

FOR INFORMATION

NAHIP Advisory Committee Annual Meeting 2023

Agenda Item 1.1

Last updated: 29 August 2023

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Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) Report (2022-2023)**RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the NAHIS Advisory Committee NOTE the relevant activities the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) are currently involved with.

BACKGROUND

1. The NAQS, within the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), conducts an animal disease surveillance program to help address the unique biosecurity risks associated with Australia's extensive and sparsely populated northern coastline.
2. This surveillance program aims to provide early detection of exotic and emerging pests and diseases of significance to agriculture, public health and the environment. While pest and disease detection ('early warning') is the primary objective of NAQS surveillance, NAQS also contributes disease exclusion data to support Australia's claims of freedom for a number of pests and diseases.

DISCUSSION

3. NAQS animal health surveillance program includes the following component activities:
 - a. Targeted surveillance
 - i. Feral animal surveys across northern Australia
 1. In the 2022-2023 financial year, NAQS completed 12 feral animal surveys across northern Australia, sampling 700 feral pigs and 36 feral bovids. Healthy animals sampled were tested for the following diseases: JEV (Pigs, feral bovids, feral horses), LSD (Feral bovids), Surra (All animals), CSF (feral pigs), ASF (feral pigs), Aujeszky's disease (feral pigs). In the NT, NAQS also tested all feral pigs for *Brucella suis*. Only JEV was detected in 15 feral pigs, all from the Northern Territory.
 - ii. Domestic animal surveys in Torres Strait/Northern Peninsula Area, Queensland
 1. In the 2022-2023 financial year, NAQS completed two domestic animal surveys across northern Australia. One survey was conducted on thirty domestic pigs near Tennant Creek, NT, in February 2023, testing for JEV as part of the ongoing surveillance within the Territory. The other survey was conducted in the Torres Strait, QLD, in March 2023, with twenty-five dogs tested in the outer islands of the Torres Strait (*Ehrlichia canis*) and two domestic pigs (JEV, Surra, CSF, ASF, AJD).
 - iii. Wild bird surveys at several sites across northern Australia
 1. In the 2022-2023 financial year, NAQS completed 21 environmental avian influenza sampling events across northern Australia. Ten of the 21 sampling events were in a single site in Darwin as part of a regular monitoring programme, and NAQS recently deployed monthly sampling activities in the Torres Strait in March 2023.

2. Further to this activity, NAQS were able to sample 5 morbid wild ducks at one site and Avian influenza was excluded. It was suspected by the laboratory that these birds had botulism.
- iv. Sentinel/serosurveillance cattle herds at several sites across northern Australia
 1. Further details can be found in the NAMP minutes
- v. *Culicoides* midge trapping at several sites across northern Australia
 1. Further details can be found in the NAM minutes
- vi. Adult screwworm fly trapping in Northern Peninsula Area, Queensland
 1. NAQS conducts SWF-targeted trapping in the Northern Peninsula Area of Cape York, Queensland every three months. It should be noted that Trapping has not been conducted since January 2023, due to ongoing logistical issues.
- vii. Mosquito trapping in Northern Peninsula Area, Queensland
 1. NAQS conducts monthly mosquito trapping in the Northern Peninsula Area of Cape York, Queensland. It should be noted that Trapping has not been conducted since January 2023, due to ongoing logistical issues.
- b. General surveillance
 - i. General biosecurity awareness program: Biosecurity Top Watch!
 - ii. Syndromic surveillance in Indigenous communities in northern Australia
 - iii. Disease-specific public awareness campaigns for emerging risks (e.g. African swine fever)
 - iv. Postmortem training for rangers and pastoralists
4. NAQS also supports the 3 northern jurisdictions to conduct disease investigations arising from NAQS planned surveillance activities or in response to reports from third parties (e.g. Indigenous rangers).
5. Details of NAQS surveillance activities delivered in 2021-2022 FY are found in Attachment A.
6. NAQS also chairs the Northern Australia Biosecurity Strategy (NABS) Animal Working Group, established under the *Agricultural Competitiveness* and *Developing Northern Australia* White Papers, and continuing to coordinate ongoing and new surveillance initiatives in northern Australia, under the governance of the Northern Australia Biosecurity Framework Reference Group (NABF RG).
 - a. The NABS Significant Disease Investigation Network (NABSnet) is a White Paper legacy project developed through this Working Group that has received further funding from DAWE to continue until June 2022.
 - b. The Northern Australia Biosecurity Strategy has now been endorsed by the NABF RG. The NABS Animal Working Group has developed an implementation plan for delivering on the NABS objectives, which is currently being considered for endorsement by the NABF RG
7. NAQS acknowledges the difficulties with extracting and submitting data to NAHIP and eWHIS. Currently, NAQS is focusing on a geospatial enabled surveillance system to capture, store and report data in a more efficient and automated manner.
 - a. NAQS would like to propose the utilisation of AusPestCheck to house the original cut of data, so that there is a central reference point to then compare across the different datasets.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8. DAFF funds the delivery of NAQS surveillance activities. Some costs associated with delivery of NAQS sentinel herd and *Culicoides* midge trapping surveillance are recovered through the National Arbovirus Monitoring Program (NAMP).
9. Budget constraints continue to be a cause for some NAQS planned surveillance activities being cancelled. NAQS' budget for 2023-2024 is yet to be confirmed.

CONSULTATION/COMMUNICATION

10. Not applicable

NEXT STEPS/ACTIONS

Attachment A: NAQS Animal health surveillance activities 2022-2023

Survey Name	Region	Survey type	Year	Month	Count of animals per species type
2022_07_ADI_Q3	NPA, QLD	Animal Disease Investigation	2022	July	2x Pigs
2022_07_AFA_N3N4	Northern Arnhem Land	Feral Animal Survey	2022	July	2x feral cattle 98x feral pigs 9x water buffalo
2022_08_AGS_Q5c	Peri-urban Cairns	Post mortem workshop	2022	August	1x feral pig
2022_09_AFA_Q6b	Weipa, QLD	Feral Animal Survey	2022	September	70x feral pigs
2022_10_AFA_Q5a	Princess Charlotte Bay, QLD	Feral Animal Survey	2022	October	70x feral pigs
2022_10_AFA_W9	Central Kimberly, WA	Feral Animal Survey	2022	October	66x feral pigs
2022_11_AFA_N1a	Eastern Arnhem Land, NT	Feral Animal Survey	2022	November	1x feral cattle 41x feral pigs 4x water buffalo
2022_11_AFA_Q6aQ7	Gulf country, QLD	Feral Animal Survey	2022	November	145x feral pigs
2022_12_AFA_N1c	Eastern NT	Feral Animal Survey	2022	December	84x feral pigs
2023_02_ADA_NT	Tennant Creek, NT	Domestic Animal Survey	2023	February	30x domestic pigs
2023_03_ADA_Q1aQ1bQ2Q3	Torres Strait and NPA, QLD	Domestic Animal Survey	2023	March	26x domestic dogs 2x domestic pigs
2023_03_ADI_N9	Darwin, NT	Animal Disease Investigation	2023	March	5x wild ducks
2023_03_AGS_Q5c	Peri-urban Cairns	Post mortem workshop	2023	March	3x feral pigs
2023_04_AFA_N12W1W2	Western NT to Eastern Kimberly, WA	Feral Animal Survey	2023	April	40x feral pigs
2023_04_AFA_N7	Tiwi islands, NT	Feral Animal Survey	2023	April	2x feral pigs 19x water buffalo
2023_04_AGS_NT	Nitmiluk National Park, NT	Post mortem workshop	2023	April	1x feral pig
2023_04_AGS_Q5c	Peri-urban Cairns	Post mortem workshop	2023	April	3x feral pigs

2023_05_AFA_Q3Q6c	Northern Cape York, QLD	Feral Animal Survey	2023	May	48x feral pigs
2023_05_AFA_W3W9	Northern Kimberly, WA	Feral Animal Survey	2023	May	1x feral cattle 16x feral pigs
2023_05_AGS_Q5c	Peri-urban Cairns, QLD	Post mortem workshop	2023	May	4x feral pigs
2023_06_ADI_Q6b	Weipa, QLD	Animal Disease Investigation	2023	June	1x feral pigeon
2023_06_AGS_Q5c	Peri-urban Cairns, QLD	Post mortem workshop	2023	June	3x feral pigs

FEEDBACK

11. *[Please respond to the questions below in assessing the performance of the NAHIP over the 2021–22 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
Please explain your answer, including any suggested changes:				

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
Please explain your answer, including any suggested changes:				

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
Please explain your answer, including any suggested changes:				

Q4 NAHIP satisfies national surveillance data and reporting requirements. (Please outline any requirements not being met).				
Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your answer, including any suggested changes: Lack of laboratory case definitions makes it complex to determine what to report – especially in surveillance.				