

## VET COMMUNIQUÉ – May 2022

Animal Health Committee (AHC) provides veterinary leadership and technical expertise for Australia's animal health systems. AHC includes the Australian, state and territory chief veterinary officers (CVOs), and the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness; with Animal Health Australia and Wildlife Health Australia as observers. The committee reports to the National Biosecurity Committee. This communiqué covers the major topics discussed at meeting 41 held 10-12 May 2022 in Darwin, Northern Territory.

AHC was pleased to meet face-to-face for the first time in over two years. AHC covered a busy agenda over the three days, including a discussion with industry stakeholders on biosecurity threats to Australia and a field visit to Berrimah Veterinary Laboratory with a new Molecular Facility. New Zealand's CVO joined the meeting virtually as an observer for some sessions.

### **Japanese encephalitis**

AHC discussed the response to detections of Japanese encephalitis (JE) in piggeries in Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia in early 2022. AHC agreed that an after-action review should be undertaken to capture key successes, challenges and lessons learnt. This will assist with planning for any future response activities. The review will occur early in the 2022-23 financial year.

### **Preparedness for lumpy skin disease and other emergency animal diseases**

Australia is facing increasing biosecurity threats, including lumpy skin disease (LSD), foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and African swine fever (ASF).

To increase Australia's preparedness and response for an incursion of LSD, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment has established a national LSD taskforce. The department provided AHC with a summary of departmental LSD activities and an overview of the objectives to the National LSD plan.

The Australian CVO briefed AHC on the actions the department is taking following the confirmation of FMD in Indonesia in May 2022.

AHC also discussed strengthening key national biosecurity infrastructure and systems, including information management and traceability systems, to support a national response to emergency animal disease incursions.

### **Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement**

To help prepare for the five-year review of the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA), AHC discussed the different approaches taken in the national coordination of the responses for the two most recent emergency animal disease incidents in Australia; the avian influenza outbreak in

poultry in Victoria in 2020, and the current JE outbreak in pigs.

### **National Livestock Standstill – Cost-Benefit Project**

AHC is considering a cost: benefit analysis of a national livestock standstill (NLSS) in a response to an FMD outbreak in Australia. This involves consideration of the economic and disease control factors relevant to a NLSS and is being undertaken to ensure a standstill (national or jurisdictional) is implemented in circumstances and in a manner that benefits the disease response and is most effective for all stakeholders.

### **ASF voluntary enhanced biosecurity standards**

A working group comprising industry experts and government has developed a set of voluntary enhanced biosecurity standards that pig producers can implement now to assist them to apply for an emergency movement permit for pigs and semen from their state jurisdiction in the event of an ASF outbreak. These standards focus on defining the level of biosecurity practices that would be required to support the movements of live pigs and semen in an ASF outbreak. The enhanced standards may be implemented through APIQ<sup>1</sup>® in a voluntary capacity, to allow producers to prepare their business in the event of an ASF outbreak.

### **Other key discussion items**

- Industry and government priorities for Animalplan 2022-2027. A joint industry- government workshop is planned for late May to progress agreed priorities.
- Further development of AHC strategic and operational objectives including focusing on strategic priorities.
- Projects initiated in 2021-22 to address the key objectives of the National Animal Health Diagnostics Business Plan 2021-26 (NAHDBP).
- Australian and New Zealand policies on SARS CoV-2 (COVID-19) diagnostic testing and surveillance in animals.