

AHC VETCOMMUNIQUÉ

November 2016

Message from Dr Mark Schipp, Australian Chief Veterinary Officer and AHC Chair

Welcome to the Animal Health Committee (AHC) newsletter, *AHC Vetcommuniqué*, which updates stakeholders on our activities.

AHC has undergone a number of changes this year in how we conduct our business. The induction of new members provided us with the opportunity to reflect on our priorities and to explore new ways of doing business in a rapidly changing world.

On behalf of AHC, I would like to congratulate Dr Mia Carbon on being appointed Western Australian CVO. I also welcome Dr Roger Paskin, South Australian CVO, as the incoming chair for 2017. Dr Paskin has a strong and positive vision for AHC. I look forward to AHC continuing to work strategically, collaboratively and transparently, demonstrating national leadership in animal health matters.



AHC members and staff of the Coastal Plains Research Station

Animal Health Committee meeting, Darwin, 2-4 November 2016

AHC meets face-to-face twice a year to discuss national animal health issues in a collegiate and collaborative environment. We met in Darwin this month to discuss challenges and opportunities for Australian terrestrial and aquatic animal industries. The meeting brought together Australian, state and territory chief veterinary officers (CVOs), the director of the Australian Animal Health Laboratory, representatives from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, observers from Animal Health Australia (AHA) and Wildlife Health Australia (WHA), representatives from national industry organisations and Northern Territory (NT) industry representatives.

Showcasing the Northern Territory 'Barra, buffs and crocs'

AHC rotates its twice-yearly meetings through all jurisdictions, providing us with an opportunity to engage with local industry throughout Australia and gain a deeper understanding of issues unique to each jurisdiction.

Mr Luke Bowen, General Manager, Northern Australian Development and Trade, set the scene by providing an impressive overview of the Northern Australia Development agenda, including a summary of the trade and industry context in the NT. On a field trip hosted by NT representatives, AHC saw the impressive work underway at Humpty Doo Barramundi farm, the Coastal Plains Research Station and Janamba Crocodile Farm. These operations demonstrate the importance of good on-farm biosecurity practices and the need to satisfy national and international animal health and welfare requirements.

Key Items For Discussion

Traceability and surveillance—identified as priorities for AHC in 2016-2017—were the subject of facilitated workshops.

Traceability Workshop

Traceability of Australian animals and animal products is critical to disease control and for exports. AHC participated in a facilitated workshop to identify potential gaps in traceability and strategies to address these. We discussed strengths and weaknesses of current traceability systems for all livestock species and the importance of consistency and compliance across Australia.

AHC agreed on the way forward for a national approach to the use of Property Identification Codes for both animals and plants. This will be discussed with Plant Health Committee before being presented to the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC).

We discussed traceability criteria for sheep—agreed by the Agriculture Ministers' Forum in October 2014. The Victorian CVO provided an update on the state's implementation of the electronic National Livestock Identification System for sheep and goats.

We also discussed current and future trends in the livestock sector that affect traceability (e.g. online sales).

AHC members reiterated their strong commitment—at both jurisdictional and national levels—to improving traceability of animal movements in Australia.

Surveillance Workshop

Good surveillance data is essential for maintaining Australia's favourable animal health status and providing confidence to trading partners.

We reaffirmed our commitment to a pan-Australian veterinary surveillance system, with data sharing through a national database with functional data sharing

platforms. AHC also agreed on the importance of analysing data to inform national animal health policy and decision-making.

AHC discussed current surveillance systems and opportunities to access and share resources and experiences. A strong surveillance system needs a platform that enables sharing of data.

We also agreed to:

- develop a national engagement and communication strategy for surveillance
- develop policy for the appropriate use of emerging technologies and biological risks
- undertake foresighting for animal health in Australia and
- explore the establishment of a collaborating forum for veterinary epidemiologists.

Workshop Outcomes

The discussions and outcomes from both workshops will inform AHC activities over the next 12 to 18 months to improve Australia's surveillance and traceability systems. This aims to support Australian animal industries and trade, enhance emergency preparedness and maintain our animal health status.

30th AHC Face-to-Face Meeting Animal Health Australia and Wildlife Health Australia

At the meeting, we congratulated Dr Rupert Woods (WHA) on being awarded the Order of Australia for his outstanding contribution to wildlife health. We also acknowledged the activities of AHA and WHA and the contribution these organisations make to Australian animal health.

AHC Subcommittees and Task Groups

We discussed the work of AHC Subcommittee on Aquatic Animal Health and the Laboratories for Emergency

Animal Disease Diagnosis and Response network. AHC agreed on the scope and activities of AHC National Laboratory Task Group to continue work previously undertaken by the AHC Subcommittee on Animal Health Laboratory Standards. We value the contribution of these and other AHC task groups.

Megalocytiviruses

At the meeting, AHC noted the 2014 Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources review of biosecurity risks associated with gourami iridovirus and related viruses. This review assessed the risks of megalocytiviruses to Australia. We discussed the implications of this to surveillance and national and international trade (noting the need to be compliant with the World Trade Organization's Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures) and agreed to further examine the technical advice presented at the meeting to progress work towards a national policy.

Industry Session

A joint AHC-industry session was attended by AHA Industry Forum executives (representing national industry associations) and NT industry representatives from the Barramundi Farmers Association, the Buffalo Council, Cattle Council of Australia, Harness Racing Australia, the Northern Territory Cattleman's Association and WoolProducers Australia.

Issues discussed included:

- compensations rules under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement
- changes to the management of bovine Johne's disease
- identification of Silirum vaccinates
- management of *Theileria orientalis* and registration of buparvaquone

- biosecurity modules under the Livestock Production Assurance program
- changes to the Livestock Biosecurity Network.
- risks of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) being introduced from neighbouring countries that import animals and animal products from FMD-affected countries
- mob-based versus electronic identification of sheep and goats
- registry for recording horse microchipping
- data to inform risk assessments and aquaculture practices in countries that export to Australia.
- application of the Biosecurity Act 2015 during an emergency animal disease response.

AHC will address some of these issues out of session.

Next Meeting

The next AHC meeting is in April 2017, in Western Australia.

Contact your AHC representative if you have agenda items that you would like considered for this meeting.

Thank you for your continued support of our animal and aquatic industries.



The esteemed members of AHC at the AHC Dinner, NT style

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