



# Vetcommuniq 

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## Animal Health Committee Meeting 08, 24-26 October, 2006

Welcome to the fifth edition for 2006 of the Animal Health Committee's (AHC) newsletter for food animal production industry bodies. The aim of Vetcommuniq  is to improve communication links between AHC and client industry bodies.

The face-to-face meeting was held on 24-26 October in Canberra, ACT. Face-to-face meetings are held twice each year, with the venue rotating around the States, Territories and New Zealand. The meetings are attended by the Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) of the Commonwealth, States, Territories and New Zealand with representatives from Biosecurity Australia, CSIRO, Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) and Animal Health Australia (AHA) to discuss animal health issues of national importance. Industry representatives may also attend for specific discussion from time to time.

### *Key Outcomes from AHC08*

#### **Avian Influenza**

Avian Influenza (AI) continues to be a priority issue for AHC. At the meeting members discussed:

- \* update on domestic and international activities
- \* national surveillance policy
- \* reporting and lab forwarding arrangements
- \* response to detection in wild birds
- \* vaccination policy
- \* implementation of recommendations from Exercise Eleusis
- \* public communication



#### **National Recognition of Veterinary Registration**

AHC reviewed progress on national recognition of veterinary registration including the completed Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) consultation process. The RIS was made available for a period of public comment, which included a letter to all registered veterinarians in Australia seeking their input. Of the responses received 99% were in favour of national registration, with most favouring the national recognition model as described in the RIS. AHC members reaffirmed support for full national recognition of veterinary registration across all states and territories. Members decided that the next steps forward are to further develop administrative and legislative details around the model considered. A working group will complete development of a detailed model by December 2007.

#### **AI reporting and lab forwarding arrangements**

Members discussed the rules and guidelines in relation to AI reporting and lab forwarding. There is a continuing need to notify results to CVOs as appropriate. A consolidated version of reporting and lab forwarding requirements for AI will be presented to AHC for endorsement.

## Outcomes



### Update on recent and current domestic activities and projects

Members were updated on the activities of the DAFF AI taskforce. CVOs noted that DAFF is planning an AI industry workshop that will provide a good opportunity to discuss AI issues with industry. The workshop will cover a broad range of issues including national surveillance, vaccination, industry biosecurity, OH&S and response arrangements. An industry surveillance project and on-going surveys of wild birds in northern Australia undertaken by DAFF and the National Health and Medical Research Council have not detected highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI). Members noted that there is an Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) audit taking place which includes Exercise Eleusis and the use of AUS-VETPLAN manuals in an emergency response. AHC members have continuing involvement in implementation of the recommendations from Exercise Eleusis '05, Members reviewed the recommendations and will report on progress.

### Public communication

Communication relating to AI remains an important activity for jurisdictions. Members discussed future communications strategies. They agreed that the main focus should be on high risk areas including small flock poultry owners and hobby farmers. DAFF is rolling out a 3-year AI awareness campaign targeting the non-commercial poultry and bird keeping sectors. Members noted that a clear distinction needs to be made, for the public, in relation to the differences between human flu and bird flu. There is continuing coordination between DAFF and jurisdictions on AI communication.

### Vaccination policy

Development for the AI vaccination policy is progressing. Availability of vaccine stocks will be considered and industry is being consulted. AHC noted that arrangements are being made in conjunction with Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority and AQIS for importation and use of vaccine.

### Response to detection in wild birds

The policy for a response to detection in wild birds was discussed and is being further refined. AHC is closely considering responses to a range of potential findings related to AI in wild birds. The policy will be finalised at teleconference and out-of-session.



### National surveillance policy

AHC discussed national AI surveillance policy, including ongoing testing requirements and industry and government contributions. A working group was established to develop a discussion paper on national surveillance for HPAI. The paper will focus on surveillance in higher risk locations and establishments taking into account existing passive surveillance and exploring options for enhancement of surveillance for AI at the wild bird/domestic poultry interface. A review of the National Animal Health Information System capture of AI data is being considered to ensure that the data is in a format that meets surveillance analysis and reporting needs. Surveillance will be discussed at the AI industry workshop.

## Outcomes



### **National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) audits**

The NLIS for cattle has been fully implemented. To ensure its ongoing performance several audit activities are being undertaken. Members noted that the audit process will need to be reviewed during and after implementation to assess practicality, the level of detail and required intensity.

As a part of this activity, Meat and Livestock Australia sought AHC endorsement of NLIS monitoring templates for cattle, sheep and goats developed by the NLIS monitoring committee. AHC endorsed the templates and procedures agreeing to the proposed monitoring activity. Jurisdictions will submit quarterly reports using the templates from the Oct-Dec 2006 quarter for analysis by the NLIS technical committee. Results will be provided to the NLIS Executive; SAFEMEAT and AHC will be kept informed.

The Australian Government minister has requested an audit of NLIS (cattle). AHC supported the exercise which will be managed by DAFF and will test achievement against the national tracing standards.

### **National Animal Health Laboratory Strategy (NAHLS)**

Members were provided with background to recent developments in the NAHLS and PIHC consideration of the strategy. Further consultation will be undertaken. Use of key performance indicators will be explored with reference to public service accounting. A needs analysis of the Australian National Reference Laboratories is being undertaken.

### **Australian Veterinary Reserve (AVR)**

The AVR training program has concluded with approximately 100 veterinarians trained. The course developed skills and confidence to work in an EAD response. Ongoing AVR activities to maintain engagement include half-day workshops at the AVA conference and access to other training opportunities as appropriate.

### **Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE)**

AHC members cooperated in an EC evaluation of Australia's preventative measures for BSE during October 2006. Initial EC advice indicates that the final evaluation report (expected in February) may contain non-binding recommendations aimed at improving the Australian system. The key areas of focus could possibly be broadened surveillance for BSE and strengthened domestic and import controls over cross-contamination of ruminant feeds. Governments and industry will cooperate to prepare an action plan to address the report's likely findings. An unfavourable report could place at risk Australia's BSE ratings, with possible flow on effects to some beef export markets.



### **National Animal Health Surveillance Strategy (NAHSS)**

AHC members were advised that the paper on NAHSS was not endorsed by PIHC at their meeting. The proposal to PIHC incorporated establishment of a National Significant Disease Investigation Program and a Wildlife Event Investigations Team. The strategy will be represented to PIHC out-of-session incorporating AHCs advice and further consultation, as required. AHC highlighted the need for integration of AusBIOSEC and NAHSS regarding activities for wildlife disease surveillance/investigations.

# Outcomes

## Future management of animal welfare

AHC discussed options for future management of animal welfare within the primary industries committee structure. Animal welfare is a growing area in terms of profile and workload. Ongoing work will flow from the rollout of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy. Members proposed the establishment of a new animal welfare committee reporting to PIHC noting that the committee would need to be carefully structured regarding responsibilities for animal welfare beyond animal production. Members noted that coordination with the National Consultative Committee on Animal Welfare (NCCAW) may be needed as NCCAW produces position statements for animals other than live-stock.

AHC will further develop the proposal for consideration by PIHC and PISC.



## Enzootic Bovine Leucosis (EBL)

AHC members discussed the progress report from the EBL Eradication Working Group on a national strategy to finalise eradication of EBL. Members were advised that the eradication WG is active and a draft report will be complete by December 2006 and will be circulated to AHC.

## Tuberculosis Freedom Assurance Program (TFAP)

TFAP officially finishes on 31 December 2006. AHC discussed arrangements for ongoing management of TB in the period 2007-2010 relating to surveillance, case response and laboratory services, which are in train for next year. Cattle Council of Australia Inc will be consulted in TB policy related matters for the period 2007 to 2010.

## AusBIOSEC

AUSBIOSEC is a policy framework that is being further developed to improve national collaboration on biosecurity. Feedback was sought from AHC members on how the AusBIOSEC program is progressing in jurisdictions and any impacts it may have had. Members noted that the program had increased awareness of biosecurity in environmental groups and conservation groups. Members also commented on the benefit of these groups becoming more literate in terms of emergency response. The AusBIOSEC taskforce provides an opportunity to share expertise across sectors. AHC noted the need for on-going coordination of activities.

## AHC Key Contacts

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