

## VET COMMUNIQUÉ

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 (ACDP); with Animal Health Australia, Wildlife Health Australia and New Zealand as observers. The committee reports to the National Biosecurity Committee. This communiqué covers the major topics discussed at meeting 42 held 6-8 September 2022 in Fremantle, Western Australia.

AHC met for its second face-to-face meeting of 2022 in the port city of Fremantle. Discussions centred around the current environment of increasing biosecurity threats with lumpy skin disease (LSD) and foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in Indonesia. AHC recognised the increased national interest in critical issues, such as emergency animal disease preparedness, data sharing, traceability, one health and the progress of various task forces on these issues.

### AHC priorities

Key AHC priorities for 2022-2023 include national animal biosecurity infrastructure for response capability; national data management systems; traceability; and industry engagement and communications.

The National Biosecurity Committee representative for WA, Dr Mia Carbon, provided an update and noted NBC's recognition of the important work of AHC in informing these key strategic areas.

AHC also looks forward to the report of the Joint Inter-Agency Task force on Emergency Animal Disease Preparedness which will help to inform AHC's work priorities going forward.

### Future traceability hub and sheep EID

The Commonwealth Future Traceability Project Team presented their draft *National Agricultural Traceability Strategy* with eight strategic objectives and corresponding priority action areas to AHC for feedback. Some activities are already underway, and there is a 5-year timeframe for implementing actions.

One activity already in progress is electronic identification (EID) for sheep and goats. This is a big step towards improving livestock traceability, particularly in FMD susceptible animals.

AHC remains committed to national livestock traceability and will continue to remain engaged through the implementation of actions under the National Agricultural Traceability Strategy.

### Private veterinary engagement in emergency animal disease responses

The engagement of private veterinarians in an emergency animal disease (EAD) outbreak is essential to implementing a timely and efficient response. In a significant EAD response, veterinarians from the private sector will be critical to support response efforts. AHC agreed to examine a national framework to engage with vets to build understanding and participation in EAD responses. AHC supported a review of the national payment schedule for private veterinarians working in an EAD response on an annual basis.

### A new AHC sub-committee: Sub-Committee for Emergency Animal Disease (SCEAD)

A new Sub-Committee for Emergency Animal Disease (SCEAD) has been initiated by AHC to co-ordinate the critical national preparedness actions for integration into Australia's animal biosecurity response system to combat the impending threats of emergency animal diseases including FMD, LSD and African swine fever in our region. SCEAD will convene in October 2022 with WA CVO, Dr Michelle Rodan, as Chair with representation from AHC member jurisdictions, ACDP, and AHA. Task groups under SCEAD will consist of industry and government members.

### Sharing Australian viruses of interest with the international science community

AHC endorsed the arrangements proposed by ACDP, where scientific data may be placed in the public domain, either following announcement by the Commonwealth CVO or, for variants of pathogens known to be present in Australia, with prior notification to the CVO of the state(s) of origin. Where appropriate, virus strains may also be made available to other laboratories, for research purposes, with standard conditions of transfer.

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### AHC working group achievements

The *Ehrlichia canis* working group concluded their work in late-August 2022 with the publication of national guidance documents and factsheets now available on the [DAFF website](#).

The National Livestock Standstill (NLSS) task group completed their report on the benefits and costs of a national livestock standstill and will be shared with stakeholders via AHA.

Congratulations and many thanks to the working group members for their involvement and efforts in finalising the outcomes of these groups.

AHC would also like to acknowledge the significant and continuing work of the Vaccine Expert Advisory Group (VEAG), including providing advice to AHC on LSD vaccines and considerations for a FMD vaccine bank held in Australia.

### AHC-Stakeholder forum and compensation discussion

AHC met with industry representatives to discuss compensation principles in an EAD response. As a result, AHC will develop a one-page factsheet that clarifies compensation arrangements and share it with industry.

### Japanese encephalitis

AHC discussed the continued management of Japanese encephalitis (JE) and preparing for the next season in jurisdictions where the mosquito activity was reduced in southern Australia over winter. AHC agreed that a national approach for the principles of management for JE was needed and will publish a position statement on the AHC website.

### AHC website and policies

AHC's [website](#) was recently updated with a fresh new look and more information about the committee, our members and the work we do. Stakeholders will also have easy access to AHC's charter, national policy documents and links to related sites for reference.

### Field trip to barramundi and yellowtail kingfish hatchery

AHC members and guests were treated to a tour of the Western Australia Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development's (DPIRD) Marine Fish Hatchery in Fremantle. The hatchery supports research projects and the supply of juvenile barramundi and yellowtail kingfish.



Clockwise from top-right: Kyelee Driver, Trevor Drew, Emily Doyle, Katie Webb, Michelle Rodan, Narelle Clegg, Allison Crook, Mike Harrison, Rupert Woods, Mary van Andel, Graeme Cooke.

### Next AHC F2F meeting

The AHC43 face-to-face meeting will be held in Tasmania on 28-30 March 2023.