



Vetcommuniqué

Vol 4, No 2, May 2004

Animal Health Committee Meeting 03, 11-13 May 2004

Welcome to Animal Health Committee's (AHC) newsletter for food animal production industry bodies. This is the post-AHC03 meeting edition. The aim of Vetcommuniqué is to improve communication links between AHC and client industry bodies.

AHC meetings are held twice each year, with the venue rotating around the States, Territories and New Zealand. These meetings are attended by the Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) of the Commonwealth, States, Territories and New Zealand. Representatives from Biosecurity Australia, CSIRO and Animal Health Australia (AHA) are also members.

In May this year, New Zealand hosted the meeting in Christchurch. AHC had the opportunity to inspect an innovative commercial dairy and hear about recent advances in NZ dairy practice.

Emergency Animal Disease Issues

Emergency use of vaccines

AHC discussed the use of vaccines during animal disease emergencies and considered a paper outlining the use of vaccine as a potential response strategy for a number of diseases.

A report is being prepared on the sourcing of emergency animal disease vaccines.

AHC also agreed to form a working group with Animal Health Australia (AHA) to develop a list of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for FMD vaccine use during a disease outbreak. The working group will deliver its report at AHC04 in October this year.

EADRA

The Committee considered a number of issues that could arise in 'non-infected' jurisdictions during a national emergency animal disease outbreak in preparation for an EADRA workshop held by Animal Health Australia (AHA) in June in Melbourne. AHC recommended that AUSVETPLAN guidelines are developed to address welfare issues that might arise during an emergency animal disease response. Animal Welfare Working Group has particular expertise to assist in the development of guidelines.

Feral animals

AHC considered the consolidated reports of feral animal issues and activities across jurisdictions and agreed that members would further progress these issues in collaboration with feral animal control agencies. A Coordinating Group will meet annually with Vertebrate Pests Committee (VPC) to discuss feral animal issues.



National Screw-Worm Fly Preparedness Strategy

The National Screw-worm Fly Preparedness Strategy for 2004-2009 was agreed by AHC and will now go to Primary Industries Standing Committee (PISC). A detailed business plan is being developed by AHA. Information is available on the AHA website—<http://www.aahc.com.au/eadp/swf.htm>.

New Zealand Report

The CVO of New Zealand provided an update on a number of current issues including: surveillance for Red Fire Ant and scrapie; arrangements for testing of stock feed as part of New Zealand's Ruminant Feed Ban; developments with livestock tracing; current policy for management in the case of an outbreak of Avian Influenza; tuberculosis in livestock; and the recent discovery of wire worms in ostriches.

NZ Biosecurity

Plans for New Zealand's Biosecurity strategy were published in August 2003 and have been fully endorsed by the New Zealand government.

Further features include a Biosecurity Policy Unit to be established with overall strategic role, incorporating:

- ◇ a single agency to coordinate all biosecurity issues
- ◇ a generic interventional model
- ◇ a recommendation for more direct funding and less government funding.

Submission of laboratory samples for an FMD outbreak

Recent changes to International Air Transport Association (IATA) rules may have implications for air freighting diagnostic samples to veterinary laboratories in Australia, particularly if there were large numbers of samples. The Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) was requested to convene a working group to develop a policy for submission of samples if there were an FMD outbreak. The group will consider work previously undertaken as it develops the policy. Once FMD requirements are established, the working group will consider packaging and transport for other emergency animal diseases.

Newcastle Diseases SOPs

AHC considered the recently revised SOPs for Newcastle disease vaccination and noted that current and future research may require further revision of the SOPs. AHC members will work with industry representatives within their jurisdictions to ensure that the revised procedures are communicated to the poultry industry.

SCAHLs - Sub Committee on Animal Health Laboratory Standards

SCAHLs has been particularly active in the last six months and AHC discussed a number of major reports presented by SCAHLs.

AHC and SCAHLs are reviewing the holding and management of biological agents in Australian veterinary laboratories. Planning is also underway for the consideration of future supply and demand for laboratory veterinary specialists.

A number of recommendations from a recent SCAHLs workshop on export testing of livestock were also discussed.

Management of infectious agents in laboratories

In response to the SCAHLs report 'Control of biological agents in Australian Veterinary Laboratories', jurisdictions agreed to undertake an audit of biological agents held in veterinary laboratories in Australia. An assessment of the management of the agents within each site against Australian Standards will be made. SCAHLs will coordinate the review and report back to AHC with findings and recommendations.

Export testing

AHC noted a draft report on export testing in Australian laboratories which was deferred for further discussion at a meeting with Biosecurity Australia in June.

AHC reaffirmed their commitment to absolute adherence to NATA accreditation requirements and this commitment will be emphasised to laboratories within members' jurisdictions.

A recommendation will be sent to the Frawley Surveillance Steering Committee stressing the importance of capturing export testing results as part of any national animal health surveillance system being developed.

Avian influenza

The outcomes of a recent AI workshop held in Melbourne were discussed. Development of a national integrated AI strategy and the development of industry mortality reporting guidelines, are considered a very high priority.

The ruminant feed ban

AHC agreed that uniform national risk-based guidelines will be developed to deal with stock inadvertently exposed to restricted animal material (RAM). Options were discussed and the Ruminant Feed Ban Working Group (comprising representatives from DAFF, Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales) will present draft guidelines to AHC out of session.

AHC considered the 'Review of testing methodologies for the detection of processed animal protein (PAP) in feedstuffs and the requirements for accreditations.' AHC agreed to recommend that SAFEMEAT commission a more in-depth study in Australia to investigate the official EU procedure for microscopic analysis of feedstuffs for the presence of processed animal protein.

The information will then be used in Australian feedstuff monitoring programs.

National Livestock Standstill

Arrangements for a national livestock standstill during an outbreak of an emergency animal disease such as FMD were endorsed. A number of issues were identified that could arise during the standstill. Policy will be developed during the coming months to address these items.

BJD Assistance Package

AHC commended the initiative of the Cattle Council in developing the assistance package for owners of beef cattle herds infected with BJD and recognised that the objective was to reduce the prevalence of BJD in beef herds.

AHC asked that Cattle Council note that eradication of the disease would not result from the implementation of strategies in the package. Ms Ailsa Fox, attending the meeting for the Cattle Council clarified issues in the paper.

New Zealand Dairy Industry Presentations

AHC enjoyed presentations from the New Zealand dairy industry organisations including:

- ◇ Dairy InSight
- ◇ South Island Dairy Development Centre (SIDDC)
- ◇ Dexcel and
- ◇ Lincoln University

These organisations provide best practice advice, and share experience, expertise and research. AHC also visited the dairy associated with Lincoln University. The farm is 185 ha and implements new technologies and ideas on a commercial basis. The farm demonstrates world best practice dairy farming systems and provides New Zealand dairy farmers an opportunity to see this in operation.

Frawley Report – progress

Work is progressing on the three Frawley Steering Committees:

- ◇ Surveillance
- ◇ Integration of Non-Governments Vets, and
- ◇ Utilisation of Diagnostic Laboratories.

The Laboratory Steering Committee and AHA will ensure ongoing liaison of national laboratory issues.

AHC agreed that there is an increasing need for wildlife surveillance to be included in mainstream activities. A number of recent new diseases have emerged from wildlife populations. Diagnosis and structured investigation of wildlife requires further development and will be a subject for a workshop. The Surveillance Steering Committee will ensure that wildlife issues are considered.

The **Australian Veterinary Reserve** has been launched and interested practitioners are asked to forward an expression of interest to DAFF. Information, and the AVR 'expression of interest' form, is available on the DAFF website www.daff.gov.au and search for 'AVR'.



Dairy farm visit—near Christchurch, NZ



Endemic animal disease and Animal Welfare



OJD - National approach to management: post July 2004

AHC endorsed the 'National Approach to the Management of OJD (NAOJD) Implementation of Assurance-based OJD Management'. The National Stakeholders meeting also endorsed the Implementation document and TAG will finalise some remaining minor technical details.

AHC endorsed TAG recommendation that, based on current information, Western Australia be declared a Very Low Prevalence Area (VLPA) for OJD. WA thanked other jurisdictions for their advice and assistance following the recent discovery of OJD in WA.

SA and NSW are finalising details of their respective submissions for Prevalence Areas for consideration by TAG.

Animal Welfare Working Group

AHC considered the forward workplan for the AWWG and endorsed the final terms of reference for the group.

AWWG is progressing a number of codes of practice including for the land transport of sheep, goats and poultry. As well the group is progressing a model for future code development.

AWWG is also considering the issue of unnecessary use of animals in biological testing.

AWWG Chair provided a report to AHC on the first OIE Global Conference on Animal Welfare held in Paris earlier in the year.

Another issue that AWWG will be involved in progressing includes implementation plans for the Australia Animal welfare Strategy recently agreed after wide community and industry consultation.

**NEXT ANIMAL HEALTH COMMITTEE
MEETING**
will be held at
South Australia
26-28 October 2004

**VETCOMMUNIQUE IS AVAILABLE
ON THE WEB AT:**
[http://www.daff.gov.au/ product
integrity animal & plant
health/ animal health committee](http://www.daff.gov.au/product_integrity_animal_%26_plant_health/animal_health_committee)

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