



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 systems. AHC includes the Australian, state and territory chief veterinary officers (CVOs), and the CSIRO's 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. The committee reports to the National Biosecurity Committee.

AHC met for its first face-to-face (F2F) meeting of 2024 in Melbourne on 12-14 March 2024 (AHC45). The meeting was chaired by Dr Beth Cookson, Australian CVO (ACVO), with all members represented.

### **AHC membership changes**

AHC welcomed new permanent members, Dr Beth Cookson, ACVO and Dr Elise Spark, SA CVO.

### **Animalplan 2022 to 2027**

The Chair of the Animalplan steering committee provided an update on Animalplan 2022 to 2027, with a focus on AHC's role in engaging with the plan. AHC noted its continuing commitment to support Animalplan objectives. AHC and Animalplan secretariat will hold a workshop to review AHC's priority areas and consider progressing this year's activities.

### **Five-year review of the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA) – next steps**

AHA provided an update on the progress on the five-year review of the EADRA. AHC acknowledged AHA's significant efforts to progress the review. AHC will continue supporting AHA through the categorisation working group as the next part of the EADRA implementation work plan.

### **Preparedness for high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI)**

The Commonwealth facilitated a session on HPAI preparedness with presentations from the Commonwealth, Tasmania, Victoria, WHA and NZ MPI. AHC agreed to continue prioritising HPAI preparedness activities, recognising the global situation and significance of the changing virus epidemiology. AHC will hold a dedicated workshop to consider short-term priority areas.

Victoria hosted an [HPAI-themed field trip](#) to Werribee. AHC visited an egg producer and the Ramsar Wetlands at the Western Treatment Plant for an overview of wild bird surveillance methods.

### **Joint AHC- Industry session**

The joint AHC-industry session was very well attended, both in-person and online. The Commonwealth presented on Australia's Animal Sector Antimicrobial Resistance Action Plan and considerations on zoning for international trade and biosecurity. Australian SPF Services presented on the specific pathogen free (SPF) egg supply in Australia for poultry vaccine manufacturing.

AHC and industry participated in an open forum discussion which covered a range of topics including veterinary workforce issues and engaging private veterinary practitioners in an EAD response.

### **AUSPestCheck® Animal Project**

AHC noted the timeline for delivery of the AUSPestCheck® Animal Project and the timing of critical milestones and dependencies such as the finalisation of data sharing documentation. Based on this timeline, data will be transitioned onto AUSPestCheck® to enable quarterly reporting to be completed by early May.

### **AHC subcommittee and task/advisory group achievements**

AHC received updates from its sub-committees and task/advisory groups on key activities and achievements, including completing Exercise Waterhole.

Two AHC task groups are approaching completion—The National Framework for Engagement of Private Veterinary Practitioners Task Group and the National Notifiable Disease List for Terrestrial Animals Criteria Review Task Group. Congratulations and many thanks to the Chairs and members for their involvement and efforts in finalising the outcomes of these groups.

### **Reporting incidents of potential national interest**

AHC discussed processes for reporting incidents of potential national interest to the ACVO. These processes will be regularly reviewed to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose and support national coordination and Australia's international obligations.