



Vetcommuniqué

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Animal Health Committee Meeting 06, 8-10 November, 2005

Welcome to the first edition for 2006. Vetcommuniqué, the Animal Health Committee (AHC) newsletter, provides a link between AHC and client industry bodies such as food animal production industry bodies.

This newsletter reports on the outcomes of the AHC06 meeting. The next meeting, AHC07, will be held in Perth from 9-11 May 2006. AHC meets face to face twice yearly, with the venue rotating around the States, Territories and New Zealand. Meetings are attended by the Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs), Biosecurity Australia, CSIRO and Animal Health Australia. AHC often invites key representatives of industry groups to the meetings, to discuss animal health issues of national importance. AHC also regularly meets by teleconference in between face to face meetings.

Key Outcomes from AHC06

Avian Influenza (AI) and Surveillance

Australia's arrangements to detect an AI incursion and to manage any outbreak is a key focus of AHC discussion.

AHC06 confirmed the need for all industry segments to have Biosecurity plans in place and AHC is developing minimum standards to further discuss with industry.

AHC is also developing protocols for follow-up of sero-reactors, including where any reactions to H5 and H7 are detected.

The Committee requested SCAHLS to validate and standardise AI laboratory tests as a matter of priority.

AHC is in discussion with the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) and the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicine Authority (APVMA) to ensure the regulatory clearances for importation of AI vaccine are in place if required.

Exercise Eleusis 2005

Ex Eleusis and the lead up exercises tested procedures, policies and plans, essential for effective AI control both before and during a response across a range of disciplines and jurisdictions. About 1,000 government and industry people participated. AHC06 discussed the implementation of key outcomes of the exercise.



OIE—AI

The new definition of notifiable AI in the OIE code divides AI viruses into highly pathogenic notifiable avian influenza (HPNAI) and low pathogenicity notifiable avian influenza (LPNAI).

The new definition has implications for certification of country freedom from AI and for notification of the disease under State and Territory legislation to ensure compliance with international requirements. AHC agreed that national consistency in notification and the reporting of both HPAI and LPAI is important.

Members agreed that it is important that industry is aware that all AI is notifiable in all jurisdictions and agreed to ensure that the poultry industry has a clear understanding of requirements under notifiable disease legislation.

EMERGENCY, NASCENT AND EMERGING ISSUES

Sub-Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases (SCEAD)

AHC has established a new sub committee, to take forward operational tasks relating to emergency animal diseases (EAD).

During the coming year SCEAD will develop guidelines to assist jurisdictions consider the eradicability of an EAD, develop standard operating procedures (SOP) for vaccination in EAD outbreaks, and further develop SOPs for each state and Territory, relating to a national livestock standstill. They will also take a key role in co-coordinating AI preparedness activities between jurisdictions.

Minimum national list of notifiable animal diseases

Every two years Animal Health Committee updates the agreed minimum list of animal diseases that are notifiable in all Australian States and Territories. Diseases included on the list are those:

- * Exotic to Australia
- * Endemic in Australia where there is a national or State control program
- * Endemic where there are export certification or country freedom requirements
- * Animal diseases of public health significance, zoonotic diseases
- * Diseases for which Australia has international reporting obligations.

In addition to the national list, all States and Territories have diseases that are specifically notifiable in their jurisdictions.

The national list is available on the AHC web page at www.daff.gov.au/ahc.

NLIS AUDITS

AHC discussed ongoing audit of the National Livestock Identification System. AHC agreed that audits should take a consistent approach within all jurisdictions and be done in partnership with all stakeholders. An AHC Working Group is developing Standard Operating Procedures for the use in future audits.

AHC agreed that each jurisdiction will undertake regular audit against relevant legislation and, as well, audit of traceability standards is needed.

Audit of the NLIS will comprise desktop audit and site visits to facilities such as abattoirs and saleyards.

Emerging Diseases

The borders between production animal, companion animal, wildlife and human health issues are becoming less and less clear as more diseases, such as avian influenza, Nipah virus and SARS, emerge. This trend is also occurring internationally.

Australia is now obliged to provide urgent notification to the OIE Central Bureau within 24 hours of the occurrence of an emerging disease with significant morbidity or mortality, or zoonotic potential. This obligation is not limited to production animals.

AHC has agreed that the need for investigation, diagnosis and reporting is clear, regardless of species or any response decision, and that standard reporting procedures are to be followed. Universities, research institutions, wildlife agencies, private practitioners and production facilities are obliged to report any preliminary diagnosis of emergency or emerging disease to their CVO.

AHC agreed that the benefits to Australia of prompt reporting of any suspicion of new or emerging diseases are enormous, in terms of enhanced livestock and human health, trade, Australia's integrity with trading partners, and environmental impact.



Wildlife Health

AHC supports the continuation of the Australian Wildlife Health Network (AWHN) and agreed it is a key part of Australia's surveillance network. AHC discussed the arrangements between wildlife coordinators and the CVOs in each jurisdiction and procedures to manage data submitted to the health information database.

AHC will work with the AWHN in response to media issues relating to wildlife.

AHC noted progress of a trial to test arrangements for data retrieval from interested groups such as pig, deer and other game hunters.

Endemic Animal Diseases



TFAP-2 post 2006—future directions

A number of issues had been identified by the legal review of State and Territory legislation on compensation under the Tuberculosis Freedom Assurance Program (TFAP2). The Cattle Council of Australia will negotiate with individual jurisdictions on arrangements to apply from January 2007.

Enzootic Bovine Leucosis (ELB)

- the way forward

EBL freedom in the national dairy herd is approaching completion. The Australian dairy industry is attuned to import and export issues and aware of the flow on effects from Australia's declaration of freedom. Industry must be engaged to drive further progress towards demonstrating EBL freedom.

A number of large herds require assessment and that will determine the rate of progress. Significant industry changes that have occurred over the last 12 months will also influence further progress.

The EBL Working Party agreed some additions to the Standard Definitions and Rules (SDRs). AHC endorsed the Australian and New Zealand Standard Diagnostic Procedures (ANZDP) for *Enzootic bovine leucosis* that were finalised by SCAHLS.

Industry are to be advised of the current situation regarding EBL eradication. A statement of industry's position will be sought with a view to developing a process to finalise EBL eradication from Australian dairy herds.

BJD

AHA presented a six month report on the National Bovine Johne's Disease (BJD) Strategic Plan. A vaccine trial is progressing as is bulk milk faecal culture screening testing.

BJD — Future of zones

Industry was consulted regarding a risk-based system that would see the phasing out of zones. In-principle agreement was given but progress needs to occur in several steps with dairy and beef herds considered separately. A paper was circulated to AHC from industry for discussion on calf credits.

OJD

AHC discussed a review of Prevalence Areas based on data from abattoir surveillance provided by jurisdictions at June 2005. A consensus about the review was not reached.

A summary report of the jurisdictional data is to be forwarded from AHA to AHC for further discussion.



Laboratory and diagnostic issues—SCAHLS (Sub-Committee on Animal Health Laboratory Standards)

AHC endorsed a half day workshop to be held in conjunction with SCAHLS20 (April 2006) on test verification and validation to produce a draft set of guidelines for new test approvals.

AHC noted the recent changes to international regulations for the transport of animal samples. SCAHLS has provided comment to the National Transport Commission on the new draft of the Australian Transport Code, which will cover both road and rail transport.

The Laboratory Accreditation Standards and Guidelines for Nucleic Acid Detection Technology has been circulated for final comment before publication.

A SCAHLS Working Group is preparing biosafety and biosecurity guidelines specifically for use in veterinary laboratories.

Animal Welfare



Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS) - Implementation

AHC discussed the resourcing and legislative changes that will be needed in the states and territories, flowing from the implementation of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy. The Committee will continue to be closely involved in the progress of this national strategy.

The Strategy covers the care, uses and direct and indirect impacts on all species of animals in Australia including those used in research and teaching, recreation and entertainment, production of food and fibre, companion animals, aquatic animals, pest species, and wildlife.

The AAWS Advisory Committee is co-ordinating implementation and a series of sectoral working groups which met in Feb 2006 to work out action plans for implementation.

Model Codes of Practice

AHC agreed to establish a process to review and clarify jurisdictional responsibilities relating to Model Codes of Practice and will liaise closely with AQIS and other agencies to develop this.

AHC also agreed that the level of awareness of animal welfare and engagement of industry of animal welfare related risks must be fostered by broad consultation and liaison. AHC considered recent policy developments and actions overseas and discussed their application to Australia.

AHC discussed the model cattle code developed by a small working group demonstrate the proposed new approach to model codes of practices. Part of the process involves undertaking a literature review. AHC agreed that broader consultation was needed and noted that this will be covered by a public consultation period.

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