



VetCommunique

Vol 3 No 6

ANIMAL HEALTH COMMITTEE MEETING 01, 8-10 APRIL 2003

Welcome to VetCommunique, the Animal Health Committee (AHC) newsletter for food animal production industry bodies. The aim of VetCommunique is to improve communication links between AHC and client industry bodies. AHC's first meeting was in Orange, New South Wales. The Committee addressed a comprehensive range of national animal health issues.

IN THIS EDITION OF VETCOMMUNIQUE

- * *FMD*
- * *Animal Welfare*
- * *Johne's Disease*
- * *Animal Health Australia*
- * *Veterinary Public Health*

ORANGE PROVIDES AMBIANCE AND OUTCOMES FOR THE FIRST MEETING OF ANIMAL HEALTH COMMITTEE

Animal Health Committee (AHC), formerly VetCom, met in April in Orange NSW. Face-to-face meetings are held twice each year, with the venue moving around the States and New Zealand.

This meeting was attended by the Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) of the States, the Northern Territory and New Zealand. The Australian CVO and representatives from Biosecurity Australia, CSIRO and Animal Health Australia also attended.



AHC 01 in a nutshell

Australia's Residue Testing Capability

AHC discussed the need for national co-ordination of the development of analytical capability in laboratories engaged in residue testing for animal products in Australia. An AHC working group has drafted a comprehensive report on the issues, which will be circulated to stakeholders for comment.

Vertebrate Pests Committee

VPC now reports to the Natural Resource Management Council, where there is less emphasis on agriculture. However, continuing liaison between AHC and VPC is required to progress previously agreed work on pest animal control.

BJD: Import Protocols

Members discussed the import protocols for cattle, semen and ova, with respect to BJD. It was agreed that Biosecurity Australia (BA) amend the import conditions for semen, replacing the test requirement with "the donor showed no clinical signs of Johne's disease during the collection period".

BA will also amend the import requirements for susceptible animals to provide an option that provides for recognition of zoning.

AUSVETPLAN Technical Review Group Report

Key items on the work program are review of the Control Centre Manuals, the development of the next draft of the AUSVETPLAN Disposal Manual and the formation of a new writing group to update the destruction manual.

VETCOMMUNIQUE IS AVAILABLE ON THE WEB!

http://www.affa.gov.au/animal_plant_health

Then click on 'Animal Health Committee'

KEY OUTCOMES

Animal Health Australia

Dr Peter Thornber summarised recent developments at Animal Health Australia (AHA):

Personnel –

Ralph Hood was appointed as new CEO

Dick Roe was working till June as JD manager

A new agriculture graduate joined AHA in late April.

Programs –

Performance standards audits had filtered in and are required from all Company members.

Revision of APAV core manual with APAV co-ordinators had been completed.

EADP training was still a priority.

Biosecurity planning was completed. All members had returned plans which will be included as annexes to industry QA plans.

EADRA – Approximately 15 outstanding issues had been proposed for discussion at the workshop held in June

AHA has also begun work on the EXANDIS video series. This multi media tool was made in the early 1990's, however there is a need to include new technical information. As well as updating the video series AHA will also investigate web-broadcasting, CD Rom and DVD.

Animal Welfare

Animal Welfare Working Group

Animal Welfare is an increasingly important issue that affects both industry and the government at every level. AHC is now responsible for overseeing the Animal Welfare Working Group (AWWG) that is made up of State and Commonwealth government representatives.

One AWWG task is to develop animal welfare standards and codes that are not only workable but set the benchmark for the rest of the world.

AWWG will also be tackling issues such as, tail docking of dogs and animal welfare issues that might arise during disease emergencies such as a foot and mouth outbreak.

AHC will work with AWWG on policy developments and the implementation of agreed recommendations into State and Commonwealth legislation as appropriate.

Veterinary Public Health

Salmonella enteritidis – update

AFFA reported that RIRDC had released a paper on preparedness for SE. AFFA was planning a workshop with AHC and the Department of Health and Aging and industry to develop a way forward.

Avian influenza update

Members discussed recent developments regarding AI, particularly in the Netherlands and noted that the OH&S aspects of the AI AUSVETPLAN Manual needed review.

AFFA advised members of the pervasive incidents of AI in Australia and difficulties with surveillance between outbreaks was discussed.

There are now close linkages between the Department of Health and Aging and AFFA. It would be desirable to develop similar linkages at the state level to deal with this disease.

Bovine Johne's Disease (BJD) National Approach

AHC discussed the National BJD Program and acknowledged that there had been extensive stakeholder consultation to develop a national approach to BJD - an approach rather than a program. The document addressing the issues was circulated to all stakeholders for endorsement. (Ed note - The National approach document has since been endorsed by all stakeholders and a Steering Committee is proposed to assist with implementation.)

The meeting was advised that a member of AHC had been invited to join a national dairy industry group considering the national management of M. paratuberculosis.

Members agreed that Dr Millar should join the national dairy industry group, with Dr Vandegraaff as his deputy, as this was a valuable opportunity to liaise and communicate with industry on this important issue.

WORKING GROUP REPORTS

Engagement of private vets in Government Service– The Frawley Review of Rural Veterinary Services

As part of the 2001 election platform, government made a commitment that up to \$2 million would be provided to support initiatives aimed at boosting veterinary services in rural areas. The 2002-03 Budget provided \$2 million over 5 years for this purpose.

A working group had been formed at VetCom 13 to develop common approaches to surveillance using the private veterinary sector.

There were two main issues of concern to the working group – the formation of national veterinary reserve and the engagement of vets for ongoing surveillance. A draft paper was circulated to the working group for consideration. The working group will be focusing first on the national veterinary reserve.

Australia's livestock industries need animal health services that provide benefits to individual producers,

industries and the community. The animal health system underpins Australia's disease free status, disease detection and emergency response arrangements. These form the basis of our export trade in animals and animal products.

Review of the National Registry of Domestic Animal pathology (Turner Report)

The recommendations of the Turner report were outlined. The involvement of the Australian Society of Veterinary Pathology (ASVP) in the Registry was noted.

Members discussed options for maintaining the Registry, including the provision of a half time registrar and management by ASVP and Animal Health Australia.

Strong support for the need for the registry as a unique, valuable, ongoing national training resource was shown by members.

Although the New Zealand registry was no longer functional. New Zealand's policy was to fund on a user pays basis.

It was suggested that consideration needs to be given to fund this Registry as a national collection. This would need investigation as to the practicality of the proposal.

FMD

FMD-BSE Policy Forum outcomes– Action Plan

A second FMD/BSE policy forum was held in February this year to discuss ways to move forward after Exercise Minotaur. AHC is considering an Action Plan and the next steps in the FMD issue.



INDUSTRY TALKS

Industry representatives from NSW Scott Hansen from the Sheep Meat and works closely with NSW Agriculture. Farmers Federation, Sheep Meat Council presented a paper titled 'The future for OJD Control in Australia'. Council of Australia and Cattle Council of Australia were invited to AHC to discuss JD.

AHC values industry input and is committed to keeping communication operating in an open and effective environment.

Felicity Henderson from the NSW OJD Advisory Committee, spoke on the need to engage NSW producers and give them ownership of dealing with the disease on-farm.

NSW OJD Advisory Committee is made up of a range of industry groups

Michael Hartmann, from the Cattle Council of Australia, spoke about the importance continuing support for BJD control and risk-based trade.

Cattle Council of Australia asked to be invited to AHC 02 to present the outcomes of a consultancy on risk based cattle trading.

AHC SECRETARIAT CHANGES

This was the last meeting for AHC Secretary, Dr Jill Mortier. Jill has been with the secretariat for three years. She will remain within the AFFA taking responsibility for coordination of as international matters. Over the last three years Jill has made a significant contribution to AHC. Members thanked Jill for her contribution to AHC.

Dr Peter Thornber from Animal Health Australia (AHA) will also be leaving the Committee. He will be moving back to work with the Commonwealth and his replacement has not yet been announced. Dr Thornber worked for AHA for nearly three years on the Emergency Animal Disease Preparedness Program and the Animal Health Services Program. He was thanked for his contribution during this time.

Jill will be replaced by Dr Lyndel Post. Lyndel was in private practice in rural NSW and then with the NSW Department of Agriculture. She worked with the NRA (now APVMA) before moving to AQIS and working in both Animal Programs and Animal Biosecurity. Lyndel brings a wealth of experience to her new position. AHC members are looking forward to working with her.



Lyndel Post

The next AHC meeting will be held in Alice Springs in October 2003.

Issues that will be discussed include both international and domestic animal health developments.

A report will be given from New Zealand and from the Animal Health Quads (USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia.) This will give State CVO's and the Commonwealth an opportunity to discuss animal health developments in other countries and Australia's response in these circumstances.

Domestic animal health issues on the agenda include quarantine, endemic diseases (OJD and BJD) and veterinary public health.

AHC CONTACTS

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**THE NEXT FACE-TO-FACE MEETING OF ANIMAL HEALTH COMMITTEE
WILL BE OCTOBER 2003 IN ALICE SPRINGS, NORTHERN TERRITORY**