

MEMBERS' FORUM REPORT

24 SEPTEMBER 2024

ITEM ONE

Welcome and CEO Address

Jackie Poyser, Animal Health Australia's (AHA) General Manager, Member Engagement and Strategy (Acting) and Forum Facilitator, welcomed members to the first forum for September 2024 and introduced Dr Samantha Allan, AHA Chief Executive Officer.

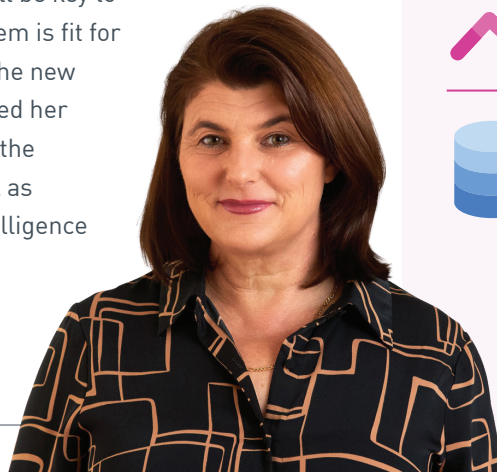
Samantha expressed her gratitude to the members for their attendance and shared several key achievements, challenges, and priorities.

What's on the horizon for AHA:

1. A major focus on developing AHA's new strategic plan.
2. Outcomes from the review of the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA).

Members raised excellent questions regarding the support AHA needs to ensure the database system is future-proof and asking Samantha what her priorities are as incoming new AHA CEO.

Samantha emphasised that an independent review and collaboration will be key to ensuring the database system is fit for purpose for the future. As the new AHA CEO, she also expressed her commitment to overseeing the evolution of EADRA, as well as exploring how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be leveraged to enhance biosecurity at a national level.



Dr Samantha Allan
CEO

Key Wins



The successful 3rd Australian Biosecurity Symposium, which featured the launch of the Biosecurity Youth Summit in partnership with the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. Feedback from members has been collected and will be shared with the management committee.



The completion of ParaBoss Phase III last quarter.



Liaison Livestock Industry course is now live and available for members.

Challenges



Biosecurity threats have increased greatly in the last five years.



Issues surrounding the surveillance database system, to ensure it is future focused, flexible and adaptable to incorporate historical data and also emerging technologies such as machine learning and artificial intelligence. Samantha noted that strong progress was being made in finalising a solution.

ITEM TWO

AHA Board Chair address

Sharon Starick expressed her appreciation for the discussions during the CEO's morning session and provided an update on the AHA Constitution Review.

- The constitution review was conducted to ensure the constitution is fit for purpose and up to date.
- Outlined the items that the board and management chose to retain or remove from the constitution, based on the feedback received from members and the outcomes of the review.

ITEM THREE

Industry Forum update

1 Dr Mary Wu was re-elected as Chair of the Industry Forum.

2 Strategic priorities for FY25 will build on last year's activities, with additional focus on:

- Engaging in discussions and providing feedback to the government
- Sectoral preparedness and planning
- Aligning with national frameworks
- Contributing to the Biosecurity Committee
- Increasing engagement and collaboration with the Animal Health Committee

3 In terms of data management options, Industry Forum members did not support migrating to AUSPESTCHECK. They requested an independent review to analyse risks and challenges, aiming for a co-designed process to develop the final solution.

4 Key learnings and challenges from HPAI H7 highlighted that additional work needs to be undertaken to address the increasing presence of global threats.

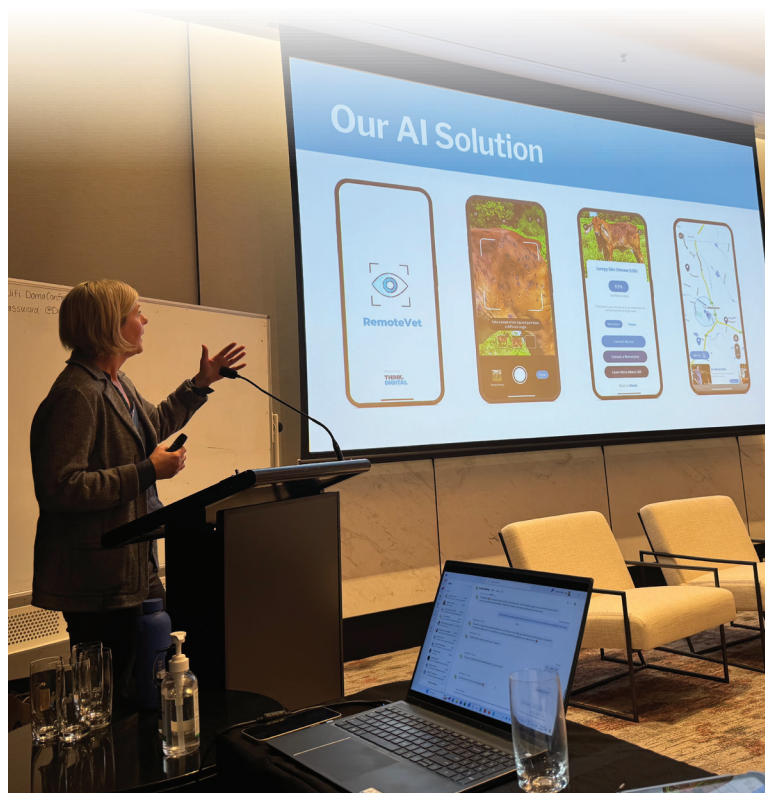
5 A major topic for the next meeting will be assessing whether current biosecurity budgets are fit for purpose.

ITEM FOUR

Think Digital presentation on extended reality applications for the animal biosecurity system

Kat Bidstrup, Chief Executive Officer of Think.Digital, shared recent work experiences in the biosecurity space.

- Collaborating with the Department of Primary Industries and Regions South Australia (PIRSA) and AHA, Think.Digital delivered innovative projects which included:
 - » deploying a 3D model on desktop computers to help understand sheep carcass conditions.
 - » creating an Augmented Reality application to identify early signs of emergency animal diseases (EAD) in sheep.
- For Australian Eggs, they developed a virtual tour for workers, accessible on mobile devices, to assist with onboarding, induction, and biosecurity training.
- Kat also introduced – RemoteVet, a newly developed real-time tool that predicts potential EAD cases and advises contacting the nearest veterinarian. It is currently being tested with QDAF on buffalo fly.



ITEM FIVE

AnimalPlan update

Tanya Pittard, General Manager of Policy and Industry Relations at Australian Pork, shared the vision, objectives, and provided an update on current status of AnimalPlan.

Current Focus

1

Supporting livestock industry stakeholders in progressing key projects, including crisis management planning, biosecurity planning, and communications.

2

Facilitating a workshop with Animal Health Committee members to identify their priorities.

3

Regularly updating the plan based on national and jurisdictional activities.

4

Hosting a webinar in October 2024 aimed at helping stakeholders understand how priorities are set by the government and industry.

[VIEW PRESENTATION HERE](#)



ITEM SIX

One Health approach within the interim Australian Centre for Disease Control (iCDC)

- Dr. Sarah Britton, Director One Health, iCDC, shared the iCDC embodies a One Health approach by integrating human health, animal health, and environmental health. This holistic framework recognises that the health of people is closely connected to the health of animals and the environment.

- She shared the iCDC, launched in early 2024 and explained how it interacts with animal industries and existing arrangements. Current activities / initiatives of iCDC include:
 - » The formation of the Health Security Unit and the One Health Unit.
 - » Horizon scanning to identify potential health threats, developing surveillance plans, and governance frameworks to manage health issues effectively.
 - » Conducting situational analyses to inform the development of a national One Health action plan.
- Sarah also outlined AHA and its members can actively collaborate with the iCDC through partnerships, contribution to research and data sharing, involvement in task forces, adopting and promoting biosecurity best practices, and by providing feedback on the effectiveness of implemented strategies and frameworks can help iCDC refine its approaches and address sector-specific concerns.

ITEM SEVEN

The Department's Statement of Strategic Intent

- Justine Saunders, Deputy Secretary of the Biosecurity Operations and Compliance Group, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), presented the department's Statement of Strategic Intent, and outlined DAFF's vision for a more sustainable and prosperous Australia driven by biosecurity, production, and trade.
- Justine shared DAFF's transformation program for the livestock sector means:
 - » Reduced Disease Outbreaks
 - » Market Confidence and Access
 - » Increased Resilience

[VIEW PRESENTATION HERE](#)



ITEM EIGHT

AUSVETPLAN update

Dr Mark Cozens, General Manager Emergency Preparedness, Animal Health and Biosecurity, AHA (previously Head of Program – Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan (AUSVETPLAN), AHA) provided an update on AUSVETPLAN manuals, addressed challenges, and discussed future work.

- Mark reported that several manuals, including those on Avian Influenza, African Swine Fever, destruction of animals, disposal, and livestock welfare and management, are progressing well, though some are taking longer than expected. He expressed appreciation to the Australian Lot Feeders Association for their leadership in the Beef Cattle Feedlots manual, which was recently published.
- Mark also highlighted that the Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) manual is scheduled for review under the 2024 – 25 work plan. He sought members' views on whether the PPR manual should be swapped with another or if its review should be paused. The consensus in the room was to proceed with the PPR manual, given the increased overseas risks, and to swap it with the Surra manual.
- He noted that reaching consensus across industries, governments, and jurisdictions has become increasingly challenging due to polarised opinions, which has led to delays in manual approvals. The complexity of the manuals and concerns about them becoming overly operationalised adds to the challenges.

ITEM NINE

H5N1: Update from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Luke Osborne, Head of the H5N1 Taskforce DAFF, provided an update on Australia's efforts to maintain its status as the only continent free from H5N1 High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (HPAI). He outlined the Australian Government's leadership in national preparedness initiatives, which include:

- The establishment of the HPAI taskforce.

- A \$6.9 million investment aimed at accelerating preparedness activities. This funding supports national exercises, technical analysis, the exploration of innovations such as commercial vaccines, and collaboration with international partners, particularly in North America, to strengthen Australia's biosecurity systems.
- The preparedness exercise **Volare**, which tested Australia's response capabilities, demonstrated the strength of existing national arrangements while identifying areas for improvement, especially in managing wildlife infections.
- Luke emphasised the importance of shared responsibility for biosecurity, underscoring the need for strong partnerships across all sectors. He also highlighted ongoing communication and engagement with key stakeholders, including upcoming webinars and international collaborations, to continuously improve preparedness and response strategies.

[VIEW PRESENTATION HERE](#)



ITEM TEN

Enhancing models for rapid decision-support in EAD outbreaks

Dr Chris Baker, Senior Research Fellow, The University of Melbourne with support from Dr Mark Cozens, AHA presented on the use of mathematical models for data-driven decision making in biosecurity.

Chris discussed how mathematical modelling can be leveraged to support decision-making and predict risks, particularly in the context of initial infected properties. The project aims to enhance biosecurity measures by providing a framework for informed and proactive responses, using modelling to forecast potential outbreak scenarios and guide risk management strategies.

The project aims to enhance biosecurity measures by providing a framework for informed and proactive responses...

ITEM ELEVEN

AHA Program Spotlight: ParaBoss

Kelly Wall, Project Manager and Afifa Qureshi, Communications Coordinator, AHA shared key outcomes from the ParaBoss Phase III project, which spanned three years. Kelly highlighted that the goal of Phase III was to encourage producers to engage more deeply with ParaBoss to improve their parasite management practices.

Key achievements of Phase III include:

- Condensed 1,700 pages of technical information into 855 web pages and brought eight separate websites into one.
- Producers, who represent 54.5% of ParaBoss website users, our primary target audience make up the majority of our total user base. They are followed by veterinarians, advisors, and others in the industry.
- A 108% increase in Facebook audience, connecting more producers with timely and relevant content.
- Over 41,000+ e-newsletter opens, ensuring critical information reaches the target audience.



- Extensive media coverage, reaching 2.3 million readers and boosting brand awareness.
- 5,700+ webinar registrations, providing cattle, sheep, and goat producers and advisors with vital knowledge through expert-led sessions.

[VIEW PRESENTATION HERE](#)



ITEM TWELVE

Strategic direction - 2025 and beyond

Dr Samantha Allan, CEO, and Jackie Poyser, General Manager, Member Engagement and Strategy (Acting), AHA, facilitated discussions on current priorities to help shape AHA's upcoming strategic plan and shared AHA will continue engaging with members, gathering feedback through multiple touchpoints, including a review draft plan in March 2025 and a planned launch in July 2025.

- Members agreed that AHA's strategic priorities remain relevant and reaffirmed the need for AHA's role as a facilitator and broker between industry and government.
- Members acknowledged the common challenge of resourcing, particularly the availability of skilled personnel and funding.
- A strong focus was placed on climate change and its potential impact, particularly in relation to biosecurity, animal welfare, and traceability.
- Discussions also explored the importance of integrating technology and innovations, such as Artificial Intelligence, virtual reality, and social media, into AHA's approach.
- Considerations were raised about the capability to deliver mass vaccination programs and the evolving roles of industry and government in funding disease control efforts.
- Members noted preferred methods of engagement to collect further feedback on the upcoming Strategic plan, including face-to-face discussions and email correspondence, with flexibility for detailed responses allowed.

ITEM THIRTEEN

Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness vaccine research update: Focus on Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD)

Dr Daniel Layton, Senior Research Scientist, Health and Biosecurity, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) presented on the ongoing cutting-edge work in immunology, AI-driven diagnostics, and vaccine technology to combat animal diseases and improve agricultural biosecurity.

Daniel shared:

- LSD is a serious disease for cattle, and current vaccines have limitations such as risk of reversion and less effectiveness. The team is developing a “disc vaccine” (defective infectious single cycle vaccine) that provides immunity without the virus replicating in the animal. This approach allows for a DIVA (Differentiating Infected from Vaccinated Animals) test, crucial for controlling outbreaks and trade restrictions.
- The team is working making vaccines not only effective but also affordable for agricultural use, including stable formulations that are easier to store and distribute.
- Use of genome-engineered tools like CAS9 to create vaccines that are safe, effective, and can be differentiated between vaccinated and infected animals through advanced testing.

[VIEW PRESENTATION HERE](#)



ITEM FOURTEEN

FMD Vaccine Bank update: Current Status and future challenges

Dr Penny Linnett, AHA presented on the management and ongoing development of the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) Vaccine Bank, collaborations with international partners, and future operational exercises to ensure the system’s effectiveness.

Key highlights include:

- The ongoing agreements for vaccine production, storage, and management are being reviewed, and there are plans for future importation and operation exercises to test the system’s readiness. The antigens will soon be produced and stored in a new facility in France, requiring documentation and operation tests.
- The Vaccine Bank governance committee has remained stable, but there are plans to review membership and add more industry representation.
- Ongoing maintenance and updates to training modules and documentation are necessary to keep the system effective and ready. A significant exercise involving the importation and distribution of mock vaccines is planned for 2025 – 2026 to ensure the system works smoothly.
- The Vaccine Bank project is closely linked with international partners such as Canada, the US, and New Zealand, who share knowledge and practices for biosecurity and vaccine preparedness.
- Documentation and contract renewals will continue, with a focus on ensuring that the bank remains ready for immediate activation at any time, including potential global responses to outbreaks.



ATTENDANCE LIST

Name	Surname	Organisation
Melinda	Hashimoto	Egg Farmers Australia
Allison	Crook	Queensland Government
Adam	Dawes	WoolProducers Australia
Lorna	Citer	Goat Industry Council of Australia
Andrea	Reiss	Wildlife Health Australia
Samantha	Allan	Animal Health Australia
Michelle	Rodan	Government of Western Australia
Johann	Schröder	Sheep Producers Australia
Mark	Cozens	Animal Health Australia
Raymond	Chia	Australian Pork
Andy	Hancock	Dairy Australia
Jo	Coombe	NSW Government
Verity	Price	Australian Chicken Meat Federation
Bomber	Lancaster	Australian Lot Feeders' Association
Sharon	Starick	Animal Health Australia
Elise	Spark	Government of South Australia
Eliz	Braddon	NSW Government
Catherine	Chicken	Australian Horse Industry Council
Kathy	Gibson	Australian Government - Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Malcolm	Letts	Animal Health Australia
Therese	Wright	Animal Health Australia
Narelle	Clegg	Australian Government - Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Rob	Barwell	Animal Health Australia
Graeme	Cooke	Victoria State Government
Mary	Wu	Australian Chicken Meat Federation
Chris	Baker	The University of Melbourne
Justin	Toohy	Australian Dairy Farmers
Johann	Schröder	Sheep Producers Australia
Geraldine	Wickham	Animal Health Australia
Carolina	Diaz	Australian Wool Innovation Limited
Bridget	Peachey	Australian Wool Innovation Limited
Peter	Scott	Australian Eggs
Penny	Linnett	Animal Health Australia
Chris	Parker	Cattle Australia
Mike	Darby	Cattle Australia
Kelly	Wall	Animal Health Australia
Mark	Cozens	Animal Health Australia
Greg	Parkinson	Australian Duck Meat Association Incorporated
Sheaaz	Sakur	Animal Health Australia
Kristina	Vidovic	Animal Health Australia
Bronte	Clifford	Animal Health Australia
Katie	Hallatt	The Australian Livestock Export Corporation
Tanya	Pittard	Australian Pork
Lucinda	Corrigan	Animal Health Australia
Beth	Cookson	Australian Government - Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Narelle	Jones	Animal Health Australia
Bronwyn	Hendry	Animal Health Australia
Emily	Sears	Animal Health Australia