

FOR INFORMATION

NAHIP Advisory Committee Annual Meeting 2020

Agenda Item 3.1

Last updated: 4 September 2020

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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

1. 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)
2. 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).
3. NAQS also chairs the Northern Australia Biosecurity Surveillance (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 is currently out for consultation. Once endorsed by the NABF RG, this strategy will set framework for any work completed by the Working Group going forward.
4. NAQS is now managing a 12 month project, running from July 2020 to June 2021, to be 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 has 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.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5. 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).
6. Budget constraints remain one of the most common reasons for NAQS planned surveillance activities being cancelled. NAQS' budget for 2020-21 is yet to be confirmed.

CONSULTATION/COMMUNICATION

7. Not applicable.

NEXT STEPS/ACTIONS

8. Not applicable.

Attachment A: NAQS animal health surveillance activities 2019-20

FEEDBACK

Q1 My organisation's needs and expectations of the NAHIP are being met.				
Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Best for DAWE rep to answer this on behalf of the department.				

Q2 The outputs of NAHIP, such as the Animal Health in Australia report, Animal Health Surveillance Quarterly and the interactive data map are credible and robust.				
Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
For the most part I think AHIA and AHSQ tick the 'credible and robust' box. The omission of feral animal data from reports (e.g. NNDI table in AHSQ) doesn't make any sense to me – surely inclusion of all NNDIs completed, regardless of species, would paint a better picture as to the robustness of Australia's animal health surveillance system. Interactive map does not appear to work (for me at least) so I can't comment on its utility.				

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
We've made some headway over the last 12 months in improving the richness of the data that NAQS submits to NAHIS. The system for managing data is functional but still clunky (but I realise this is not a new issue and I believe may be addressed through AusPestCheck if that progresses).				

Q4 NAHIP satisfies national surveillance data and reporting requirements.				
Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
As far as I am aware – really a Q only relevant to DAWE rep I think.				