



Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture

## AHC Vetcommunique

May 2015 edition 2015/2

### An eNewsletter from the Animal Health Committee

#### Animal Health Committee 27 meeting

**Melbourne, 22-23 April 2015**

Welcome to the Animal Health Committee (AHC) newsletter, Vetcommunique. The aim of Vetcommunique is to provide a communication link between AHC, industry bodies and other stakeholders.

AHC meetings are attended by the Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) of the Commonwealth, States and Territories, representatives of the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL), Animal Division (Department of Agriculture), the Australian Department of the Environment, Animal Health Australia (AHA), Wildlife Health Australia (WHA), and a New Zealand representative. National industry association representatives from the Animal Health Australia (AHA) Industry Forum Executive and industry representatives from the host jurisdiction also attend a joint AHC-industry session.

Dr Michelle Rodan is the Western Australian Chief Veterinary Officer and AHC Chair for 2015.

Further information on AHC can be found on the Department of Agriculture website at: : <http://www.agriculture.gov.au/animal-plant-health/animal/committees/ahc>

#### Key outcomes from AHC27

AHC met on 22-23 April 2015 in Melbourne. Key issues discussed included:

#### **National Animal Health Surveillance and Diagnostics**

AHC members and their surveillance managers held a one day workshop to develop a national animal health surveillance and diagnostics business plan. The business plan will need to both recognise existing activity within states and territories as well as identifying gaps for further coordination and improvements at national level. Initiatives were identified in the areas of nationally standardised case definitions and sampling protocols for six priority diseases, aligning and introducing flexibility into active surveillance programs, undertaking a national animal health data management trial, and enhancing private veterinarian and producer communications, including through the development of an electronic exotic diseases field guide. An industry government consultative workshop will further progress this work in August 2015.

### **Bovine Johne's Disease (BJD) Review**

AHC commented on the initial discussion paper produced by AHA, noting that wide-ranging BJD positions could be read into it and further versions would require greater clarity and policy direction. AHC supported less regulation but detailing what comes next would be challenging. The existing AHC policy position would be re-submitted to AHA and may be expanded on pending progress with the review.

### **World Organisation of Animal Health (OIE) Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Engagement**

AHC received an update on the planned OIE PVS training and evaluation processes and reiterated their support. More information on OIE PVS evaluation can be found at <http://www.oie.int/support-to-oie-members/pvs-evaluations/> . South Australia spoke highly of a PVS based process they had undertaken. Planning is advanced for PVS training to be delivered by OIE experts in Canberra on 6th - 9th July 2015. The external PVS evaluation is likely to take place in October and November 2015, with the closing meeting to coincide with AHC28 in Sydney. Industry stakeholders will be closely involved in both processes. AHC generally supported addressing the gaps identified by PVS, as well as undertaking more detailed jurisdictional performance benchmarking after the PVS evaluation using Australians trained in PVS methods.

### **Avian Influenza (AI) Risk Mitigation**

AHC heard a report from the industry-government AI risk mitigation task group, who had agreed on the definition of a high risk enterprise and supported incentives to increase levels of biosecurity audit and certification, such as farms needing to meet audit standards to receive full outbreak compensation. AHC was tasked to explore this option within jurisdictional legislation and report back to AHC. Interest was also expressed in engaging retailers to require biosecurity standards from high risk suppliers given free range requirements from retailers are increasing AI risks. A stakeholder workshop to more broadly consult on AI risk mitigation will be held back-to-back with the annual egg producers forum on 19 May 2015 in Adelaide.

## **AHC's National Animal Health Research Priorities**

AHC endorsed its National Animal Health Research Priorities, a collection of research questions identified by members as priorities for scientific input to policies and programs AHC is grappling with. The document will be distributed via the National Animal Biosecurity R,D&E Strategy process, the Centre for Excellence in Biosecurity Risk Analysis (CEBRA) processes and directly with university veterinary Deans, relevant Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) and others. It is anticipated that this will become a triennial AHC publication.

## **On Farm Biosecurity Initiatives**

AHC received updates on two on-farm biosecurity initiatives. One Biosecurity involves the application of biosecurity and disease status ratings to farms. It has received good support and will shortly be piloted in South Australia, with a report to be provided to AHC. The SAFEMEAT initiatives review involves introducing farm biosecurity and animal welfare standards to the Livestock Production Assurance program, currently focused on food safety and contaminants. There may be good opportunities for synergies between these activities, such as through mutual recognition of biosecurity status.

## **Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) and AHC**

AHC welcomed WHA to their first meeting as an AHC observer. WHA reported on two events that have raised issues with response arrangements for wildlife; the snapping turtle and Risso dolphin mortalities, and sought advice from AHC on its role. AHC advised that WHA should further detail to AHC how it might develop a co-ordination role to help interface between agricultural and environmental (and health) agencies at national and jurisdictional level on wildlife disease events and issues. The relevance of the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement (NEBRA) in the wildlife context could also be reviewed.

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