

Statement of Biosecurity Policies and Programs for Tasmania

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This statement of biosecurity policy and programs is provided in accordance with clause 14 (b) (ii) of the Government and Livestock Industry Cost Sharing Deed In Respect Of Emergency Animal Disease Responses.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Tasmanian Government, through the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment (DPIWE), has in place comprehensive biosecurity policies, programs and procedures aimed at maintaining Tasmania's freedom from pests and diseases that could adversely impact on trade, public health and food safety, market access, the rural economy and the environment.

The Government maintains infrastructure and provides resources to prevent, detect, manage and respond to serious animal diseases. Tasmania also has in place an emergency management framework that ensures an effective whole-of-government response to outbreaks of emergency animal diseases that have evaded Australia's quarantine barrier or are newly emerged.

By implementing stringent quarantine policy Tasmania has capitalised on its island status to restrict the entry of disease pathogens. As an island the natural movement of wild and feral animals into the state is prevented. The limited number of ports ensures that entry of domestic animals can be adequately monitored and supervised. During 2002 there was an increase in interstate livestock trade and increased tourism associated with more frequent ferry services, which has emphasised the importance of biosecurity measures at ports of entry.

Animal biosecurity programs are underpinned by contemporary legislation which has been assessed against nationally agreed critical success factors, and shown to provide an appropriate range of specific and general legislative measures and powers to deal with prevention, monitoring, control and eradication of animal diseases and pests. There are some areas of this legislation requiring minor clarification and amendments to achieve this will be progressed during 2003.

Biosecurity programs for animal diseases are managed by the Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Division of DPIWE. Branches within this division are responsible for the development and implementation of policies on barrier control, animal health and welfare, emergency animal disease response, meat hygiene and management of vertebrate pests.

Tasmanian legislation specified in this document can be accessed on the web at: www.thelaw.tas.gov.au

2. ANIMAL DISEASE PREVENTION AND SURVEILLANCE PROGRAMS

The DPIWE implements a number of policies and programs that are primarily aimed at reducing the risk of incursions of an Emergency Animal Disease, including programs of barrier control, prevention of high risk activities and disease surveillance.

2.1 Barrier control

The DPIWE through its Quarantine Branch provides staff to carry out national quarantine restrictions under the direction of the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), and also state quarantine requirements. Improved threat identification and communication assists AQIS and the DPIWE to ensure that the entry, establishment and spread into Tasmania of exotic pests and diseases is minimised.

Quarantine Branch staff based at ports of entry implement restrictions on movements of animals and animal products from other states of Australia into Tasmania to keep out a number of diseases and pests that exist in other states but not in Tasmania.

2.2 Prevention

Specific emergency disease prevention programs operate in Tasmania. The two most important of these involve compliance programs for the prevention of feeding swill to pigs, and for the prevention of feeding restricted animal materials to ruminants.

Swill Feeding

Tasmania has strict legislation prohibiting the feeding to pigs of **placental** mammalian-derived material such as food wastes etc. Compliance activities and regular audits are undertaken by animal health field staff in all regions. Awareness and education programs also operate targeting producers, pig owners and possible sources of swill such as hotels and supermarkets.

Prosecutions are mounted where non-compliance is detected. The issuing of on the spot fines will be explored during drafting amendments to the *Animal Health Act*.

Ruminant Feed Ban

Compliance with the ban on feeding restricted animal materials to ruminants is an on-going activity of the State's animal health services, demonstrated by extensive and on-going audits. Education and audit activities are directed at renderers, stock feed manufacturers, wholesale and retail outlets and at farm level end users of manufactured stock feed.

2.3 Surveillance Programs

Early detection is essential to ensure the impacts from outbreaks of disease are minimised. DPIWE operates animal health field and laboratory services, which form part of DPIWE's Food Agriculture and Fisheries Division's core business.

Animal disease surveillance programs are delivered by the Animal Health and Welfare Branch that comprises 12 veterinary staff supported by seven stock officers. Accredited private veterinary practitioners are involved in Johne's disease control programs.

Competency based training courses are held for practitioners on a regular basis. These focus on disease recognition and early detection of new and exotic diseases, State and National disease reporting and emergency disease response arrangements. A process is underway to increase involvement of private veterinary practitioners in emergency animal disease preparedness, routine disease surveillance and disease control through development of contractual arrangements.

Animal health laboratory services are provided through the DPIWE Animal Health Laboratory in Launceston where four veterinary pathologists and associated staff provide a diagnostic service for terrestrial livestock and aquaculture.

General (passive) surveillance involves continuous observation of a given population to detect the occurrence of disease. It covers all diseases, in all species (including wildlife and feral animals as well as livestock), in all locations. This type of surveillance is achieved through a network consisting of:

- producers and others in close contact with livestock being alert for unusual or significant disease events and promptly reporting such events to a veterinarian;
- veterinarians (Government and private) being available and competent to soundly investigate reported cases; and
- diagnostic laboratory to analyse samples and conduct appropriate tests to reach a diagnosis.

Disease notification (Statutory obligation to report diseases)

Diseases of significance to Tasmania are listed as List A or List B diseases under the *Animal Health Act*. These lists, based on the nationally agreed list of reportable diseases, are reviewed and published annually in July by the Chief Veterinary Officer. The lists include all diseases listed under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement. List A is comprised of diseases exotic to Australia or significant diseases exotic to Tasmania, which may be present in other States. List B is comprised of diseases present in Australia for which a control or monitoring program exists, diseases of special significance for export, or zoonotic diseases of human health significance.

A person who suspects that a List A or List B disease may be present in livestock is required to report this as soon as possible to a State Government Veterinary Officer or Stock Inspector. In addition to this the *Animal Health Act* requires the reporting of New diseases which are diseases other than a List A or List B disease that the person

believes does not normally occur in Tasmania. There are also requirements under the Act for an Unknown disease in which case a person suspecting a disease which they can not identify must either engage a veterinary surgeon to investigate the disease or report it to an inspector. Legislative amendments specifying reporting times with respect to the various categories of disease are being proposed to ensure reporting and responses reflect the nature of infectious diseases.

Targeted (specific) surveillance involves examination of carefully selected animals to determine their status for a specified disease(s) over a defined time period. This frequently involves structured surveys of animals in their environment but may also include other activities such as examination of animals at abattoirs. Targeted surveillance activities in Tasmania include: NAMP; TSE; EBL; NGSP, Johne's disease and Echinococcus granulosus.

2.4 Livestock Identification

Livestock identification to facilitate an effective traceback system is fundamental to the management of animal disease control programs. Animal identification requirements are regulated through the *Animal (Brands and Movements) Act 1984* and *Animal (Brands and Movement) Regulations 1986*.

In Tasmania mandatory animal identification requirements are that cattle presented for sale or slaughter must have a tail tag, ear tag, NLIS tag or bolus carrying the identification number of the property of origin, and that pigs over the age of 10 weeks presented for sale or slaughter must be tattooed with a registered tattoo.

All cattle entering Tasmania from another state, other than for slaughter within three days, are required to be identified with an electronic NLIS device.

Registered earmarks are used to identify sheep and cattle over six months of age. Tasmania is encouraging the adoption of the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) and the National Flock Identification System (NFIS). Currently approved devices can be used on a voluntary basis. Legislative amendments are being made so that NLIS and/or NFIS can be made compulsory if appropriate at some future date.

3. ANIMAL DISEASE PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PROGRAMS

The Tasmanian Government through DPIWE has an excellent emergency management capability developed through it being the lead response agency for emergency animal and plant disease outbreaks.

A high level of emergency animal disease preparedness exists, key elements of which include:

- Detailed pre-agreed response plans are in place to enable an immediate coordinated response to an emergency animal disease outbreak.

AUSVETPLAN is a coordinated national response plan for the control and eradication of emergency animal diseases such as FMD. AUSVETPLAN comprises a series of strategies for diseases, and a series of operational and management manuals providing a uniform national approach to control and eradication of emergency disease.

- The State of Tasmania is a signatory to nationally agreed arrangements to share the costs of an emergency response, thereby ensuring that debate about funding issues does not occur to delay an effective response.
- Tasmania has the necessary legislation in place to effect the necessary disease control measures to deal with an outbreak.
- Tasmanian emergency management arrangements ensure a multi-agency response involving all relevant agencies (such as SES, Police, Department of Premier & Cabinet and Local Government).
- DPIWE animal health staff are trained in emergency animal disease recognition and response:
 - most veterinary staff have attended the AAHL training course on recognition of emergency diseases in animals;
 - all animal health staff and selected other DPIWE staff participate in training to meet agreed national competency standards in Emergency Animal Disease Preparedness (EADP);
 - many staff have direct experience in handling emergency diseases responses arising from interstate outbreaks of anthrax, avian influenza, Newcastle disease, and from the recent FMD outbreak in the UK;
 - animal health staff are available to immediately investigate any suspicion of an emergency animal disease.
- DPIWE has a strong frontline veterinary diagnostic capability within the DPIWE Animal Health Laboratory, with the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (Geelong) available for rapid referral of suspect samples for specialised emergency disease diagnosis.
- DPIWE and the Tasmanian Division of the Australian Veterinary Association are working to develop contractual arrangements to increase practitioner involvement in animal disease surveillance and to allow rapid employment of private veterinary practitioners to assist in an emergency disease response.

The *Animal Health Act 1995* provides a broad range of specific and general measures and powers to deal with the prevention, monitoring and eradication of both endemic and emergency animal diseases. The legislation was reviewed as comprehensively delivering nationally agreed critical success factors essential to mounting an effective emergency animal disease response. Appropriate powers for search, entry, decontamination, destruction and compensation are provided. There are some areas of this legislation requiring minor clarification and amendments to achieve this will be

progressed during 2003. This Act is supported by the *Animal Health Regulations 1996* and the *Animal Health (Apiaries) Regulations 2001*.

Tasmania's emergency management legislation, the *Emergency Services Act 1976*, provides a framework for a whole-of-government approach to planning, preparedness, operational coordination and community participation in an emergency response, including the response to an emergency animal disease. Activation of a declared state under this legislation can provide powers in addition to those already in the *Animal Health Act 1995*, such as the ability to control the movement of people, to assist in control of an emergency animal disease.

4. VERTEBRATE PESTS (FERAL ANIMALS)

The major feral animal pest in Tasmania is the rabbit. There is no significant problem with feral ruminants apart from wild fallow deer, and feral pigs only exist in low numbers on Flinders Island. Foxes have recently been detected in Tasmania and a Fox Task Force is established to undertake surveillance and control procedures aimed at eradication of this pest.

In Tasmania the landholder (private and public) has responsibility for controlling specified vermin on their land. Under the *Vermin Control Act 2000*, rabbits and foxes are the only species currently defined as vermin. The DPIWE administers this legislation through the Wild Animal Management Unit in relation to rabbits, and the Nature Conservation Branch in relation to the recently detected incursion of foxes.

In view of the role wild fallow deer may play in an exotic disease incursion, a formal population control policy for this species is required.

Wallaby control is undertaken for forestry and crop protection in accordance with permit provisions under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002*. These provisions would also be used for any native wildlife control program required as part of the response to an emergency animal disease. The DPIWE manages the use of poisons for rabbits and wallaby control.

The use of leg hold traps is banned under the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*, however the Minister can issue permits in exceptional circumstances.

Freshwater fish pests are managed by the Inland Fisheries Commission who administer legislation (*Inland Fisheries Act 1995*) which enables the prevention of entry of pest species and the control of introduced pests such as European carp.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

A close relationship has been developed between the Animal Health and Welfare Branch and the Environment Division of DPIWE to facilitate resolution of environmental issues associated with emergency animal disease response, especially in relation to carcass disposal.

Establishments such as abattoirs, dairy factories, feed lots, fish processing plants and sewage treatment works require an environmental permit issued under the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994*. An environmental impact assessment is needed before such a permit is issued.

The location of dairy farms, piggeries etc are controlled by local government, through the *Land Use (Planning and Approvals) Act 1993*. Local government can refer issues to the Environment Division for assessment and permit on a case by case basis.

Dairy effluent is covered under the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994*. All waste generated on a dairy farm is required to be retained on the property and must not escape into the greater environment. Dairy effluent management is required to meet the standard described in *Effluent Management Guidelines for Dairy Farms 1997*.

6. PUBLIC HEALTH

6.1 Meat Safety

All operators processing any animals for the production of meat are required to meet Australian National Standards and to have in place Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) based quality assurance systems, which are audited by the DPIWE.

It is a requirement of the HACCP systems for operators to verify they are achieving the required outcomes by conducting microbiological monitoring of ready to eat smallgoods and carcasses, the results of which are monitored, and corrective action implemented if required.

Export meat works

Tasmania has three export registered establishments. These are regulated by AQIS via the (*Commonwealth*) *Export Control Act 1982* and *Export Meat Orders 1985*. These works are required to operate according to Meat Safety Quality Assurance (MSQA) systems as audited by AQIS, and are deemed to be licensed under Tasmanian legislation.

Combined annual throughput for 2000/01 of 140 000 cattle, 21 000 calves, 44 000 sheep and 75 000 lambs.

Domestic meat premises

Tasmania has 31 domestic licensed meat premises and five premises licensed to process poultry. These are regulated by DPIWE via the Tasmanian *Meat Hygiene Act 1985* and *Meat Hygiene Regulations 1986*, incorporating relevant Australian Standards. The Standards require adherence to procedures for the handling of animals affected, or suspected of being affected, by contagious or notifiable disease. This includes associated animals, carcasses and carcase parts.

All licensed meat premises are required to operate according to approved quality assurance (QA) programs. These programs are audited by DPIWE's Meat Hygiene Standards Section certified food safety auditors. Frequency of audits is based on

market access and the level of food safety risk of the operation. Meat premises QA manuals include a section on procedures in the event of the detection of an exotic or notifiable disease. This covers aspects of discovery and notification of the disease, stoppage of production, isolation procedures, traceback and disinfection.

Combined annual throughput for 2000/01 of 33 000 cattle, 29 000 calves, 330 000 sheep, 320 000 lambs, 59 000 pigs and 5.55 million poultry.

Pet Food works

Pet food works are regulated by DPIWE via the *Meat Hygiene Act 1985* and *Meat Hygiene Regulations 1986*. Regulations require that product is identified to distinguish it from meat for human consumption.

6.2 Milk Safety

Dairy food safety is regulated under the *Dairy Industries Act 1994*, which is administered by the Tasmanian Dairy Industry Authority.

Dairy farms must comply with regulations with regard to location of the dairy, construction standards, effluent discharge, yard construction, equipment cleaning and milk cooling standards. Requirements are set out in the Code of Practice for Effluent Management 1997 and Code of Practice for Farm Dairy Premises 1998 under the Act.

Dairy processors have in place HACCP quality assurance systems that include microbiological monitoring of milk supplies and milk products. In addition to requirements of the *Dairy Industry Act*, dairy factories are monitored by the Department of Health and Human Services to ensure food safety standards comply with the *Food Act 1998*.

6.3 Zoonotic diseases

From 1962 to 1996 Tasmania mounted a control program for Hydatid disease resulting in provisional freedom from the disease. To maintain this status dogs entering Tasmania are treated for Hydatids and imported sheep and cattle are identified so that they can be differentiated and monitored at slaughter.

Tasmania participates in the National programs monitoring for BSE and tuberculosis in livestock.

DPIWE maintains a close liaison with the Department of Health and Human Services which facilitates cooperation on investigation and response to zoonotic diseases such as chlamydiosis and salmonellosis. A range of zoonotic diseases of human significance are included in the list of reportable diseases under the *Animal Health Act 1995*.

The Chief Veterinary Officer and the Director of Public Health are developing a Memorandum of Understanding to exchange information to facilitate early and

appropriate response to public health events. The Memorandum would also ideally nominate the appropriate contact persons for individual issues.

Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, Tasmania