



VetCommunique

Vol 3 No 4

ANIMAL HEALTH COMMITTEE MEETING 02, 27 — 29 OCTOBER 2003

Welcome to VetCommunique, the Animal Health Committee (AHC) newsletter for animal production industry bodies. The aim of VetCommunique is to improve communication between AHC and client industry bodies. In late October, AHC met in Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. The Committee addressed a number of significant national animal health issues and took the opportunity to meet with members of local animal industries. Animal Health Committee (AHC), meets face-to-face twice each year, with the venue moving around the States, Territories and New Zealand. AHC also meets regularly by teleconference.

Alice Springs provided heat and hard work for Animal Health Committee

AHC 02 was attended by the Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) of the States and Territories, the Deputy Australian CVO and the New Zealand CVO. Representatives from Biosecurity Australia, CSIRO and Animal Health Australia also attended.



AHC02 in a nutshell

Emergency Animal Diseases

A paper covering cost-sharing of non-infected jurisdictions in an emergency response is to be developed. The paper will include a description of likely activities in non-infected areas covering barrier and movement controls, surveillance and vaccination programs. This is a further step in the on-going elaboration of the national emergency response plan and associated cost sharing arrangements.

The Frawley recommendations cover issues such as trained veterinary capability for undertaking surveillance and to cover emergencies, improved data collection and management, comprehensive national risk assessments of disease occurrences in terms of species, region, disease and syndrome.

Antimicrobial resistance and the National Information Management capacity are also current issues that AHC will advance.

Surveillance

The Frawley Report on Rural Veterinary Services has been released. Recommendations 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8 fall under AHC jurisdiction and three new steering committees have been formed to progress these issues.

Johne's Disease (JD)

BJD: An assurance-based pilot program for 'beef only' cattle has been developed in collaboration with the Cattle Council of Australia (CCA). Industry strongly supports the trial and a field trial was held on 23 January 2004 in Victoria.

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Committee

KEY OUTCOMES

OJD: The outline of an Assurance Based Credits (ABC) trading scheme has been endorsed in principle by AHC and was further considered in light of OJD post-2004 framework discussions held in mid-September.

Anthrax Vaccine Supply

Australia needs a secure supply of anthrax vaccine and several options were explored at the meeting in Alice Springs. While there is manufacturing capacity within Australia, other options need to be pursued in developing recommendations for security of supply. An options paper will be developed by Animal Health Australia for the Primary Industries Standing

FMD Vaccine

Standard operational procedures and guidelines for the use of FMD vaccine are to be developed by a Working Group which will report back to Animal Health Committee in May 2004.

Livestock Standstill

Each jurisdiction will develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and enabling legislation for a livestock standstill. Jurisdictions will report on progress at the next AHC meeting in May 2004 (AHC03).

AUSVETPLAN

Animal Health Australia will manage the process and development of AUSVETPLAN manuals with input from AHC for priority setting and endorsement.

Animal Welfare

The development of new Animal Health Codes is important as welfare becomes increasingly significant both locally and internationally. Australia needs to maintain sound science-based animal welfare standards which can be used in international fora.

AHC Animal Welfare Working Group (AWWG)

AWWG also covers issues such as tail docking of dogs and animal welfare situations that might arise during disease emergencies.

Emergency Vaccine Use

A report from the Emergency Vaccine Usage Working Group was discussed. Members were asked to note that priority for vaccines were those coming under the Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) cost sharing agreement. However, endemic vaccines that may be required in an emergency were also considered by the working group.

The Commonwealth is progressing the issue of import, supply and identification of vaccines that are considered a priority.

AAHL asked AHC members to note that an increasing number of vaccines containing GMO material. CSIRO intends to be proactive to ensure that Australia remains up-to-date with developments. Members were asked to note that with vaccines that will

be used on animals entering the food chain, any risk must be understood and addressed.

SCAHLs

AHC agreed that jurisdictions and the Commonwealth should fund quality assurance and professional testing for pathology laboratories as part of management of emergency animal diseases. A proposal has been developed to share funding between the States and the Commonwealth.

Several workshops are planned for 2004 including for: molecular diagnostics, the Australian National Quality Assurance Program (ANQAP), export testing, and FMD ELISA.

The testing of pathology samples from wildlife is an important element of disease surveillance in Australia, however, the cost involved can be a concern. States are collecting information about the cost of testing wildlife samples to report to AHC in late

Feral Animals

Feral animals can pose a major environmental and pest problem and a stock-take of ongoing issues and their progress is required.

A coordinated report will form the basis for discussion at the next AHC meeting.

NEW ZEALAND

The Biosecurity strategy for New Zealand was released in August 2003 and is available on the MAF website (www.maf.govt.nz). A single agency in NZ ensures delivery of the full range of biosecurity activities.

NZ MAF will be restructured to deliver services to effectively meet stakeholder expectations. The new structure is expected to be introduced in 2004.

VERTEBRATE PESTS COMMITTEE (VPC)

Some main areas of concern to VPC are:

- ◊ Guidelines for entry, movement and keeping of exotic vertebrate animals in Australia.
- ◊ The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicine Authority's (APVMA) review of 1080
- ◊ Animal welfare on humane vertebrate pest control
- ◊ Mapping of pest distribution and trends
- ◊ Maintaining links with AHC,

REPORTS TO AHC02

ANIMAL HEALTH MINI-QUADS

A Quadrilateral meeting attended by Australia, NZ, Canada and USA was held in California in October 2003. Some issues discussed were:

- ◊ The international veterinary reserve agreement which will be discussed by AHC in May 2004.
- ◊ The OIE global conference on animal welfare to be held in Paris in 2004 when discussions will be held to develop OIE guidelines on animal welfare.
- ◊ The OIE Code Chapter on BSE and country evaluation.



'Desert Park'—Alice Springs in October

OIE DEVELOPMENTS

Some developments from the OIE 71st general session held in Paris in May 2003 were:

- ◊ Changes to chapters of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code
- ◊ A presentation on the use of vaccination as an option for the control of avian influenza
- ◊ The work programs for animal welfare and animal production food safety
- ◊ A report from the Working Group on Wildlife Diseases; and
- ◊ Adoption of OIE Guidelines on antimicrobial resistance into the Code.

Several amended Code Chapters were adopted. The Code is available on the OIE website at http://www.oie.int/eng/en_index.htm.

The General Session agreed that there was a need to simplify categorisation of countries with respect to BSE status and to ensure that the OIE guidelines are consistent with the Code Chapter. This work is to be completed in May 2004.

I N D U S T R Y P R E S E N T A T I O N S

AHC is committed to maintaining open and effective communication with industry bodies. Industry representatives were invited to AHC02 to discuss ovine and bovine Johne's disease and the future management of TB and the TB-Freedom Assurance Program. John Stewart and Nick Keating of the Cattle Council of Australia addressed AHC and presented papers for discussion. David Kennedy of AHA also joined the meeting to discuss Johne's disease.

AHC also met with representatives of NT industry who made presentations at the AHC02. These were

- * John Armstrong, President, NT Cattleman's Association spoke on the cattle industry in the NT
- * Peter Seidel, Executive Officer of the Central Australian Camel Industry discussed the export camel industry
- * Glen Edwards, Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment spoke on the feral camels in the Northern Territory.

AHC 2004

AHC met by teleconference in December 2003 and again in January and February 2004. A face to face meeting will be held in New Zealand in May 2004.

Throughout 2004 AHC will consider the outbreak of avian influenza in Asia, issues arising from the cases of BSE that have occurred in Canada and the USA and Australia's response, as well as a wide range of domestic animal health and welfare issues.

AHC meetings provide State CVO's and the Commonwealth an opportunity to discuss a national approach to animal health developments in other countries and to develop a national animal health policy in these circumstances.

AHC CONTACTS

Name	Position	Phone number
Dr Bruce Christie	CHAIR AHC, CVO NSW	02 6391 3717
Dr Gardner Murray	AUSTRALIAN CVO	02 6272 5848
Dr Hugh Millar	CVO Vic	03 9217 4246
Dr Kevin Dunn	CVO Qld	07 3239 3552
Dr Brian Radunz	CVO NT	08 8999 2130
Dr Peter Buckman	CVO WA	08 9368 3342
Dr Robin Vandegraaff	CVO SA	08 8207 7970
Dr Rod Andrewartha	CVO Tas	03 6233 6836
Dr Will Andrew	CVO ACT	02 6207 2357
Dr David Banks	Biosecurity Australia	02 6272 4465
Dr Martyn Jeggo	CSIRO	03 5227 5160
Dr Peter Morcombe	Animal Health Australia	02 6203 3944
Dr Lyndel Post	AHC Secretariat	02 6272 5450

THE NEXT FACE-TO-FACE MEETING OF ANIMAL HEALTH COMMITTEE
WILL BE HELD IN NEW ZEALAND FROM 11-13MAY 2004