

FOR INFORMATION

NAHIP Advisory Committee Annual Meeting 2024

Agenda Item 2.1

Last updated: **10 May 2024**

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Brief update on relevant activities and issues influencing Australia's animal health surveillance needs**RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the NAHIP Advisory Committee *NOTE the update from the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.*

BACKGROUND

2. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department) provides an annual paper for the information of the NAHIP Advisory Committee to:
 - a. provide an update for the NAHIP Advisory Committee on relevant activities of the department;
 - b. inform the NAHIP Advisory Committee of identified issues that may affect Australia's animal health surveillance needs; and
 - c. highlight areas of the NAHIP that trading partners may scrutinise and use to assess Australia's animal health status.
3. Animal surveillance supports Australia's trade and market access, facilitates early detection of emergency and emerging animal diseases, and enables monitoring of significant endemic diseases.
4. In recent years, biosecurity threats have increased, and trading partners and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) are moving towards requiring sound 'evidence of absence', rather than simply 'absence of evidence' and subjecting evidence to greater scrutiny. More robust evidence in support of Australia's claims about its animal health status will be needed. For example:
 - a. To meet new WOAH standards for official status recognition for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE).
 - b. Recently, stronger animal health surveillance evidence could have better supported Australia's response to temporary trade disruptions due to concerns from trading partners regarding Australia's status for lumpy skin disease and Newcastle disease.
5. Animal Health Australia (AHA), Plant Health Australia (PHA) and the department are working closely together to establish an animal health version of AUSPestCheck to support the operation of key national animal health surveillance data reporting programs. The system provides enhanced data reporting, analysis and visualisation capabilities and presents opportunities for further capability enhancements over time e.g. automated data reporting, cross-sectoral data sharing. Key components of this work include preparing relevant animal health surveillance programs currently operating on the Central Animal Health Database (CAHD), including NAHIP, for migration onto AUSPestCheck, and finalising data-sharing documentation for these programs.

DISCUSSION

6. Surveillance to demonstrate emergency animal disease and nationally notifiable animal disease exclusions in Australia is important to substantiate Australia's claimed animal health status, official

status with WOAHA, and to support trade negotiations. Trading partners will often seek further information from Australia following our self-declared disease status. Documentation and evaluation of surveillance activities is necessary to support Australia's claims to ensure import and export policy is science-based, trade is not disrupted, and unnecessary import conditions are not applied to Australian animal-based exports.

7. As part of our international obligations, Australia submits a range of reports to WOAHA, including immediate and follow-up notifications during disease outbreaks, six monthly and annual reports summarising our disease status and animal health systems, and annual reconfirmations for disease status officially recognised by WOAHA. Data demonstrating robust surveillance, diagnostics, and absence of disease is required for these activities. New WOAHA standards for recognition of BSE status were adopted in May 2023 with a 12-month adoption period. New standards for Contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP) and African Horse Sickness (AHS) are expected to be put forward for adoption in May 2025. These standards will generate greater scrutiny of the data provided to substantiate our freedom from these diseases.
8. NAHIP has supported requirements of the Australian Government in substantiating Australia's official and self-declared animal health status and supported trade negotiations. There are also instances where the department has experienced challenges in obtaining the data and information required.
9. The department is frequently required to provide current surveillance information to international organisations and overseas authorities. Existing surveillance data, combined with descriptive information about our system, is usually sufficient to address most of these queries. Currently, data shared with trading partners and WOAHA to substantiate Australia's health status and support market access is fragmented across multiple systems e.g. disease investigations/ exclusions in domesticated species, investigations/exclusions in wild/feral, NAQS survey data etc.

CONSULTATION/COMMUNICATION

10. Relevant areas of the department were consulted internally during the preparation of this paper.

NEXT STEPS/ACTIONS

11. Progress towards objectives (especially 3, 4 and 5) of the recently-published [National Animal Health Surveillance Plan \(2022-2027\)](#) will help address the issues identified above.
12. DAFF continues to work closely with AHA and PHA to establish an animal health version of AUSPestCheck to replace the CAHD and aquatic animal health surveillance reporting system to commence operation as soon as possible. DAFF is keen to ensure clear and regular communication with jurisdictions on the project and its key deliverables, including through re-establishing regular meetings of the AUSPestCheck Animal Reference Group.

FEEDBACK

13. [Please respond to the questions below in assessing the performance of the NAHIP over the 2022–23 year, and use this as an opportunity to offer feedback and suggested changes for continual improvement.]

Q1 My organisation's needs and expectations of the NAHIP are being met.				
Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Currently, data shared with trading partners and WOAHA to substantiate Australia's health status and support market access is fragmented across multiple systems e.g. disease investigations in domesticated species vs wild/feral populations, NAQS survey data etc. Also, it is not always possible to differentiate the number of investigations vs animals tested vs tests performed. AUSPestCheck may provide opportunities to improve management, analysis and interpretation of national animal health surveillance data.				

Q2 My organisation is satisfied that the outputs of NAHIP, such as the Animal Health in Australia report are Animal Health Surveillance Quarterly, are credible and robust.				
Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Q3 The format and protocols in place for uploading and transferring national surveillance data are fit for purpose.				
Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
N/A				

Q4 NAHIP satisfies national surveillance data and reporting requirements. (Please outline any requirements not being met).				
Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Considerations may be needed around whether AusPestCheck has the flexibility to meet changing WOAHA standards for surveillance system requirements, including new BSE requirements and future changes for other diseases.				