

FOR INFORMATION

NAHIP Advisory Committee Virtual Meeting Oct 2025

Agenda Item 1.1

Last updated: 3 October 2025

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WHA REPORT – SURVEILLANCE ACTIVITIES 2024-25

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the NAHIP Advisory Committee NOTE:
 - a. **The update on surveillance activities by WHA**

BACKGROUND

2. WHA administers Australia's general wildlife health surveillance system, through which wildlife health information is collected into a national database, the electronic Wildlife Health Information System (eWHIS). Information includes reports by our network of State/Territory WHA Coordinators, veterinarians at zoo-based wildlife hospitals, 'sentinel' veterinary clinics and universities, as well as researchers, wildlife rehabilitators, other wildlife health professionals and members of the public. A summary of wildlife disease and mortality events, reported through the system to eWHIS, is published through the NAHIP in each issue of Animal Health Surveillance Quarterly (AHSQ). WHA provides information to help fulfil Australia's reporting requirements to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH). This paper briefly summarises some of the key programs and projects supported by WHA that are of relevance to the NAHIP Advisory Committee.

DISCUSSION**3. Wildlife Health in 2024-2025**

A total of 1,586 wildlife events were submitted to the national eWHIS database between July 2024 and June 2025 (Figure 1), with a wide variety of species reported (Table 1). Significant wildlife disease or related events in 2024-25 included: harmful algal bloom in SA, seasonal migratory shearwater mortalities in multiple states, endemic cutaneous leishmaniasis in captive quokkas in Qld, avian mycobacteriosis in ducks in a wildlife park in Queensland, seasonal recurrence of [lorikeet paralysis syndrome](#) and [flying-fox paralysis syndrome](#) in southern Qld and northern NSW, pigeon paramyxovirus in feral doves in SA, and a human case of Australian bat lyssavirus in northern NSW.

Figure 1: Wildlife disease events in eWHIS from July 1986 – 2025 by financial year (Inset: monthly events).
Total number of events in eWHIS to 30 June 2025: 1,586

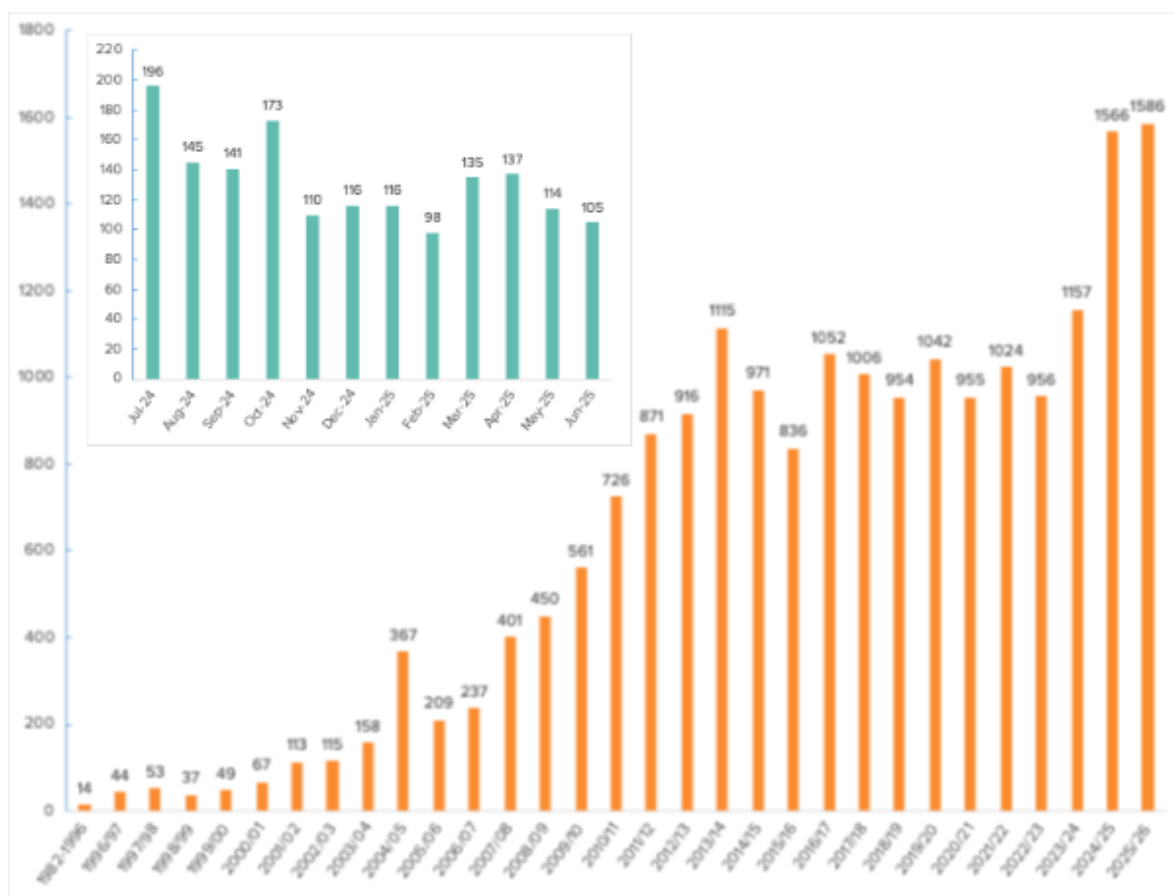


Table 1: Species involved in wildlife disease events^a reported into eWHIS, July 2024-June 2025

Animal Group	Number of eWHIS events
Birds ^b	951
Bats ^c	300
Marsupials	136
Feral mammals	112
Marine Mammals	48
Reptiles	29
Monotremes	10
Fish	4
Amphibians	3
Exotic mammals (captive)	2
Other (sharks & rays, seahorses)	1

^a Disease investigations may involve a single animal or multiple animals e.g. mass mortality events.

^b Increased number of bird events due to enhanced avian influenza surveillance associated with HPAI poultry outbreaks and risk of H5 bird flu

^c The majority of bat disease investigations are single bats submitted for Australian bat lyssavirus testing.

4. Animal Health Surveillance Quarterly

WHA contributes a wildlife health article to AHSQ on an ongoing basis, which includes a summary of wildlife disease investigations, wild bird mortality events including AIV & APMV exclusions, Australian bat lyssavirus data, targeted AIV surveillance through the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program, and any interesting case reports. In 2024-25, case reports included endemic cutaneous leishmaniasis in captive quokkas in Qld, lorikeet and flying-fox paralysis syndromes, Japanese encephalitis in feral pigs in NSW, and pigeon paramyxovirus in feral doves in SA.

5. Programs and Projects

a. General wildlife health surveillance program

The aims of the program are to:

- Identify exotic or emerging diseases and changes to the pattern of endemic diseases
- Determine the occurrence and distribution of wildlife diseases
- Provide data to improve management of disease outbreaks
- Provide data to inform risk analysis, decision making and development of policies
- Provide data to support claims of freedom from specified diseases and to meet Australia's national and international reporting commitments e.g. to the World Organisation for Animal Health.

Deliverables include:

- Monthly entry of significant wildlife cases into eWHIS based on priorities identified for wildlife disease reporting.
- Regular reports for AHSQ, WOA, Animal Health in Australia (AHIA) and others as requested.
- Ad hoc reports, analysis and foresighting as requested by stakeholders.

The program is primarily funded through a cost-shared agreement with the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and all Australian state and territory governments, and receives significant in-kind contributions from our surveillance partners. WHA also receives funding for coordination through the NAHIP.

b. National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Program

WHA is responsible for collation and reporting of surveillance data for avian influenza in wild birds in Australia. National funding is provided by DAFF and is matched by in-kind contributions from many collaborators including Commonwealth and State/Territory government agencies, NAQS, non-government organisations, industry, and universities. In 2024-25 WHA continued to coordinate the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird (NAIWB) Surveillance Program, which is overseen by a Steering Group.

Since July 2005, over 161,200 wild birds have been tested for avian influenza viruses (AIVs), with a subset also tested for avian paramyxovirus 1 (APMV-1). Between July 2024 and June 2025 pathogen-specific, risk-based surveillance was conducted by sampling apparently healthy, live (predominantly waterfowl species) and hunter-shot wild birds at sites in all state and territories and in external Australian territories. In total, over 12,800 faecal environmental, cloacal and oropharyngeal swabs collected from waterbirds were tested for AIVs, with a subset also tested for APMV-1. No high pathogenicity AIVs or strains of APMV-1 have been identified. However, targeted surveillance activities continued to find evidence of low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) viruses, including LPAI H1-H7, H9-H12. The National Avian Influenza Wild Bird Surveillance Newsletter, '[Wild Bird News](#)', makes the results of this program available to the general public.

In response to the threat of H5 bird flu (HPAI H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b) that has been causing outbreaks of disease in wild birds and mammals overseas, enhanced targeted surveillance was undertaken through

the NAIWB program to focus on long distance migratory shorebirds and seabirds. WHA, working with stakeholders, has developed a range of resources that are available on the [WHA website](#).

c. Wild bird mortality and morbidity events

Between July 2024 and June 2025, 951 wild bird mortality/morbidity event investigations were reported to WHA. AIV was excluded by PCR in 852 events. APMV-1 was excluded by PCR specific for Newcastle disease virus and/or pigeon paramyxovirus type 1 in 341 events. Specific disease exclusion testing was not warranted in the remaining events based on clinical signs, history, prevailing environmental conditions, or other diagnoses. The diagnoses for wild bird events included: aspergillosis, avian pox, black and white bird syndrome, botulism, pododermatitis (bumblefoot), *Chlamydia psittaci* infection, coccidiosis, *Macrorhabdus ornithogaster*, neoplasia, *Mycobacterium avium* infection, parasitism, toxicities (pesticides, anticoagulant rodenticides, heavy metal, environmental e.g. algal bloom), pigeon paramyxovirus, photosensitisation, psittacine beak and feather disease, *Salmonella* infection, spironucleosis, trichomoniasis, and *Yersinia pseudotuberculosis* infection. Low pathogenicity avian influenza viruses were detected by PCR in a small number of birds, but were considered incidental findings with no associated disease (see [Wild Bird News](#) for more information).

d. WHA Environment Representatives

In order to further promote collaborative links in the investigation and management of wildlife health, representatives from each jurisdiction's environment agency are included as part of Australia's general wildlife disease surveillance system. Each WHA Environment Representative works closely with their respective WHA Coordinator and ensures a second point of contact in the jurisdiction.

e. Sentinel Surveillance Programs

WHA coordinates a Sentinel Surveillance Program, which includes 10 major zoos, 10 sentinel clinics and 7 universities. The zoo based program is a collaborative project between WHA and the Zoo and Aquarium Association. Sentinel clinics include those with a high or dedicated wildlife caseload, or which expand the geographic or taxonomic range of the national surveillance system. The clinics participating in this surveillance program see over 65,000 free-ranging wildlife cases every year, which represents a significant surveillance effort. Over 5,700 wildlife disease records have been entered into eWHIS by these clinics and organisations since 2010.

f. WHA Bat Health Focus Group

The Bat Health Focus Group, supported by WHA, uses a collaborative One Health approach to consider bat health issues in relation to the broader context of biosecurity, public health, domestic animal health and environmental impacts in Australia. Members come from a wide range of government and non-government organisations. Working with the Bat Health Focus Group, WHA maintains a national dataset of ABLV bat testing, with data contributed into eWHIS by the participants of the surveillance programs described above. Summary reports of ABLV testing of bats are provided in WHA's reports in AHSQ and published in [ABLV Bat Stats](#) every six months.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6. N/A

CONSULTATION/COMMUNICATION

7. N/A

NEXT STEPS/ACTIONS

8. N/A

FEEDBACK

9.

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: No suggested changes to the program. Continued inclusion of a wildlife health article and key wildlife health feature articles in AHSQ and AHiA acknowledges the importance of wildlife in the Australian national animal health surveillance system. These outputs assist in raising awareness of wildlife health issues and disease investigations nationally.				

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: As above.				

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: Unable to comment on the whole, as WHA's only experience is with the NSDI project.				

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: All requirements are met.				