

Second Meeting
Geneva, 6-10 December 2004

Meeting of Experts
Geneva, 19-30 July 2004
Items 5 and 6 of the agenda

Disease Surveillance in Australia: A animal Diseases

Submitted by Australia

I Introduction

1. Given Australia's large agricultural sector, Australia has long been active nationally and internationally to limit the risk of incursion of animal diseases, or outbreaks of other emergency animal diseases. Australian Commonwealth, State and Territory governments all recognise that disease surveillance and reporting is a major function of their animal health services.

II Components of Disease Surveillance

2. Australia's disease surveillance the system is carefully designed, nationally coordinated, has an established funding base and has been extensively reviewed and upgraded in light of the lessons learned from the FMD outbreak in the UK in 2001. The animal industries have a large role in policy formulation and implementation. The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) is the coordinating Federal agency, and policy decisions are approved through a hierarchy of committees operating under Ministerial Council. Animal Health Australia is a private-not-for-profit company that provides national coordination. State and Territory Governments are responsible for all animal health matters within their borders. The Commonwealth is responsible for national border quarantine systems and policies, offshore initiatives, operation of the national veterinary laboratory, and is responsible for international reporting to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

III Intentional Outbreaks of Disease

3. The Australian surveillance and response systems for animal diseases act to detect and respond to outbreaks regardless of whether they are natural or intended. An epidemiological

analysis may be able to determine whether an animal disease outbreak was intended or not, although if the disease was exotic, it would initially be seen as suspicious. Mechanisms for police and law enforcement agency interaction with animal health authorities are currently being developed in the event of a suspicious outbreak of animal disease.

IV Utilising Existing International Frameworks

4. Animal disease surveillance, reporting and control measures are well-established in many countries, and sophisticated surveillance and response systems have evolved in some with the changing economic threats posed by naturally occurring outbreaks of emergency animal diseases. International standards on disease surveillance and transparent reporting have been developed by the OIE and are recognised under the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement within the WTO to support trade obligations. Australia recognises that work under the BWC to focus on animal disease surveillance should rely on existing standards and recommendations wherever possible, rather than 'reinventing the wheel'. Australia's contributions to regional cooperation in global animal disease-control efforts have been outlined in the Australian paper: *"Improving Regional Surveillance Efforts: Animal Health? Australia's Contribution"*.

V Further Details

5. Details of investigations and responses to outbreaks and suspected outbreaks of emergency animal disease are published annually in the Animal Health in Australia Report (<http://www.aahc.com.au/status/ahiareport/index.htm>). The annual report also outlines Australia's national disease control system, and describes Australia's interaction with the OIE. Links to chapters of interest from the report follow.

6. Other details on Animal Health issues in Australia may be found either on the Animal Health Australia (<http://www.aahc.com.au>) or DAFF (<http://www.daff.gov.au>) web sites, or requested by email from ocvo@daff.gov.au

7. Attachment 1 Animal Health in Australia 2003, Chapter 3, Animal Disease Surveillance http://www.aahc.com.au/status/ahiareport/2003/Animal_disease_surveillance.pdf

8. Attachment 2 1 Animal Health in Australia 2003, Chapter 6, Managing Animal Health Emergencies http://www.aahc.com.au/status/ahiareport/2003/Managing_animal_health_emergencies1.pdf
