



Animal Health Committee

ahc@aff.gov.au

02 6272 5830

VET COMMUNIQUÉ

Animal Health Committee (AHC) provides veterinary leadership and technical expertise for Australia's animal health system. AHC includes the Australian, state and territory chief veterinary officers (CVOs), and the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP); with Animal Health Australia (AHA), Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) and New Zealand Ministry for Primary Industries (NZ MPI) as observers. AHC met for its second face-to-face (F2F) meeting of 2024 in Adelaide on 3 to 5 September 2024 (AHC46). The next AHC F2F meeting will be March 2025 in NSW.

AHC workplan

AHC confirmed its 2024 strategic priorities to improve Australia's preparedness and response capacity for emergency animal diseases and to improve Australia's animal health surveillance, diagnostic and data capabilities. AHC reviewed progress in delivering its 2024 workplan and identified priorities for its forward work plan. AHC's role in providing leadership on objectives identified in key national strategies and action plans was discussed, including Animalplan.

HPAI response and preparedness

HPAI response and preparedness continues to be a high priority for AHC. The response to HPAI H7 outbreaks in Victoria, NSW and ACT continue. AHC discussed lessons learned from the outbreak responses including the importance of communication, government-industry relationship, costs of response activities and technical skillsets, and resourcing needs. AHC is also progressing several activities relating to HPAI H5 preparedness – 3D capabilities and vaccine policy for potential vaccination of rare, threatened, valuable collections of birds are high priorities.

LSD National Action Plan

AHC is progressing its activities under the [National LSD Action Plan](#). These include developing a national LSD surveillance strategy and a national LSD vaccination strategy and exploring point of care testing options.

Exercise Waterhole

A key achievement for AHC's Subcommittee for Animal Health Laboratory Standards was the completion of Exercise Waterhole and release of the recommendations. In response to the recommendations, AHC has identified national barcoding for sample submissions and IT enhancements needed for [STARS](#) as a priority.

Point of Care Testing (POCT)

The POCT Task Group has progressed key policy issues including nationally consistent definition of POCT, circumstances for when POCT can be used and five overarching principles on the application of POCT. Next steps are validation of overarching principles and completion of the work by the end of 2024.

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

AMR will be a key priority for AHC in 2025 with the establishment of the AHC AMR Task Group. The task group will identify high priority activities from the Australia's Animal Sector AMR Action Plan and provide government leadership for these activities.

Veterinary workforce challenges

Veterinary workforce challenges remain critical following the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Veterinary Workforce Shortages and the recent Veterinary Workforce Roundtable hosted by the Office of the Australian Chief Veterinary Officer. AHC discussed its leadership role on this important issue including ways that governments can collaborate with the veterinary profession on veterinary workforce data and governance that was agreed to at the roundtable.

Stakeholder session

AHC held a stakeholder session with representatives from poultry, cattle and dairy industries, local South Australian enterprises and veterinary bodies. Key topics raised by participants were how communications in an EAD outbreak could be improved to ensure rapid responses, while maintaining privacy and reporting obligations, importance of the Liaison – Livestock Industry (LLI) role during an EAD response and wildlife surveillance for HPAI.