

FOR DISCUSSION

NAHIP Advisory Committee Annual Meeting 2026

Agenda Item 2.2

Last updated: **7 May 2026**

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**Update on relevant activities and issues influencing
Australia's animal health surveillance needs****RECOMMENDATION**

1. That the National Animal Health Information Program (NAHIP) Advisory Committee:
 - a. DISCUSS a process for evaluating the NAHIP against stakeholder needs to identify whether the program is meeting its objectives and address any gaps.
 - b. NOTE the update on action items from the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

BACKGROUND

2. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department) provides an annual paper for the information of the NAHIP advisory Committee to:
 - a. Inform the NAHIP of key issues relevant to the NAHIP program that are influencing Australia's animal health surveillance needs.
 - b. Provide an update for the NAHIP Advisory Committee on relevant activities of the department.
 - c. Confirm out of session advice provided to the committee since the last annual meeting (May 2025) that have implications for reporting of data into the National Animal Health Information System (NAHIS) for the NAHIP program.
3. National-level animal surveillance supports Australia's trade and market access, facilitates early detection of emergency and emerging animal diseases, and enables monitoring of significant endemic diseases.

DISCUSSION

4. Data demonstrating robust surveillance, diagnostics, and absence of disease are required for substantiating Australia's official and self-declared animal health status and to support trade negotiations. Adequate surveillance ensures import policy is science-based, trade is not disrupted, and unnecessary import conditions are not applied to Australian animal-based exports.
5. The department routinely uses outputs from the NAHIP (Animal Health in Australia, and Animal Health Surveillance Quarterly [AHSQ]) as a baseline level of information to demonstrate surveillance effort and exclusions of emergency and nationally notifiable animal diseases in Australia.
6. Trading partners regularly question Australia's self-declared disease status and further surveillance information can be required for international organisations and overseas authorities on request. Existing disease investigation data combined with descriptive information about Australia's animal health system has usually been sufficient to address most queries. Additional information can usually be provided by data custodians (States and Territories, and the Northern Australian Quarantine Strategy [NAQS] with the department) when required. In some instances, the active collection of additional disease testing data has been required to support negotiations; for example, for lumpy skin disease in 2023.

7. The department continues to encounter challenges with the timeliness of data availability in NAHIS due to the verification period for each quarter. With the recent tightening of WOA's prescribed timelines, this has become a particular challenge for the department's reporting obligations for six-monthly reports and annual confirmation of official disease status. For the 2025 annual reconfirmation, the department had to request select surveillance data directly from jurisdictions that were pending verification in the NAHIS.
8. National sources of disease investigation data also remain fragmented and can be duplicated across multiple systems (e.g. NAHIS, the Wildlife Health Information System [eWHIS], and NAQS database).
9. Objective 4 of the National Animal Health Surveillance Plan is: Animal health stakeholders use national surveillance data to take action. Under this objective, the strategy recommends improving surveillance information by identifying and documenting the needs of key stakeholders to inform collection, analysis, presentation and dissemination of surveillance information. The strategy also promotes a strong evaluation culture within the surveillance system.
 - a. The NAHIP business plan includes annual evaluation activities; these are narrow in scope and designed to monitor the program performance against key performance indicators but does not adequately measure the effectiveness of program outcomes.
 - b. Less frequent but more in-depth evaluation would be beneficial to assess the overall value, effectiveness, and outcomes of the program.
 - c. Given the recent implementation of data standards, changes to reporting for some diseases, challenges raised with timeliness of information, and the increasing scrutiny of Australia's animal health status, a more strategic program evaluation in the next 12 months may be beneficial to assess the overall value, effectiveness and outcomes of the program.
 - d. Within the department, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) has been developing a [Manual for General Surveillance Program Design, Monitoring and Evaluation](#). Pilot programs have included the Northern Australia Biosecurity Surveillance network (NABSnet), a program designed to improve animal health surveillance in northern Australia. See **Attachment A**.
 - e. Program evaluation could be undertaken using the methodology developed by ABARES, or alternatively by other established methods or an independent subject matter expert.
10. The department is currently supporting other surveillance evaluation activities, including:
 - a. The Screw Worm Fly Surveillance and Preparedness Program (SWFSPP): A structured evaluation is being undertaken to assess the design and performance of current surveillance activities, focusing is on reviewing surveillance activities, data sources and underlying assumptions to support the program continuing to meet its scientific objectives.
 - b. A quantitative evaluation of the performance of general surveillance for lumpy skin disease for providing evidence of freedom from disease and sensitivity for early detection in the event of an incursion. This evaluation is being conducted by Animal Health Committee's National Veterinary Epidemiology and Surveillance Advisory Group and supports the National LSD Surveillance Strategy.
11. Since the May 2025 NAHIP Advisory Committee Meeting, the department provided the following advice to the NAHIP Advisory Committee:
 - a. The reporting of bovine brucellosis by syndrome and number of animals tested should be retained.
 - b. The reporting of high pathogenicity avian influenza by number of birds tested should be retained where possible.
 - c. The reporting of disease investigations instead of numbers of animals tested is supported for equine herpes virus 1 (EHV1), equine infectious anaemia (EIA), and equine viral arteritis (EVA). From a trade perspective there would be no reason to report the EHV-1 syndromes separately. The number of investigations for EHV-1, EIA and EVA could therefore be listed in the national notifiable animal disease investigations table in AHSQ, rather than separately.

- d. The reporting of only virulent Newcastle Disease investigations into NAHIP and replacing number of birds tested with number of investigations/lab submissions is supported.
 - e. The removal of Varroa mite reporting to the NAHIP is supported with a comment to be made in AHSQ to the effect that eradication was determined to no longer be achievable, and that further information can be found at www.varroa.org.au/reporting.
 - f. The removal of *Cysticercus bovis* reporting to the NAHIP is not supported due to potential trade implications. Outputs from the NAHIP have been used by the department to support trade negotiations with several trading partners. The department acknowledges that clinical disease will not be seen in cattle antemortem but requests the reporting requirement be retained.
12. The department has implemented quarterly reporting of negative Japanese Encephalitis Virus (JEV) data from NAHIS to share in confidence with signatories of the National JEV Memorandum of Understanding for Data Sharing. Only verified data will be shared.
13. Internal consultation is planned to provide advice to the NAHIP Advisory Committee as per outstanding action items:
- a. The scope of the NAHIP Nationally Notifiable Diseases project and the inclusion of Salmonella enteritidis, given its lack of clinical disease.
 - b. Determine whether the New and Emerging Disease project is still necessary to support international requirements, and if any adjustments are required.
 - c. The inclusion of bee diseases.
 - d. Any gaps in the AHSQ quarterly statistics and data sections following recent updates, and if adjustments are required to meet reporting and surveillance needs.

CONSULTATION/COMMUNICATION

14. Relevant areas of the department were consulted in relation to the activates outlined in this paper.

NEXT STEPS/ACTIONS

15. NAHIP Advisory Committee to consider undertaking a comprehensive program evaluation.

Attachment A: *Overview of the ABARES General Surveillance Program Manual*