identify issues likely to be of importance to their stakeholders' interests and recommend specific consultation on these issues.

Peak livestock industry bodies represent producers rather than processor or livestock associated industries, although AHA also have an associate member category that service industries can use to engage through AHA.

AHC uses AHA as a focal point to collectively engage peak industry bodies through:

- face-to-face engagements:
 - The AHC chair presents current AHC activities to the AHA industry forum twice a year.
 - AHA industry forum executives attend AHC face-to-face meetings twice a year for an interactive session.
 - Where an item of importance is identified, AHC invites the appropriate peak industry body or livestock service industry to address AHC meetings.
 - AHC members in their substantive roles attend AHA forums on animal disease management programs. While not formally representing AHC, this does ensure AHC members interact at a one-on-one level with peak industry representatives.
- written (including email) communication:
 - AHA and WHA receive AHC out-of-session (OOS) papers and can interact through the OOS process on issues addressed by these papers.

- On specific issues of importance, AHC through the chair addresses issues by correspondence with AHA, WHA and peak industry bodies.
- wider communication (one way)
 - AHC puts out a Vet communiqué before and after each face-to-face meeting advising of issues on the agenda and outcomes of discussions. This communication is subscribed to by a wide range of stakeholders.
 - Information about AHC, its activities and Vet communiqué is available through the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry web site
 - AHC is to investigate providing information on major outcomes and decisions on this web site.

Areas for enhanced stakeholder communication and engagement

Effective and strategic communication, consultation and engagement with key stakeholders is critical to the success of animal biosecurity and surveillance activities. Stakeholder engagement has focused on livestock production industries and the recent addition of wildlife, with the granting of observer status to WHA.

Exercise Odysseus 2014-15 highlighted a wider range of stakeholders that are impacted in animal health decisions that are not adequately engaged in current communications. . Additionally, these industries are critical to the success of biosecurity activities that affect them. This strategy includes tools to enhance engagement with these stakeholders either through existing or new communication channels. Although some progress was made during Exercise Odysseus activities, such engagement needs to be continued into the future.

In addition to producer groups, key stakeholders identified during Exercise Odysseus activities include:

- livestock transport industry
- livestock agents
- meat processing industry
- dairy processing industry.

Peak Industry bodies and associate members represented on AHA, which are not represented on AHC, will either receive communication directly or through AHA. These include:

- Australian Alpaca Association
- Australian Chicken Meat Federation
- Australian Dairy Industry Council
- Australian Duck Meat Association
- Australian Egg Corporation
- Australian Horse Industry Council
- Australian Lot Feeders' Association
- Australian Pork
- Cattle Council of Australia
- Equestrian Australia
- Goat Industry Council of Australia
- Harness Racing Australia
- Sheepmeat Council of Australia

- WoolProducers Australia
- Australian Veterinary Association
- Australian Livestock Export Corporation (LiveCorp)
- Australian Racing Board
- Council of Veterinary Deans of Australia and New Zealand
- Dairy Australia
- National Aquaculture Council Inc
- Wildlife Health Australia
- Zoo and Aquarium Association

Other animal biosecurity key stakeholders (in addition to producers covered by peak industry bodies) include (but is not limited to):

- abattoirs
- National Farmers Federation
- Australian Livestock Exporters' Council
- Livestock Biosecurity Network

Peak wildlife stakeholders will receive communication via WHA. These include:

- Zoo and Aquarium Association,
- Wildlife Diseases Association,
- Universities Focus Group,
- Bat Health Groups,
- Wildlife carers and clinics.

Where an issue is likely to impact on wildlife WHA will assist in identifying appropriate stakeholder groups and facilitating communication with those groups.

With each policy issue considered by AHC, consideration needs to be given to what communication is needed on the issue, who needs to be included in that communication, the method to be used for the communication and the priority that needs to be given to that communication.

Enhanced stakeholder communications and engagement will be required around the specific issue of surveillance in conjunction with the National Surveillance and Diagnostics Business Plan.

On occasion AHC will consider issues which affect stakeholders who are not regularly engaged with AHC and for whom most AHC activity will be of limited interest. Such bodies may include dog and cat groups or keepers of exotic pets. Where AHC is faced with an issue outside of the usual livestock and associated industry stakeholder group, consideration will be given to

developing a communications plan for the specific issue to ensure appropriate stakeholders are engaged.

Table 1 describes the engagement strategy for routine engagement of key stakeholders.

Table 1 Engagement of key stakeholders

Stakeholder	Issues	Engagement type	Engagement strategy	Tools & processes
All livestock associated industries	<p>Need for ongoing biosecurity with livestock management and movement.</p> <p>Need to be observant and report unusual conditions.</p> <p>Collect data on livestock movement and also an indicator of the numbers of normal (healthy) livestock passing through the system.</p> <p>Collaborative advice on how to implement movement controls and possibly how to keep as much normal business going while maintaining emergency controls.</p>	<p>Inform</p> <p>Consult</p> <p>Involve</p> <p>Collaborate</p>	<p>F2F contact.</p> <p>Telecommunications and internet (email, website).</p> <p>Support materials (Vet communiqué).</p>	<p>Engage AHA members through AHA members workshop to inform, consult and collaborate on relevant biosecurity issues.</p> <p>Circulate Vet communiqué to peak bodies and AHA member bodies.</p>
<p>Livestock agents</p> <p>This group has daily contact with livestock from numerous properties through organising livestock sales at saleyards and through direct sales. They will be severely impacted by any large scale restrictions on livestock sales or movements and represent a workforce familiar with handling and valuation of livestock.</p>	<p>Need for ongoing biosecurity with livestock management and movement.</p> <p>Need to be observant and report unusual conditions.</p> <p>Collect data on livestock movement and also an indicator of the numbers of normal (healthy) livestock passing through the system.</p> <p>Collaborative advice on how to implement movement controls.</p>	<p>Inform</p> <p>Consult</p> <p>Involve</p> <p>Collaborate</p>	<p>F2F contact</p> <p>Telecommunications and internet (email, website)</p> <p>Support materials (Vet communiqué)</p>	<p>Recommend they consider associate membership to AHA to engage with animal health decision making.</p> <p>Establish key contacts in peak industry bodies for engagement on relevant issues (e.g. livestock standstill).</p> <p>Use key contacts to obtain livestock agents' inputs before discussion on in-session papers on relevant topics.</p> <p>Invite key contacts to AHC industry sessions at F2F meetings if appropriate.</p> <p>For key issues offer to provide local jurisdictional CVO as AHC rep to major industry events.</p>

Stakeholder	Issues	Engagement type	Engagement strategy	Tools & processes
<p>Livestock transport industry</p> <p>This group has daily contact with livestock from numerous properties and saleyards and travel across jurisdictions. They will be severely impacted by any large scale restrictions on livestock sales or movements and represent a workforce familiar with handling livestock and transport and welfare regulations affecting livestock movements.</p>	<p>Need for ongoing biosecurity with livestock management and movement.</p> <p>Need to be observant and report unusual conditions.</p> <p>Collect data on livestock movement and also an indicator of the numbers of normal (healthy) livestock passing through the system.</p> <p>Collaborative advice on how to implement movement controls and possibly how to keep as much normal business going while maintaining emergency controls.</p>	<p>Inform</p> <p>Consult</p> <p>Involve</p> <p>Collaborate</p>	<p>F2F contact</p> <p>Telecommunications and internet (email, website)</p> <p>Support materials (Vet communiqué)</p>	<p>Recommend they consider associate membership to AHA to engage with animal health decision making.</p> <p>Establish key contacts in peak industry body for engagement on relevant issues (e.g. livestock standstill).</p> <p>Use key contacts to obtain livestock agents' inputs before discussion on in-session papers on relevant topics.</p> <p>Invite key contacts to AHC industry sessions at F2F meetings if appropriate.</p> <p>For key issues offer to provide local jurisdictional CVO as AHC rep to major industry events.</p>
<p>Saleyards and feedlots</p> <p>This group has daily contact with large numbers of livestock from all jurisdictions. They will be severely impacted by any large scale restrictions on livestock sales or movements and represent a workforce familiar with handling livestock.</p>	<p>Need for ongoing biosecurity with livestock management and movement.</p> <p>Need to be observant and report unusual conditions.</p> <p>Collect data on livestock movement and also an indicator of the numbers of normal (healthy) livestock passing through the system.</p> <p>Collaborative advice on how to manage and implement movement controls.</p>	<p>Inform</p> <p>Consult</p> <p>Involve</p> <p>Collaborate</p>	<p>F2F contact</p> <p>Telecommunications and internet (email, website)</p> <p>Support materials (Vet communiqué)</p>	<p>Recommend they consider associate membership to AHA to engage with animal health decision making.</p> <p>Establish key contacts in peak industry bodies for engagement on relevant issues (e.g. livestock standstill).</p> <p>Use key contacts to obtain inputs before discussion on in-session papers on relevant topics.</p> <p>Invite key contacts to AHC industry sessions at F2F meetings if appropriate.</p> <p>For key issues offer to provide local jurisdictional CVO as AHC rep to major industry events.</p>

Stakeholder	Issues	Engagement type	Engagement strategy	Tools & processes
<p>Meat processing industry/Abattoirs</p> <p>This industry sector will be severely impacted by any large scale restrictions on livestock sales and/or movements and represent a workforce familiar with behaviour, handling and health of livestock.</p>	<p>Collaborative advice on how to support movement controls and possibly how to keep as much normal business going while maintaining emergency controls.</p> <p>Advice on how biosecurity measures may impact on markets.</p>	<p>Inform</p> <p>Consult</p> <p>Involve</p> <p>Collaborate</p>	<p>F2F contact</p> <p>Telecommunications and internet (email, website)</p> <p>Support materials (Vet communiqué)</p>	<p>Recommend they consider associate membership to AHA to engage with animal health decision making.</p> <p>Establish key contacts in peak industry bodies for engagement on relevant issues (e.g. livestock standstill).</p> <p>Use key contacts to obtain inputs before discussion on in-session papers on relevant topics.</p> <p>Invite key contacts to AHC industry sessions at F2F meetings if appropriate.</p> <p>For key issues offer to provide local jurisdictional CVO as AHC rep to major industry events.</p>
<p>Dairy processing industry</p> <p>This industry sector will be affected by movement restrictions and restrictions on sales of dairy products.</p>	<p>Collaborative advice on how to support movement controls and how to keep as much normal business going while maintaining emergency controls.</p> <p>Advice on how biosecurity measures may impact on markets.</p>	<p>Inform</p> <p>Consult</p> <p>Involve</p> <p>Collaborate</p>	<p>F2F contact</p> <p>Telecommunications and internet (email, website)</p> <p>Support materials (Vet communiqué)</p>	<p>Engage AHA members through AHA members workshop</p> <p>Establish key contacts in peak industry for engagement on relevant issues (e.g. livestock standstill).</p> <p>Use key contacts to obtain inputs before discussion on in-session papers on relevant topics.</p> <p>Invite key contacts to AHC industry sessions at F2F meetings if appropriate.</p> <p>For key issues offer to provide local jurisdictional CVO as AHC rep to major industry events.</p>

Stakeholder	Issues	Engagement type	Engagement strategy	Tools & processes
<p>Livestock exporters This industry sector will be severely impacted by any large scale restrictions on livestock sales and/or movements.</p>	<p>Need for ongoing biosecurity with livestock movements, particularly how to manage and implement movement controls.</p> <p>Advice on how biosecurity measures may impact on markets.</p>	<p>Inform Consult Involve Collaborate</p>	<p>F2F contact Telecommunications and internet (email, website) Support materials (Vet communiqué)</p>	<p>Engage AHA members through AHA members workshop</p> <p>Use established key contacts in peak industry body for engagement on relevant issues (e.g. livestock standstill).</p> <p>Use key contacts to obtain inputs before discussion on in-session papers on relevant topics.</p> <p>Invite key contacts to AHC industry sessions at F2F meetings if appropriate.</p> <p>For key issues offer to provide local jurisdictional CVO as AHC rep to major industry events.</p>
<p>Private veterinarians Vets will be critical in disease investigation and control and implementation of on-farm biosecurity measures.</p>	<p>Need for ongoing biosecurity with livestock management and movement, particularly surveillance activities.</p> <p>Need to encourage reporting of unusual conditions and sample submissions.</p> <p>Collect and provide data on herd health.</p> <p>Support to manage and implement movement controls.</p>	<p>Inform Consult Involve Collaborate</p>	<p>F2F contact Telecommunications and internet (email, website) Support materials (Vet communiqué)</p>	<p>Engage AHA members through AHA members workshop</p> <p>Circulate Vet communiqué through the Australian Veterinary Association and the State/Territory Veterinary Boards.</p> <p>Engage with private veterinarians on biosecurity issues through AVA Special Interest Groups and AVA Policy Advisory Council.</p> <p>Jurisdictional CVOs (as AHC rep) to establish regular on-going engagement with their local AVA divisions and branches (e.g. attending annual meetings).</p> <p>CVOs if possible to participate in AVA annual conference (as AHC rep) when it is held in their jurisdiction.</p>

Stakeholder	Issues	Engagement type	Engagement strategy	Tools & processes
<p>National Farmers Federation Have well-established communication channels with their Members and will be influential in getting messages to their members.</p>	<p>Need for ongoing biosecurity with livestock management and movement. Support to NFF members to manage and implement movement controls.</p>	<p>Inform Consult Involve Collaborate</p>	<p>F2F contact Telecommunications and internet (email, website) Support materials (Vet communiqué).</p>	<p>Establish key contacts for engagement on relevant issues (e.g. livestock standstill). Use key contacts to obtain inputs before discussion on in-session papers on relevant topics. Invite key contacts to AHC industry sessions at F2F meetings. For key issues offer to provide local jurisdictional CVO as AHC rep to major NFF events. Circulate Vet communiqué.</p>
<p>Livestock Biosecurity Network This group has regular and established access to important stakeholders.</p>	<p>LBN is well positioned to undertake extension work with producers.</p>	<p>Inform Consult Involve Collaborate</p>	<p>F2F contact Telecommunications and internet (email, website) Support materials (Vet communiqué).</p>	<p>Circulate Vet communiqué.</p>