

FOR INFORMATION

NAHIP Advisory Committee Annual Meeting 2020

Agenda Item 2.1

Last updated: **8 September 2020**

Prepared by AC Breed and L Macfarlane-Berry

Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Update on relevant activities and issues influencing Australia's animal health surveillance needs

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the NAHIP Advisory Committee NOTE:

- a.** the relevant activities the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment is currently involved in (Attachment A)

BACKGROUND

2. The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (the Department) provides an annual paper for the information of the NAHIP Advisory Committee to:
- provide an update for the NAHIP Advisory Committee on relevant activities that the Department is currently involved in;
 - inform the NAHIP Advisory Committee of identified issues that may affect Australia's animal health surveillance needs; and
 - highlight areas of the NAHIP that trading partners may scrutinise and use to assess Australia's animal health status.
3. Australia is free from many trade-significant animal diseases. Our favourable animal health status provides considerable benefits, including through supporting new market access requests, maintaining existing markets, and minimising additional pre-export or post-arrival procedures required by importing countries.
4. The Department is frequently required to quickly provide current surveillance information to overseas authorities. In many cases, existing surveillance data, combined with descriptive information about our system, has been sufficient to address most of these queries. However, there are instances where the department has experienced challenges in obtaining the data and information required.
5. In recent years, biosecurity threats have increased and trading partners are tending to demand more robust evidence in support of Australia's claims about its animal health status. Both trading partners and the OIE are now moving towards requiring sound 'evidence of absence', rather than simply 'absence of evidence'. Indeed the independent review of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity published in 2017 highlighted the need to address fragmentation in the national biosecurity system and the importance of strengthening Australia's capacity to collect, manage and use surveillance data.

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 and support trade negotiations. Trading partners regularly question Australia's self-declared disease status. Surveillance of some form is necessary to support Australia's claims to ensure import policy is science-based, trade is not disrupted and unnecessary import conditions are not applied to Australian animal-based exports.

7. The report 'National sharing of terrestrial animal health surveillance data' prepared in 2018 by Ausvet included several issues with the current systems of data sharing, management and analysis at the national level. Enhancement to national sharing of animal health surveillance data should provide a more complete picture of animal health, provide direct benefit to 'local' users and providers of data, and achieve greater capability to detect and manage biosecurity threats and endemic diseases. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the expectation for flexible national disease data systems which are capable of rapid information sharing to support a nationally coordinated response.
8. Pathogen genetic sequence data is being generated more quickly, at lower cost, and in more laboratories than ever before. The use of this data in conjunction with routine laboratory and field epidemiology data in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including surveillance activities, highlights this opportunity for the animal health sector (also note the incorporation of genomic data to OIE-WAHIS outlined in Attachment A). Australia should consider how this data could be captured, managed, analysed and reported for animal diseases.
9. In many cases, NAHIP is meeting the current requirements of the Australian Government in substantiating Australia's claimed animal health status and support trade negotiations. However, the Ausvet report noted that changes are required for Australia to maintain its world-class reputation in animal health surveillance. This is necessary for maintaining access to premium export markets. Improving processes for data sharing and analysis are priorities for the Australian Government. Addressing these issues will help clarify additional data requirements.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10. Not applicable.

CONSULTATION/COMMUNICATION

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

NEXT STEPS/ACTIONS

12. The responsibilities and reporting requirements outlined in the NAHIP Business Plan remain applicable.

Attachment A: Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment Update on relevant activities (excluding surveillance in northern Australia).

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: The Department of Agriculture's current needs are being reasonably met, but see responses above.				

Q2 The outputs of NAHIP, such as the Animal Health in Australia report, Animal Health Surveillance Quarterly and interactive map are credible and robust.				
Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your answer, including any suggested changes: The department and AHA are revising the structure and content of AHIA, favouring more online content. This will allow for additional national surveillance data analysis to be presented annually for agreed diseases e.g. ASF, avian influenza.				

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. The AusPestCheck project is aiming to improve issues with the format and protocols in place for uploading and transferring national surveillance data. If successful, this will create efficiencies in data transfer.				

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: The Department's current needs are being reasonably met, but see responses above.				