

FOR INFORMATION

NSDIP Advisory Committee Virtual Meeting Nov 2025

Agenda Item 1.1

Last updated: **10 November 2025**

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WHA REPORT – NSDI PROGRAM FOR WILDLIFE**RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the NSDIP Advisory Committee NOTES WHA's 2024-25 report on the NSDI Program for wildlife.

BACKGROUND

1. Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) administers the NSDIP wildlife disease investigation funds on behalf of AHA. NSDIP funds also support a sentinel veterinary clinic surveillance network coordinated by WHA.

DISCUSSION**2. Wildlife disease investigations**

The process for NSDIP wildlife disease investigations is as follows:

- WHA and the state/territory WHA coordinator make a joint decision on whether to provide NSDIP funds for an investigation. WHA determines the veterinary subsidy and considers the laboratory subsidy within the context of the national budget.
- On completion of the investigation, payments are made directly from WHA to the veterinarian and the laboratory.
- Funded investigations are entered into the national wildlife health database (eWHIS) and into the NSDIP project of the NAHIS database by WHA.

Summary of funded investigations

In 2024-25, 11 wildlife disease investigations were approved for funding through the NSDIP. There were more than 10 additional enquiries or applications that did not progress, either because they did not meet the NSDIP criteria, or they were approved but could not be completed (e.g. no further cases presented or samples could not be obtained). Samples were submitted to a combination of government, university and private laboratories. Funded investigations were from WA (4 events), Queensland (3), Victoria (2), SA (1) and NSW (1).

Taxonomic group	Number of events	Species
Marsupials	5	Ringtail and western ringtail possums, quokka, eastern grey kangaroos
Marine mammals	1	Humpback whales
Birds	2	Osprey, hooded plover
Amphibians	2	Cane toads, frogs
Reptiles	1	Bearded dragon & carpet python

Presenting syndrome	Number of events
Found dead	3
Skin lesions	3
Nervous signs	2
Ill-thrift/weight loss	1
Increased mortality/Sudden death	1
No suitable syndrome (stranding)	1

Examples of funded investigations include:

- Cane toad mortality
- Blindness in western ringtail possums
- Cluster of humpback whale strandings
- Quokka with skin lesions

Veterinarians have indicated that NSDI Program funds allow investigation of wildlife cases and diagnostic testing that would not otherwise be possible. The program has also improved communication between veterinarians and the state/territory WHA coordinators, particularly for those private veterinarians that are not involved in a WHA surveillance program.

3. Sentinel veterinary clinic surveillance network

WHA continued to manage a wildlife sentinel veterinary clinic surveillance network in 2024-25. Veterinary clinics in the surveillance network are those that have a large or dedicated wildlife caseload, or expand the geographic or species range of the national surveillance system. Eleven clinics participated in 2024-25 for the full year, including two clinics in central NT and northern Tasmania that continued in the program after a trial in the second half of the previous year.

The participating sentinel veterinary clinics see a total caseload of over 37,500 free-ranging wildlife cases per year. The clinics contribute wildlife disease information directly to WHA's national wildlife health database (eWHIS) based on national priorities for data capture. Since the sentinel clinic surveillance program was established in 2014, the clinics have contributed over 1,200 disease events involving over 180 different wildlife species into eWHIS, the majority of which would not have been captured into the national information system without the sentinel clinic surveillance network. The coordinators from the sentinel clinics meet quarterly by teleconference along with the zoo and university wildlife disease surveillance program participants to discuss interesting cases, share information and establish contacts.

Veterinarians at the sentinel clinics have indicated that their participation leads to improved disease investigations because: a) participant funding allows additional diagnostic investigation; b) participation in a national surveillance program provides impetus and justification for spending time on wildlife cases that do not bring in income; and c) significant events can be investigated due to access to NSDIP funds through their ongoing relationship with WHA. The program increases engagement and collaboration between sentinel clinic participants and the state/territory government agency in relation to wildlife disease investigations.

Following a scoping study to explore expansion of the Sentinel Clinic Surveillance Program to engage more broadly with private veterinary practices that see wildlife cases, WHA is working on a pilot project plan (requires funding) and is maintaining momentum with interested vets e.g. presentation accepted for 2026 Australian Veterinary Association conference, news articles for vet audience in development. We are keen to continue engaging with the jurisdictions in relation to this project.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4. *Disease investigations*

In 2024-25, the NSDIP budget for wildlife disease investigations was \$12,046. Almost all (95%) of the budget was utilised, with a small underspend of \$581.

The veterinary subsidies for wildlife disease investigations ranged from \$400 to \$5500 depending on the level of investigation, and laboratory subsidies ranged from \$0 to \$2,653 with an average for those events with lab subsidies of \$945.

5. *Sentinel clinics*

The 2024-25 NSDIP funds of \$12,046 were utilised for payments to clinics for their participation in the sentinel veterinary clinic surveillance network (\$5,000 per clinic).

CONSULTATION/COMMUNICATION

6. N/A

NEXT STEPS/ACTIONS

7. N/A

FEEDBACK

8.

Q1 My organisation's needs and expectations of the NSDIP are being met.				
Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your answer, including any suggested changes: The NSDIP funds are very valuable for enabling wildlife disease investigations and supporting the sentinel veterinary clinic surveillance network. The delegation to WHA of the administration of the NSDIP wildlife funds allows the program to function efficiently and effectively on a national basis.				

Q2 The National Significant Disease Investigation Program has provided opportunities to private veterinarians for gaining the necessary knowledge and skills to investigate and report on disease events.				
Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your answer, including any suggested changes: Through the program, private veterinarians interact with the state/territory WHA Coordinator to discuss appropriate diagnostics and submission of samples, which helps increase their knowledge and strengthens relationships between private vets and the WHA Coordinator, which can lead to better investigations and reporting in future.				

Q3 The National Significant Disease Investigation Program has helped to improve the level of notifiable disease investigations through effective engagement with private veterinarians and assisting in funding investigations that may not have progressed otherwise.				
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Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your answer, including any suggested changes: As above.				