

FOR INFORMATION

NAHIP Advisory Committee Annual Meeting 2021

Agenda Item 3.1

Last updated: **14 November 2021**

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Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) Report**RECOMMENDATION**

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

BACKGROUND

2. The NAQS, within the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE), conducts an animal disease surveillance program to help address the unique biosecurity risks associated with Australia's extensive and sparsely populated northern coastline.
3. 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

4. NAQS animal health surveillance program includes the following component activities:
 - a. Targeted surveillance
 - i. Feral animal surveys across northern Australia
 - ii. Domestic animal surveys in Torres Strait/Northern Peninsula Area, Queensland
 - iii. Wild bird surveys at several sites across northern Australia
 - iv. Sentinel/serosurveillance cattle herds at several sites across northern Australia
 - v. *Culicoides* midge trapping at several sites across northern Australia
 - vi. Adult screwworm fly trapping in Northern Peninsula Area, Queensland
 - vii. Mosquito trapping in Northern Peninsula Area, Queensland
 - 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. Post mortem training for rangers and pastoralists
5. 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).
6. Details of NAQS surveillance activities delivered in 2020-21 are found in Attachment A.
7. 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
8. NAQS managed a 12 month project, running from July 2020 to June 2021, delivered by Charles Darwin University: *Enhancing surveillance of the northern Australian feral pig population for African swine fever and other high impact pests and diseases*. The project had two components, each with a single objective:
 - a. Identify the genetic populations of feral pigs in northern Australia, and in doing so, identify zones with a high, medium and low potential for disease spread based on population connectivity.
 - b. Accurately assess the benefits and limitations of data collection and deep learning processes using remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS, aka drones) to detect feral pigs (alive and dead) and their environmental markers (e.g. wallows) in a range of environments commonly found in northern Australia.

The project outcomes have been presented already at a number of fora and are being prepared for scientific publication.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. DAWE 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).

CONSULTATION/COMMUNICATION

10. Not applicable.

NEXT STEPS/ACTIONS

11. NAQS plans to discuss reporting of NAQS feral animal surveillance data out-of-session with both Wildlife Health Australia and Animal Health Australia.

Attachment A: NAQS animal health surveillance activities 2020-21

FEEDBACK

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: Best for DAWE rep to answer this on behalf of the department.				

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: I think they are credible and robust, but still think there is room for improvement with how the data is reported. There's been some progress made in the last 12 months with regards to improving the data reporting.				

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: It works but is clunky/a very manual process. Also reporting lines for feral animal data are not meeting our needs – will take offline to discuss with AHA and WHA further to work out the best way forward.				

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: As far as I am aware – really a Q only relevant to DAWE rep I think.				