



# AHC VETCOMMUNIQUÉ

April 2017

*Animal Health Committee (AHC) comprises the Australian, state and territory chief veterinary officers (CVOs), the Director of the Australian Animal Health Laboratory, and the Assistant Secretary of the Animal Health Policy Branch of the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources. AHC Observers at the April 2017 AHC meeting included representatives from Animal Health Australia (AHA) and Wildlife Health Australia (WHA).*

## Message from Dr Roger Paskin, CVO South Australia and AHC Chair

Welcome to the Animal Health Committee (AHC) newsletter, *AHC Vetcommuniqué*, which provides information on topics discussed during the recent face-to-face meeting.

During my first meeting as AHC Chair, we participated in a 'futures thinking seminar' and explored what tools can be used to capture biosecurity intelligence and support informed decision-making.

'Future-proofing' Australia's animal health systems was also a theme as we continued to discuss traceability and surveillance, AHC's key priorities for 2016-2017.

The importance of collaboration with industry and other non-governmental stakeholders was continually highlighted. The meeting itself also included our largest AHC-industry session to date. With the meeting room at capacity, there was recognition of our shared interests and the importance of working together.

On behalf of AHC, I would like to thank Dr Carbon (CVO Western Australia) and the Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia for hosting the meeting and providing us with a greater appreciation of the animal sector in that state.

## 31<sup>st</sup> AHC meeting

19-21 April 2017, Perth

AHC met in Perth in April 2017, as part of its twice-yearly face-to-face discussions. These meetings provide a forum for national animal health issues to be discussed in a collegiate and collaborative environment.

### Livestock export industry

*AHC rotates its twice-yearly meetings between all jurisdictions. This provides an opportunity to engage with local industry throughout Australia and gain a deeper understanding of issues unique to each jurisdiction.*

Western Australia (WA) has a significant livestock industry sector, with its live animal exports accounting for approximately 30% of cattle and 85% of sheep exported from Australia in 2016. AHC gained key insights into this industry in WA during the meeting.

Officers from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources provided AHC with an overview of the export verification processes. Following this, visits were undertaken to cattle and sheep export farms (registered premises) as well as Fremantle Port. Discussions with representatives from Ausvision Rural Services at SJHY pre-quarantine facility, and the Wellard Group at La Bergerie quarantine feedlot highlighted the importance of good biosecurity practices (including traceability and data management) and an appreciation of the logistics involved.

### **Futures thinking seminar**

AHC participated in a 'futures thinking seminar' convened by Dr Geoff Grossel of the Australian Government of Agriculture and Water Resources. During this seminar, AHC discussed the role of horizon scanning and foresighting methods and activities, and their applicability to the biosecurity context.

Information was provided about the development of the International Biosecurity Intelligence System (IBIS). This is an automated system which gathers information from a number of sources, and has been used to monitor emerging biosecurity issues. The use of the DelphiCloud forecasting tool, which can also assist in decision-making, was discussed and a demonstration provided.

There was strong interest in further exploring these opportunities.

### **31<sup>st</sup> AHC Face-to-Face Meeting Key Items Discussed**

Traceability and surveillance—identified as priorities for AHC in 2016-2017—were a focus of the AHC meeting.

As part of the meeting, each jurisdiction provided updates about key surveillance activities. As well as supporting national consistency, this provided opportunities to learn from and collaborate on key projects.

Other key agenda items included:

#### **Agricultural Competiveness White Paper**

An update on activities funded under the Agricultural Competiveness White Paper was provided at the meeting. AHC discussed potential concepts for new activities to be considered for funding in the 2017-18 financial year.

#### **National Animal Health Surveillance and Diagnostics Business Plan 2016 – 2019**

An update on the implementation of the National Animal Health Surveillance and

Diagnostics Business Plan was provided. AHC noted the importance of engagement with non-governmental stakeholders, including industry, universities and private veterinarians.

#### **Cost-sharing a national livestock standstill**

AHC discussed a proposal for sharing the costs incurred during a national livestock standstill under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA). This work addresses one of the key findings from Exercise Odysseus and is considered integral to national preparedness for an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). Stakeholder collaboration on this issue will be critical, and plans for engagement with EADRA signatories and other stakeholders were discussed.

#### **Development of an Aquatic Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement**

AHC considered approaches for proportional cost-sharing amongst government and industry for an aquatic emergency animal disease response agreement.

#### **National Laboratory Task Group**

The National Laboratory Task Group provides policy and technical advice to AHC on laboratory matters of national importance. AHC noted the important role of this group and laboratory capacity more generally in Australia. AHC discussed the outcome of the Task Group's February 2017 workshop during which priority tasks were identified for incorporation into a national diagnostics strategy.

#### **Wildlife Health Australia**

WHA provided an update on the history of the organisation and the extensive and strong networks that it has fostered. The value of the data collected and shared through WHA was noted, together with its critical role in contributing to Australia's veterinary services.

## **Animal Health Australia**

AHA provided an update on current activities and strategic priorities, including national surveillance, the national sheep and goat traceability system, FMD vaccine bank logistics testing and a proposed approach to maintaining the currency, accuracy and consistency of AUSVETPLAN. AHA's work and support of AHC was acknowledged, including the participation of AHA Chief Executive Officer, Ms Kathleen Plowman during part of the meeting.

## **Industry Session**

A joint AHC-industry session was attended by AHA Industry Forum executives (representing national industry associations) and WA industry representatives from the WA Cattle Industry Management Committee, Kimberly Pilbara Cattleman's Association, WA Broilers/Chicken Meat Association, Commercial Egg Producers Association of WA, Pastoralists and Graziers Association of WA, WA Farmers and WA Pig Producers Association.

Issues discussed included:

- the national and Western Australian approaches for Johne's disease in cattle
- sheep traceability
- bluetongue virus
- the selection of specialist advisors for industry during an emergency animal disease outbreak
- the biosecurity challenges from business and supply chain practices in intensive industries

AHC looks forward to continuing to work with industry on key items of relevance.

## **Next Meeting**

The next AHC meeting will be held in Tasmania during October 2017.

Please 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 industries.



AHC Members and Observers (Apologies: Dr Townsend)

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