

# The Link

CONNECTING THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY FROM THE FARM TO THE SUPPLY CHAIN



**New  
biosecurity  
collective  
ready for  
action**

**SA strikes  
against ASF**

**Growing the  
grassroots**







**Working together  
for animal health**

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2019  
ACN 071 890 956  
ISSN 2209-329X

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***Animal Health in Australia*  
2018 report is now available**

The report provides an annual summary  
of Australia's animal health status and  
system and is a valuable resource for  
both national and international audiences.  
It highlights Australia's commitment to  
biosecurity and excellent reputation as a  
producer of safe and healthy animals and  
animal products.



**Download the report here**

[www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/aha](http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/aha)

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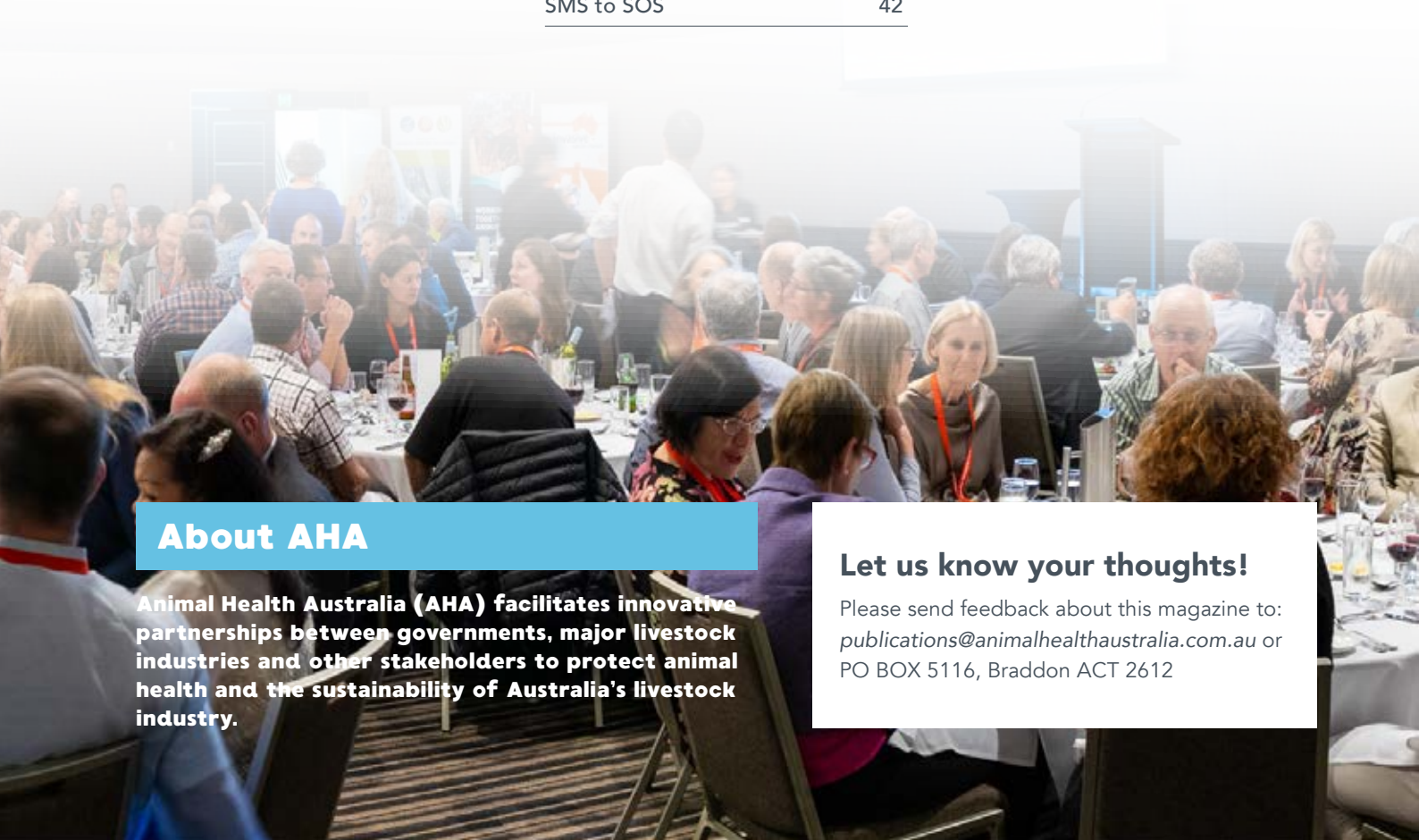
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**About AHA**

**Animal Health Australia (AHA) facilitates innovative partnerships between governments, major livestock industries and other stakeholders to protect animal health and the sustainability of Australia's livestock industry.**

**Let us know your thoughts!**

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# From the CEO

## Welcome to Issue 3 of *The Link*!

400 biosecurity champions converged on the Gold Coast for the inaugural Australian Biosecurity Symposium on 12-13 June 2-19 to share their ideas and work together to shape the future of Australia's biosecurity system.

Hosted by Animal Health Australia (AHA), the Invasive Species Council (ISC) and the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions (CISS), the Symposium brought delegates from all over Australia, New Zealand, the USA, Canada and Mexico to form Australia's first biosecurity mass movement. Their

mission – to transform Australia's biosecurity system to better protect our economy, environment and way of life.

The passion of people working in this space gives me confidence that together we can ensure Australia's biosecurity system can meet the pressures facing it over the next decade. The five-point plan launched by the host organisations at the Symposium will go some way in driving this transformation.

Check out all the Symposium action on p6 and watch this space for more information on our 2020 Biosecurity Workshop and second



## In this edition

Catch up on all the *Australian Biosecurity Symposium* action

6

Learn about the risks associated with backyard farming

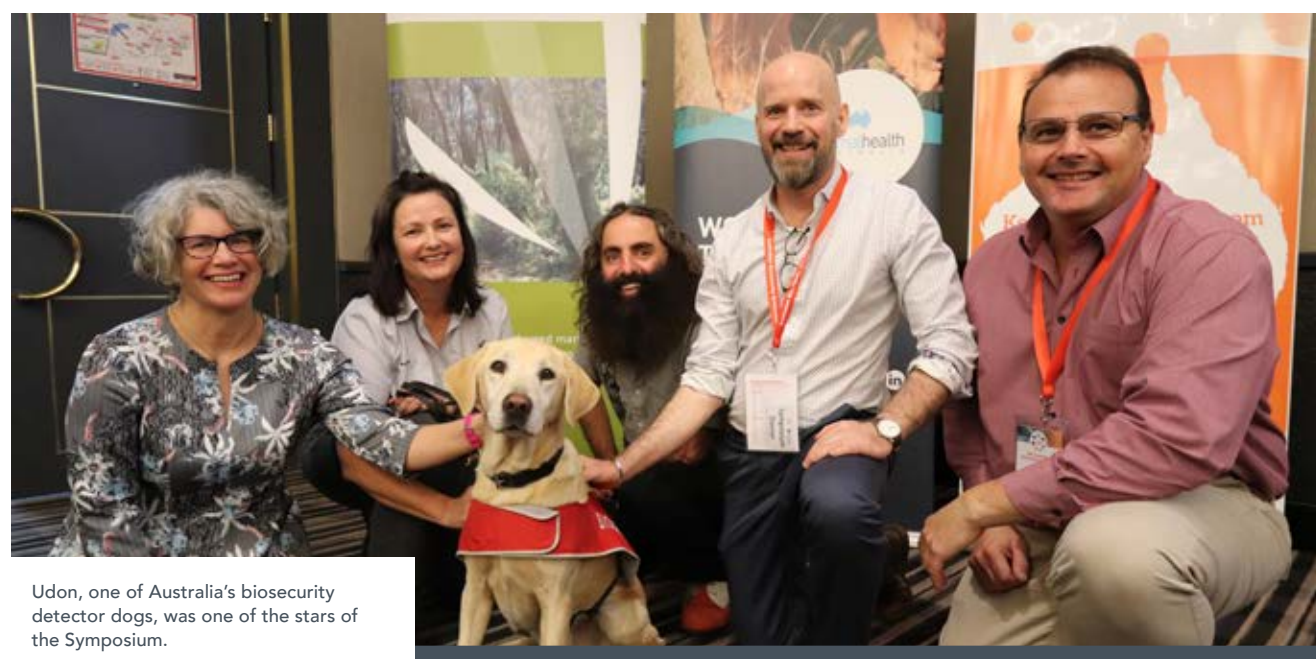
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Hear from producers about how they run their businesses

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Find out how SMS surveillance is helping WA cattle farmers

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Udon, one of Australia's biosecurity detector dogs, was one of the stars of the Symposium.



Andrew Cox, CEO, ISC; Kathleen Plowman, CEO, AHA and Andreas Glanznig CEO, CISS hosted the inaugural Australian Biosecurity Symposium.

**“The theme of collaboration was strong throughout the Symposium; and it's the common thread weaving together many of the stories featured in this edition.”**

*Australian Biosecurity Symposium* in June 2021. You can also read more about the Symposium in our report at <https://bit.ly/2oH6g5K>.

The theme of collaboration was strong throughout the Symposium; and it's the common thread weaving together many of the

stories featured in this edition. Our article on real-time foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) training showcases international industry and government partnerships (p16) whilst peak industry bodies have come together to fight against antimicrobial resistance (AMR) (p38).

As we know, the work of producers, veterinarians and other on-the-ground staff are also invaluable in mitigating biosecurity risks. Once again, our On The Ground section shares the stories of producers leading the way in biosecurity initiatives and strong business practices.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of *The Link*.

*Kaplowman*

Kathleen Plowman  
AHA CEO



# New biosecurity collective ready for action

## Animal Health Australia

**With the number of pest and disease threats that could enter our country rapidly growing, biosecurity champions from across Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Mexico and the USA came together on 12-13 June 2019 to form Australia's first biosecurity collective.**

The inaugural Australian Biosecurity Symposium, co-hosted by AHA, ISC and CISS, saw 400 delegates converge on the Gold Coast to discuss how we can future-proof our biosecurity system to better protect our multi-billion agricultural industry, our

iconic native plants and animals and our people.

Andreas Glanznig, CEO of CISS, said we need to double down on smarter actions to future proof Australia's biosecurity system.

*"By 2030, Australia will see a doubling of international passenger arrivals and containerised cargo traffic will increase 170% by 2020. We need to work more collaboratively and smarter, with more efficient systems to keep future pests and diseases out."*

*"Prevention is a key part of the solution and new techniques like environmental DNA surveillance, drone detection using thermal regulation, artificial intelligence and recognition are just some of the new innovations on the horizon which could be game-changers for the biosecurity"*



Symposium MC, Costa Georgiadis kept delegates entertained throughout the Symposium.

**"We need to work more collaboratively and smarter, with more efficient systems to keep future pests and diseases out."**



system if we strengthen efforts now," Mr Glanznig said.

Kathleen Plowman, CEO of AHA, called for the development of a national biosecurity strategy and a long-term sustainable biosecurity investment plan, as well as a national biosecurity partnership agreement, to mobilise all of Australian society.

"Biosecurity prevention is a shared responsibility but without a shared vision and authority it is difficult to bring everyone along for the ride.

"We need clear signposts along the way, we need to plot our journey and we need to make sure we are all on the same path, to ensure the system is well-equipped for the future," Ms Plowman said.

Andrew Cox, CEO of ISC, wants to rally the community together and start a biosecurity movement.

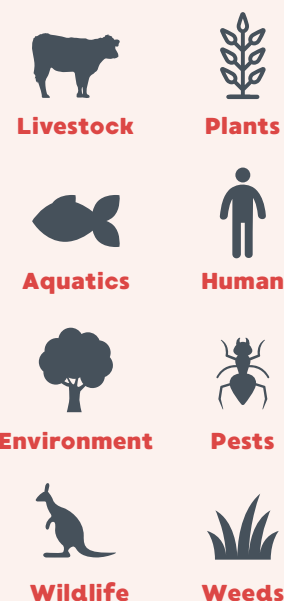
"We want biosecurity to be top of mind and top of importance for all Australians, like the Landcare movement has been since it was formed in the 1990s.

"There is growing awareness of biosecurity and now we want to take it further and build a mass movement of biosecurity champions across the country who take ownership of the problem and help keep our country free of new weeds, pests and diseases," Mr Cox said.

## Symposium snapshot



### Representatives from across 8 sectors

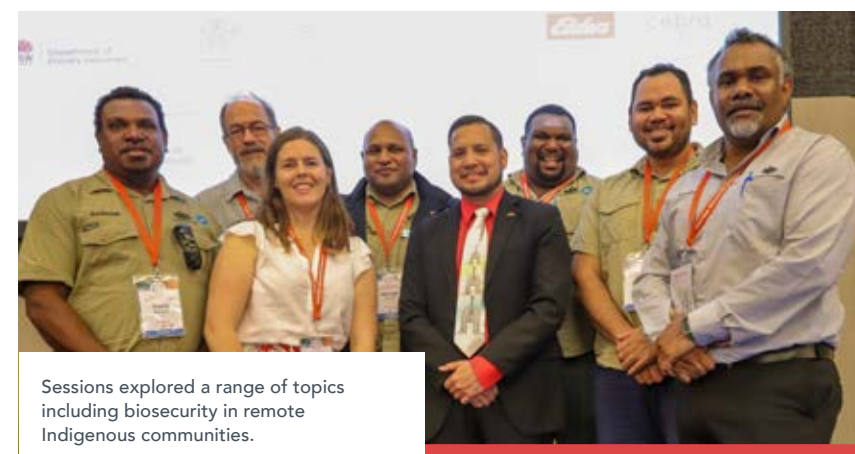


### 95 presentations showcasing 100 speakers



The Symposium was regarded as a success not only by the founding organisations but also by the delegates, with more than 96% of delegates satisfied with the event overall, and over 95% of delegates indicating that they would attend another Symposium.

One attendee commented that there was 'great energy, some fantastic speakers and presentations' whilst another commended the 'buzz, the enthusiasm from the delegates, great networking, meeting new people and hearing about different



Sessions explored a range of topics including biosecurity in remote Indigenous communities.



Roger Smith (NZ), Lyn O'Connell (Cwth) and Malcolm Letts (Qld) were part of the keynote panel, discussing biosecurity at the international, national and jurisdictional level.



Delegates enjoyed networking throughout the Symposium.

ideas and ways of looking at biosecurity.'

A Biosecurity Workshop will be held in June 2020 to progress key outcomes from this year's Symposium. The second *Australian Biosecurity Symposium* will be held in 2021 and will focus once

again on preventative biosecurity practices, outside-of-the-box thinking and the exchange of knowledge and ideas across the biosecurity collective.

 [www.biosym.com.au](http://www.biosym.com.au)

## Five-point plan to future-proof Australia's biosecurity system

At the Symposium close, the CEOs of AHA, ISC and CISS delivered a five-point plan to future-proof Australia's biosecurity system.

This plan will be refined at the 2020 Biosecurity Workshop.

- 1. Setting 2020-2030 as the decade of biosecurity.**
- 2. Designing an innovation-centred biosecurity system.**
- 3. Developing a national biosecurity strategy and sustainable investment plan.**
- 4. Creating a formal national biosecurity partnership agreement between government, industry and the community.**
- 5. Mobilising a 25-million strong biosecurity mass movement.**



# The rise and risk of peri-urbanism

## Animal Health Australia

**Do you live on the outskirts of one of Australia's capital cities and keep a few chickens, goats or pigs in your backyard?**

Maybe you keep one pig as a pet or some chickens to sell eggs at your local farmers' market – or know someone else who does? There is a rise in the presence of livestock animals in suburbia and with this, a rise in the risk of animal diseases spreading (some which could potentially affect humans).

The term for this is 'peri-urban', meaning on the fringe of rural-urban development. Landholders are surrounded by low-to-medium density housing and have access to all key amenities such as schools and hospitals, whilst enjoying the qualities associated with rural living.

Many peri-urban landholders are involved in small-scale horticulture, as well as owning different species of livestock, including running mixed livestock systems. Peri-urban farms exist across the country, and they play a larger role in Australia's agricultural production and food safety than you may think.

Dr Nicole Schembri, Peri-Urban Program Coordinator at New South Wales Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) explained why people do this.

*"People in peri-urban areas keep livestock for a variety of reasons, including family tradition or culture; food for home consumption and sustainability; as a hobby to*

*grow and sell to make additional income; or as pets," said Dr Schembri.*

It's important to note the difference between peri-urban producers and smallholder producers. A peri-urban producer tends to keep small numbers of livestock for personal use and may treat them as pets. A smallholder producer

tends to have more concentrated production practices with an income focus.

But why is it so important to implement biosecurity practices if you only have one animal? Dr Paul De Barro, Research Director, Risk Evaluation and Preparedness Program from CSIRO warns the risks of animals contracting diseases are actually higher for peri-urban landholders.

*"The peri-urban environment is home to a wide range of wildlife and pest animals. When livestock biosecurity is not practiced by peri-urban producers, this can lead to contact between backyard livestock and these animals, resulting in loss of feed to pests, stock to predators and even disease transmission," said Dr De Barro.*

*"Some of these diseases can be passed onto humans, whilst others pose a significant risk to commercial flocks and herds, particularly as a lot of commercial production also occurs in peri-urban areas," said Dr De Barro.*

Dr Schembri also spoke of the higher risks due to landholders not having formal networks, adequate knowledge of what makes up good on-farm biosecurity and potential

**Greater Sydney:**  
**Food production worth \$1.5 billion a year + 1 million shipping containers a year, 38.5 million visitors a year and 500,000 tonnes of airfreight = high biosecurity risk**



Credit: NSW DPI and Greater Sydney Local Land Services

**"Some of these diseases can be passed onto humans, whilst others pose a significant risk to commercial flocks and herds..."**



difficulties accessing livestock veterinarians.

*“Peri-urban producers can be very hard to reach. They don’t typically identify as being industry participants or belong to an organised network, which can leave them feeling as if they have no support.*

*“Because of this, there is the risk that they aren’t receiving the right advice or information, which can lead to poor practices such as feeding swill to backyard pigs.”*

If a disease were to enter your property, it has the potential to cause devastating effects on animal health and welfare, your business operations and more broadly, to Australia’s agriculture industry.

*“In the worst case scenario, disease can lead to the death of stock, but more commonly results*

*in a loss of body condition in the affected animal(s), reduced egg production in poultry or milk production in cows and goats, and can lead to substantial veterinary costs for the treatment of affected stock,”* said Dr De Barro.

*“In rare cases, the diseases affecting the animal could be passed on to people and that could make them very unwell or worse.”*

Implementing biosecurity practices is the best step you can take to protect your livestock, regardless of how many animals you own. Following these practices will also help you play your part in protecting Australia’s agricultural industry.



[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au)

## Where can I get more info?

- NSW DPI’s Peri-Urban Program – provides information and guidance for peri-urban producers ([www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/managing-biosecurity/our-partners-and-programs](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurity/managing-biosecurity/our-partners-and-programs))
- The Farm Biosecurity website – provides general biosecurity planning resources ([www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au))

## Tips for preventing disease

**Have a registered Property Identification Code.**

**Have an on-farm biosecurity plan specific to your property to help identify biosecurity risks and how you will address them.**

**If you own and sell cattle, sheep or goats, be Livestock Production Assurance-accredited and use the National Livestock Identification System (or PigPass for pigs).**

**Adhere to the swill feeding and ruminant feed bans in place nationally and only feed animals supplementary feed or approved manufactured feeds.**

**Find a private or government veterinarian to seek animal health information and advice from.**

**If your animal displays anything unusual, report it to the EAD watch hotline on 1800 675 888.**

**Find the peak industry body related to your animals and sign up to their industry-specific programs and newsletters.**

# SA strikes against ASF

Animal Health Australia

**With African swine fever (ASF) sweeping across Europe and South-East Asia, protecting Australia’s pork industry is top of mind for Australian jurisdictions.**

To ensure they’re on the front foot should an ASF outbreak occur, the Department of Primary Industries and Regions South Australia (PIRSA) hosted Exercise Rapid Strike at Roseworthy, SA in May 2019.

The aim of the exercise was to assess PIRSA’s ability to deliver the arrangements specified in SA’s Emergency Animal Disease Action Plan and relevant AUSVETPLAN manuals in response to a simulated detection of ASF in SA, said Dr Mary Carr, Chief Veterinary Officer, Biosecurity SA.

*“The exercise scenario was based on detection of ASF*



Incident Controller Paul Dowsett briefs the troops.

*on a property in the state’s lower north. We had 81 participants from a variety of agencies across Australia, who were divided up*

*to participate in different components of the exercise,”* said Dr Carr.

*“Participants undertook tasks such as establishing and operating a control centre, collecting laboratory*

*samples from live pigs and decontaminating farm equipment.”*

Lechelle Van Breda, Manager Production Stewardship at Australian Pork Limited participated as an observer in the exercise and saw firsthand the enthusiastic collaboration across various state departments led by PIRSA’s Biosecurity SA, with Pork SA as the participating industry organisation.

*“It was great to see all the different parties working to build capacity in response to an exotic*

disease incursion," said Dr van Breda.

Madison Hickey, AHA's Biosecurity and Welfare Project Officer, and one of the AHA participants in the exercise took away some key learnings from the experience.

"It was great to see the collaboration and team work involved, as well as understand how established EAD plans play out in an outbreak," said Ms Hickey.

"Participating in the exercise was a really valuable experience that provided me with great insight

into the roles and responsibilities of a Local Control Centre in the event of an ASF outbreak. The exercise was also a great opportunity to meet and learn from experienced participants."

Overall, the exercise was successful in meeting its aim and objectives and provided an excellent opportunity to share ideas from across Australia's biosecurity sectors.

## Industry and government are working on a number of activities to prevent ASF entering Australia:

### ASF Summit

On 3 May 2019, industry and government met in Adelaide to discuss the threat of ASF. Discussions at the summit covered international experiences, border protection activities, communication and engagement campaigns, feral pig management plans and business continuity.

The ideas emerging from the summit will be reviewed to inform the future efforts in ASF preparedness in Australia.

Access the full recording of the summit at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=zz452aFXhOw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zz452aFXhOw)

### AUSVETPLAN Review

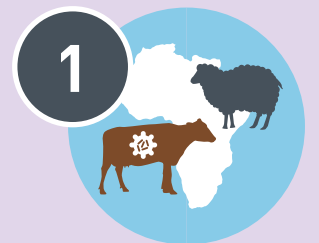
ASF was the key focus of discussion activities at the 40th AUSVETPLAN Technical Review Group meeting in February 2019. Representatives from AHA, Australian government agencies, CSIRO's Australian Animal Health Laboratory, the pig industry and the AUSVETPLAN Expert Writing Group met to explore in detail the methods Australia would use to control the spread of ASF should an outbreak occur here.

The outcomes of the discussion activities will help to inform the review of the AUSVETPLAN response strategy for ASF currently underway.

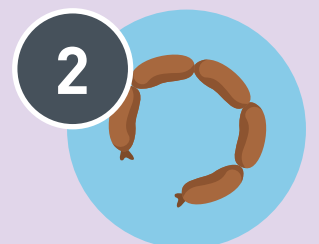


## Swill Feeding

### HOW COULD SWILL FEEDING CAUSE DISEASE IN PIGS?



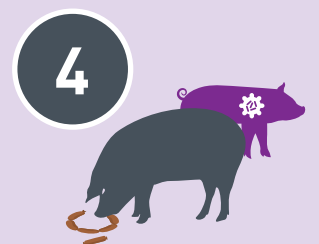
Livestock in countries with serious diseases exotic to Australia (such as ASF) become infected with the disease.



Those infected livestock are processed into meat products overseas.



The meat (which can harbour or be contaminated with the disease-causing agents), may be illegally or inadvertently introduced into Australia.



Food or food waste containing the disease-causing agents are fed to pigs. The pigs then become infected which pose a significant risk to Australia's susceptible livestock industries.

## Disease in-focus: African swine fever

### What is ASF?

ASF is an exotic, highly contagious viral disease affecting both domesticated and wild pigs. It spreads rapidly through contact with infected animals or contact with contaminated pens, trucks, clothing or feed. Pigs can also remain carriers for the disease for quite some time.

### What's the risk?

Australia is currently free of ASF. However in February 2019, virus fragments were detected in meat products seized at our border, indicating the importance of remaining vigilant. If ASF was to enter Australia, it could severely damage our pig meat and associated industries.

### How can you reduce the risk?

One of the easiest ways you can protect Australia's pork industry

from ASF and other disease threats is to feed your pigs the right feed.

Food waste that has come into contact with meat or contains meat must not be fed to pigs. This type of food waste, known as swill, could contain viruses such as ASF virus, which can be passed onto your pigs if they consume the infected food waste.

### What are the signs to look out for?

If you see anything unusual in your pigs or if you have a number of sudden deaths in your herd, you should report it immediately to the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888.

Key signs of ASF include fever, red/purple blotching of the skin and incoordination.

[www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/asf](http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/asf)

[www.australianpork.com.au/industry-focus/biosecurity](http://www.australianpork.com.au/industry-focus/biosecurity)

**"One of the easiest ways you can protect Australia's pork industry from ASF and other disease threats is to feed your pigs the right feed."**



# At the frontline of FMD

## Animal Health Australia

**It's well-known throughout the livestock industry that a foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreak in Australia would cause widespread devastation. You only need to look up the 2001 outbreak in the United Kingdom to understand the crisis the disease can cause.**

Australia is fortunate to be free of FMD. However, if FMD were to arrive on our shores, the scale of the outbreak would largely be determined by how quickly the disease was recognised, and the effectiveness of the response to the initial detection. This is why it's so important for veterinarians in Australia to undertake 'real-time' training to improve disease recognition.

The European Commission for the control of FMD (EuFMD), a

branch of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation provides practical training in FMD in countries where the disease occurs regularly, such as Turkey, Kenya and Nepal. With the support of the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Australian veterinary staff have had the opportunity to attend training sessions in Nepal.

Dr Claire Petterson, attending on behalf of AHA at the time, William Oldfield, Sheep Producers Australia (SPA), Kirstin Van Riel, Local Land Services (LLS) and Ashley Cooper, WoolProducers Australia (WPA), all undertook FMD real-time training in Nepal in late 2018.

Their week-long experience involved travelling through Kathmandu and Kathmandu Valley in Nepal while investigating an outbreak of FMD in 'real-time' – visiting affected farms, examining livestock, taking laboratory samples and carrying out field epidemiological investigations.

*"The opportunity to examine live animals with FMD, as well as spend time with epidemiologists on survey design and analysis was a unique experience that will add more value to future training activities we conduct at AHA," said Dr Petterson.*

The aim of the training is to provide participants with a unique, real-life setting in which to build emergency preparedness capacity, and to provide veterinary services in countries where FMD is endemic.

*"The training really emphasised how readily the disease is spread – between livestock, livestock products, people, transport and equipment. The farms are very close to one another and there is a high level of human and animal movement," said Mr Oldfield.*

FMD affects cloven-hoofed animals (such as cattle, sheep and goats), and the danger comes from how easily it can spread through a range of environments and production systems. The most common method of disease transfer is through animal movements, where livestock come into contact with infected



Biosecurity was taken very seriously when moving between farm visits.

## Key learnings



**Claire Petterson**  
Previous Manager Training Services, AHA

*"The practical experience in the recognition, investigation and management of FMD is a vital tool for improving Australia's preparedness should an outbreak occur. What I experienced and the knowledge I gained are particularly relevant to the work I did at AHA."*



**William Oldfield**  
Sheep Health and Welfare Policy Manager, SPA

*"The training helped me realise how important it is for the sheep industry to understand the signs of FMD so they can act quickly in reporting potential cases. Sheep can play a significant role in spreading FMD, particularly because their symptoms can be difficult to detect."*



**Kirstin Van Riel**  
Senior Land Services Officer Pest Animals, Northern Tablelands LLS

*"The key take-home message I got from the training was the importance of remaining vigilant at all times, keeping your farm biosecurity practices up-to-date and rapid notification by livestock owners if they suspect signs of disease in their stock."*



**Ashley Cooper**  
Policy Officer, WPA

*"The need for a pre-planned, coordinated response in preparation should an FMD outbreak occur is essential. I feel it's important we continue improving our preparedness and continue learning where we can from countries that have endemic FMD so we can do our utmost to mitigate the spread should we ever have an incursion."*



animals. However, it can also be transmitted by livestock inhaling the virus, ingesting contaminated feed or waste, or through human contact.

In Australia, it is crucial we maintain our strong biosecurity practices and strict border controls to prevent the introduction of exotic diseases. Participants in the real-time training noticed jarring differences between the biosecurity practices of Australian farmers compared to livestock owners in Nepal. Every precaution was taken for attendees to reduce the risk of spreading disease between field site visits, or worse, bringing it home with them.

*"The clothing and boots that we wore on our farm visits, even those worn underneath our disposable overalls, were disinfected in citric acid, washed and left behind. All equipment taken on site such as mobile phones were all cleaned and disinfected and a seven-day quarantine period applied once we were back in Australia"* explained Ms Van Riel.

*"The nature of this virus reminds us just how strict we ought to be with our biosecurity measures at, and within, our borders."*

While the experience overall was

Australia estimates that a large **FMD outbreak** over **12 months** would cost:

Over **10 years** an outbreak could cost up to:

AUD  
**\$16.8**  
BILLION

AUD  
**\$50**  
BILLION



**"...danger comes from how easily it can spread through a range of environments..."**

an educational one, participants were confronted first-hand with the impact the disease had on livestock and communities.

*"When you're studying,*

*you see pictures of the animal showing clinical signs and you can memorise these signs, but until you see them in real life I don't think you grasp just how severe this disease really is and the amount of*

*pain it causes the animals,"* said Mr Cooper.

*"Equally confronting are the economic impacts of FMD and how much it affects the finances of farming families whose businesses rely on products such as milk."*

At the end of the training, the group delivered a report and presentation to the local Nepalese government and invited guests, detailing the findings of their investigation and recommendations moving forward.



[www.fao.org/eufmd/](http://www.fao.org/eufmd/)



Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture

## Exotic pests and diseases can impact Australia's unique environment, our way of life and economy

We all need to be biosecurity aware when travelling, enjoying our parks, bushland and waterways. To find out more about what you can do to stop the introduction and spread of pests and diseases visit [agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/biosecurity-matters](http://agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/biosecurity-matters).





# The secrets behind an award-winning cattle producer

## Farm Biosecurity Project

**Central Queensland cattle producer Melinee Leather and her husband Rob are leaders in applying sound on-farm biosecurity and animal welfare practices on their properties and sharing their knowledge with others.**

Their work as advocates for the importance of biosecurity practices secured them an Australian Biosecurity Award in 2019, in the Farm Biosecurity Producer of the Year category.

*"Managing biosecurity is one of the most important things we can do on our properties," Melinee said.*

*"Good biosecurity underpins our markets and without it, our whole industry is at risk."*

The Leathers have been practicing proactive and preventative

biosecurity on-farm for around 20 years, a decision which has helped them maintain a range of accreditations, including being certified organic and European Union (EU) Cattle Accreditation Scheme-accredited, securing them a number of lucrative markets.

*"We are very aware of how important good biosecurity is to the markets we supply," said Melinee.*

*"To fit in with our EU accreditation, all cattle on the property must also be EU eligible, have a National Livestock*

*Identification System device and be lifetime-traceable. When introducing cattle to our properties they are yarded for a minimum of seven days, placed in quarantine paddocks for a minimum of 21 days, and must*

*be accompanied by a National Vendor Declaration and animal health declaration."*

Having multiple properties some distances apart also requires a robust system for transfers and introduction of new stock between them, to ensure any potential spread of diseases, parasites or weeds can be controlled. However, stock introductions are just a small

element of the biosecurity management plans in place on each of the Leathers' properties.

For people and vehicles coming on to the property, clear signage

communicates biosecurity protocols, including the need to wash down the vehicle or remain in the designated areas. Visitors are asked to sign a visitor's log, whilst feedstuff and other farm inputs must be accompanied by a

commodity vendor declaration. Other activities, such as weed management and infrastructure maintenance, are built into the daily routine on the property.

*"During a normal day, biosecurity is always occurring; whether you are mustering, fencing, doing general property work or water runs, everyone is looking at the cattle, the land and their surroundings for anything unusual," Melinee said.*

*"Biosecurity requires some effort, time and money to ensure that you're reducing risk, but when it's embedded properly, best practice management occurs every day without consciously thinking about it."*

Both Melinee and Rob believe biosecurity simply makes sense for anyone farming livestock, and have worked extensively to convey the value of biosecurity to their industry peers.

*"Good biosecurity practices will protect our people, environment and animals. A biosecurity outbreak will impact on profitability, productivity and property values," they explained.*

*"Biosecurity is the responsibility of all of us and collectively we will increase the effectiveness of our surveillance and the speed at which we can return to trade should an incursion occur."*

## "Good biosecurity underpins our markets and without it, our whole industry is at risk."



Farm Biosecurity Producer of the Year Award winner, Melinee Leather with her husband Rob.



# A crowning glory

Animal Health Australia

**National Biosecurity Response Team (NBRT) members converged in Canberra in March 2019 for Exercise Crown and Anchor.**

The exercise aimed to provide vital professional development and networking opportunities, to increase Australia's biosecurity emergency response capability.

The overall purpose of the exercise was to enhance the national ability to manage the response to a post-border biosecurity

Commonwealth place, namely a Varroa mite detection in Jervis Bay Territory or a red imported fire ant detection at Canberra International Airport. Both scenarios required participants to work with representatives from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and the ACT Government and operate within the Commonwealth's *Biosecurity Act 2015*.

Scenario activities were enhanced by technical presentations from CSIRO entomologists on Varroa mite and red imported fire ants, and site visits to the ACT

emergency operations centres, the Canberra International Airport and the Jerrabomberra training hives, where participants undertook bee surveillance activities including a sugar shake demonstration.

The exercise was regarded as a huge success by participants and observers alike, with the vast majority of participants indicating that the experience had significantly contributed to their response capabilities.

*"I did find it valuable. Always good to learn from experienced*



Participants engaging in bee surveillance activities at the Jerrabomberra training hives.

**What is the NBRT?**

The NBRT is a group of trained and experienced personnel that may be deployed to assist a jurisdiction in the response to biosecurity incidents. NBRT members are personnel from government agencies.

staff," a participant noted. Others agreed that *"the combination of being a response exercise and a discussion/workshop worked well as it allowed for skills and processes to be tested but also*

*allowed time to analyse what works and what doesn't without the pressure of a 'real-time' exercise."*

Participants also highlighted networking opportunities and

subsequent exposure to the knowledge and experience of their interstate counterparts as a highly valuable aspect of the exercise.

Feedback indicated a need to have more Commonwealth plans and templates available, as well as supplying more scenario-related information in the lead-up to the exercise in order to be able to complete the expected outputs. Issues noted during the exercise included difficulty interpreting Commonwealth legislation and difficulties related to the use of Commonwealth IT infrastructure.

Further information will be available in the Exercise Report, available later this year.

**"The exercise was regarded as a huge success by participants..."**

incident response located in Commonwealth places, with operations extending into an adjoining jurisdiction.

NBRT members were asked to determine and carry out an appropriate response to one of two fictional incursions on a



Members of the NBRT participating in the discussion-based exercise.



# Strengthening surveillance

## Animal Health Australia

**We all know that when a person gets sick, the sooner you act to treat the issue, the quicker you'll recover.**

The same logic applies with an emergency animal disease (EAD) – prompt identification of an outbreak and the swift launch of a response will ideally result in reduced impacts on the associated industries.

Modelling the sensitivity of the general surveillance system to detect an outbreak of an important disease is one way to find out how quickly a disease may be detected, said Dr Ian Langstaff, Animal Health Australia's Senior Manager Surveillance.

This was done in 2012, when Australia's general surveillance system performance was estimated using a computer model known as the General Surveillance Assessment Tool (GSAT). The GSAT assesses the efficacy of general surveillance based on 65 input parameters that define the behaviour of the average producer and other contributors to the general surveillance process. It was applied to foot-and-mouth

disease (FMD) in 12 agricultural production regions of Australia, with a reassessment in 2018 in four selected regions of Australia.

*"Fortunately, Australia is free of FMD and we have biosecurity controls in place to keep it out. However, it's important to examine how an FMD outbreak would be detected in Australia to help target our surveillance effort for it," said Dr Langstaff.*

One key finding from the 2018 assessment is that an opportunity exists to reduce the estimated time delay to detection of FMD by up to six days if producers in the extensive industries and small landholders inspect their animals frequently and respond without delay to the first signs of disease.

## Key findings from the 2018 assessment

- **The estimated median sensitivity for detection of FMD on an average farm worsened in one region of Australia and remained the same in the other three regions, compared to 2012.**
- **In the event of an FMD outbreak, the estimated time to detection of FMD would be approximately 19 days.**
- **It might take 7-9 properties to become infected before the Chief Veterinary Officer is confident about detecting FMD in at least one of them.**



The FMD Ready beef pilot group discussing strategies for improving surveillance practices on-farm.

*"This reinforces the importance of producers looking for signs of unusual disease in their animals and notifying their observation through the EAD Watch Hotline at 1800 675 888," said Dr Langstaff.*

If you'd like to know more, contact Dr Ian Langstaff on 02 6203 3909.

**"This reinforces the importance of producers looking for signs of unusual disease in their animals."**

The importance of on-farm surveillance is also captured in a multidisciplinary project working to keep Australia free from FMD.

Through the farmer-led surveillance subproject within the FMD Ready project<sup>1</sup>, animal health stakeholders such as producers, agents and private and government veterinarians, have formed local pilot groups to improve surveillance through strong partnerships.

<sup>1</sup> The project is supported by Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA), through funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture as part of its Rural Research & Development for Profit program, and by producer levies from Australian FMD-susceptible livestock (cattle, sheep, goats and pigs) industries and Charles Sturt University (CSU), leveraging significant in-kind support from the research partners.

The research partners for this project are the Commonwealth Science and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), CSU through the Graham Centre for Agricultural Innovation, the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and the Australian Department of Agriculture, supported by Animal Health Australia (AHA).




Each group has access to funding and technical resources to create a local platform that designs and trials education programs and innovative solutions to animal health surveillance and disease management problems, which will assist with on-farm surveillance. This might include designing and running training workshops for producers on what symptoms to look for to identify diseases or conditions of concern, to who

to contact if you see anything suspicious and what happens next.

The FMD Ready project also investigates response strategies, explores vaccine management and determines how disease is spread.

FMD Ready project content provided by Meat & Livestock Australia

 [research.csiro.au/fmd/farmer-led-surveillance](https://research.csiro.au/fmd/farmer-led-surveillance)



# Buyer beware – you'd better declare

## Animal Health Australia

**Buying or selling sheep? The movement of livestock presents one of the biggest risks for spreading disease to new properties and flocks.**

That is why, when livestock are sold, it is important to also provide any records related to their health and well-being. This assists the new owner in providing the best possible care to those animals in the future and to integrate them into an existing flock.

The national Sheep Health Declaration is a document which

is recommended for sheep meat and wool producers to help them capture and share health information related to a consignment of sheep.

WoolProducers Australia Policy Manager, Mr Ashley Cooper, believes the Declaration is a must for sheep and wool producers whenever sheep change hands.

*"Our advice to our producers all over Australia is pretty simple, always ask for a Declaration when buying sheep, and always provide one when you send a consignment, unless it's to slaughter," Mr Cooper said.*

**"...the Declaration is a must for sheep and wool producers whenever sheep change hands."**

*"That way you know the history of the sheep you are buying and are better prepared to consider the risks they might present."*

A new version of the Sheep Health Declaration has just been released on the Farm Biosecurity website.

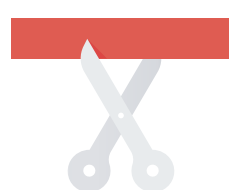


[www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/industry/sheep](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/industry/sheep)

## What's changed?



**Links in with National Vendor Declarations (NVD) which is available on the electronic NVD portal. The new version will be available soon**



**Less focus on ovine Johne's disease following complete national deregulation**



**More space to list treatments, including vaccinations, for other conditions**



**Option to include other information producers may want to highlight, such as participation in One Biosecurity in South Australia**



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# Uncovering hidden conditions

## Animal Health Australia

### Curious to know what's hurting your bottom line at the abattoir?

The National Sheep Health Monitoring Project (NSHMP) has been gathering data from participating abattoirs since 2007, providing a wealth of information regarding conditions which reduce productivity on farm or cause wastage in processing.

NSHMP monitors lines of sheep for 20 conditions (including ovine Johne's disease at the request of the producer) which negatively impact on-farm profitability or cause carcasses to be trimmed or even condemned at the processing plant.

It is estimated that these conditions collectively cost upwards of \$110 million annually in losses across the value chain.

Access to the data, via Integrity Systems Company's Livestock Data Link (LDL) portal, enables producers to see the extent to which these conditions impact their flock.

This enables the producer to make decisions about the management

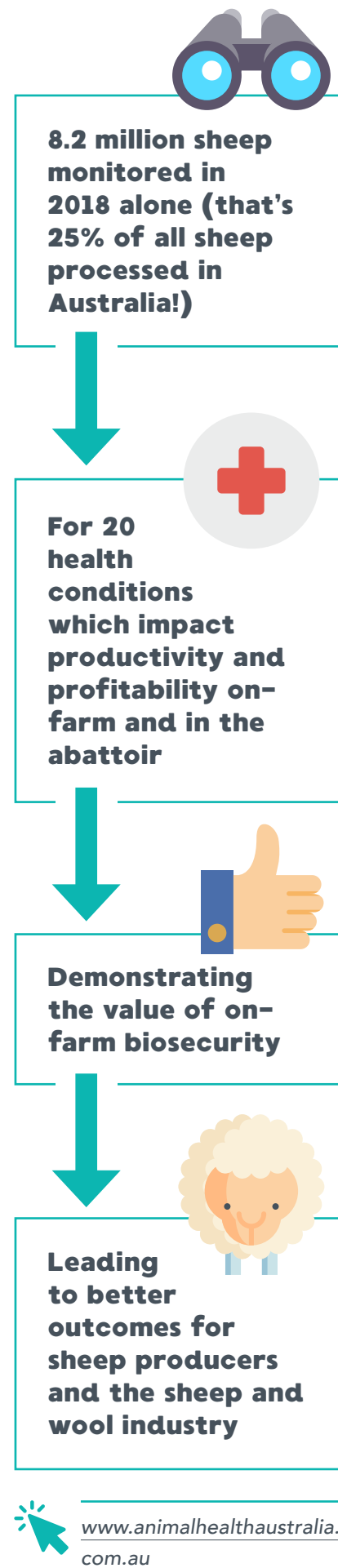
of these conditions, typically through the application of on-farm biosecurity practices, with significant flow-on effects for the health and welfare of their sheep and for the industry as a whole.

Johnny Gardner is one producer who found value in the NSHMP and using the LDL portal made it so much easier.

*"LDL has been a fantastic feedback tool to provide our farm business with animal health information, allowing on-farm amendments to improve our animal health," said Mr Gardner.*

While the NSHMP is supported by communications activities, further development of awareness programs, extension resources and preventative tools will continue to drive NSHMP to greater heights.

The future for the project includes benchmarking individual flocks against the regional average and comparisons to previous lines from the same property, enabling NSHMP to demonstrate how biosecurity and disease management plans are working for individual producers and allowing extension services to showcase the benefits of on-farm biosecurity within their region.



## Remembering John Stewart

### Earlier this year, we were sadly informed of the passing of John Stewart.

A former Councillor of Cattle Council of Australia (CCA) and strong proponent of AHA from its very beginning, John's hard work and dedication has made

a significant difference to the national animal health system.

Peter Milne, AHA's Chairman, and Justin Toohey, CCA's Advisor Animal Health, Welfare and Biosecurity both had the pleasure of working with John and reflected on their time with him.

**Peter Milne**  
AHA Chairman



*"John was a towering and familiar presence in Northern Australia for more than fifty years – though he strode the corridors of power in Canberra comfortably as well. His immense contribution to industry organisations at regional, state and national level continued for most of his adult life. Retirement was not in John's vocabulary! His focus on research, development and extension was invaluable to the cattle industry but his enthusiasm for improving animal health in Australia leaves arguably his greatest legacy. John is greatly missed and our thoughts have been with his wife Margaret and family at this sad time."*

**Justin Toohey**  
CCA's Advisor  
Animal Health,  
Welfare and  
Biosecurity



*"John was a giant in the policy-making arena for the Australian cattle industry. I thoroughly enjoyed working with him on industry animal-health programs for over two decades and developed enormous respect for his unequalled skill at bringing together disparate people and groups for the creation and implementation of initiatives that benefited all. His long list of achievements was recognised through his deserved awards from the University of Queensland (Honorary Doctorate) and Order of Australia (AM), among others. I learnt so much from John and will miss him immensely."*





# The alpacas of One Tree Hill

## Animal Health Australia

**Named after the old heather tree on top of the farm's only hill, Angela and Matthew Smith run their alpaca herd - One Tree Hill - alongside their Blackwattle Alpaca Yarn and Fibre business in Murrumbateman, NSW.**

The herd is part of a booming enterprise that all began with a chance encounter over 12 years ago.

"We had a small rural block and wanted some livestock to help eat the grass down. We purchased two mini goats and a few months later went in search of another goat. An alpaca breeder got in touch with us at the time as he had cashmere goats, but we came home with two alpacas instead!" Angela explained.

"Shortly after we moved to our current 40-acre property. Then Matthew surprised me with another five alpacas! All this happened over 12 years ago and the rest is history."

Since getting started, their herd has grown to about 70 alpacas and there's a significant focus on fibre production and maintaining the breed standards.

According to the Smiths, they're the only business in Australia that focuses on hand-dyed alpaca yarn as the core business. Angela is as passionate as they come about alpaca fibre – not only do they produce the fibre but they also process and sell it as yarn.

"The fibre is stunning! We use all our fibre and also purchase fibre from other NSW, Vic and SA alpaca farms for our business, Blackwattle Alpaca Yarn and Fibre. Last year we processed over 1.5 tonnes of fibre into yarn, which I then hand-dyed in our farm shed!" said Angela.

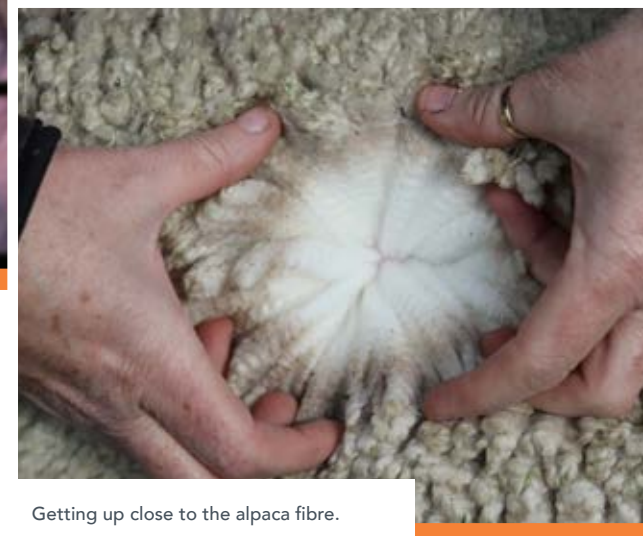
Although processing fibre for yarn is the central element of their business, the Smiths are

Blackwattle's hand-dyed yarns on display.

well known throughout the alpaca industry for their other endeavours.

"We run a wide range of crafting workshops such as crochet, as well as fleece appreciation workshops with alpaca owners to help them understand the value of their fleece and what they can do with them. From time to time, we also run alpaca business planning workshops to help other alpaca owners work out what business model will suit their enterprise," said Angela.

**"We don't know everything about what customers want so we make sure to be good listeners..."**



Getting up close to the alpaca fibre.

"In the newer side of our business, we've been working closely with Yass Tourism and Destination NSW, with four tours available and a fifth in the works that will include visits via helicopter! We're also delving into the alpaca meat side of the industry, serving up alpaca kofta and sausage rolls during farm tours and running an alpaca degustation dinner."

"We often host textile and agriculture students on the farm and discuss all things fibre and husbandry. On top of all of this, we also show and sell our alpacas and offer stud services!"

With an enterprise this busy, the risks are always front of mind for Angela and Matthew,

especially when hosting members of the public on the farm. Off the farm, Angela is a professional Work Health and Safety Advisor, and has been in this space for over 10 years.

"In terms of risk to the actual business, the biggest one was burning myself out. I'm passionate about what I do, but at the time I was working full-time elsewhere with travel alongside running this business. Over the past 18 months, the business has been my sole focus, and we've just hired our first staff members too!" said Angela.

"We also distribute the risk by using three processing mills – two in Australia and occasionally one in New Zealand. We do as much as we can to manage our alpaca herd levels to reduce the impact on the environment."

Angela and Matthew also believe in taking on board customer feedback and utilise digital channels to connect with their market.

"We don't know everything about what customers want and need, so we make sure to be good listeners and then we take what they tell us and apply it to our business."

One of the things Angela and Matthew love the most is introducing customers and the public to the wonderful animals that alpacas are.

"I love the industry, I love the people we get to meet and I love that I get to help change their minds about alpaca fibre! There's a misconception that alpaca yarn is itchy and that it's all the same so introducing them to premium fibre is great!"

"It's also great being able to educate customers on the benefits of alpaca yarn, as well as educating alpaca breeders about what we need to do to make good quality alpaca yarn and fibre for the crafting community."



[www.onetreehillalpacas.com.au](http://www.onetreehillalpacas.com.au)



[www.blackwattleyarn.com.au](http://www.blackwattleyarn.com.au)



# Harnessing the power of data

## Animal Health Australia

AHA staff met Natalie Engel, owner of livestock data analysis company BOS C Agri at Beef Week in Rockhampton in 2018. Natalie has the best of both worlds, combining work on her data analysis business, and working with her fiancée Chris on their grazing property 'Sunlight', in the Central Highlands region of Queensland. After chatting with Natalie we were keen to find out more about what she does and why she chose a career in data analysis.

## What does a livestock data specialist do?

A typical day for me starts with checking emails and my social media accounts to see if there are any enquires or leads to follow. It's amazing the opportunities that can come out of having an online presence!

Then, if my work for the day is office-based, I'm in front of a screen and remotely accessing a client's data for analysis and troubleshooting; otherwise, I'll be on-farm for the installation of new systems or training of staff.

## Why did you start your business?

After spending 12 years working in various areas of the agricultural industry, I gained a wide range of skills, especially in data collection and problem solving in relation to recording systems.

In 2015, I was travelling the Central Highlands for my job at the time, where I was supposed to be selling recording interfaces and scales. I found I was spending more and more of my time solving system

and scale issues, NLIS transfer issues and training people on the gear instead of selling it. People were so grateful that there was someone out there who actually understood what they were talking about. I enjoyed solving their problems and seeing them move forward.

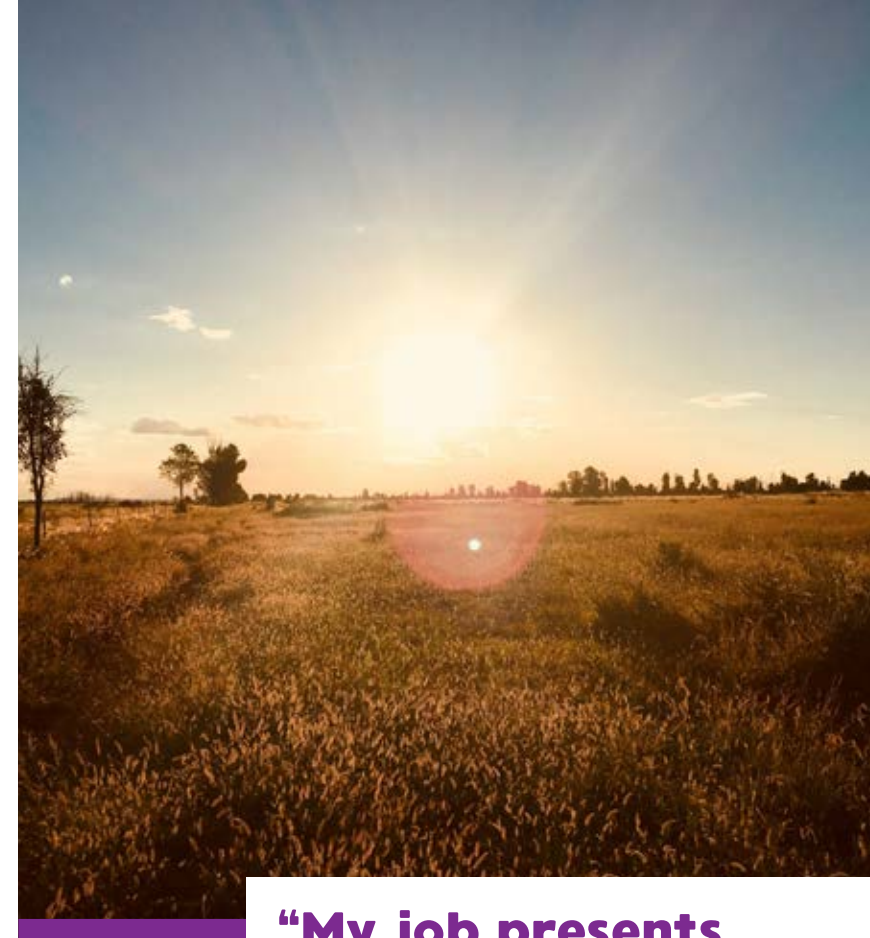
When I left the company I was working for, I had already decided that the next step was to set up my own business and see if it would fly. I then spent three months contracting to a family that breeds Brahman bulls and learnt more about herd recording and the stud side of things. In January 2017, I decided it was now or never, so BOS C Agri was officially opened for business.

## Why is analysing data important for a grazier's business?

Data analysis takes the guesswork



Natalie regularly meets with clients to help them manage their business.



## "My job presents challenges that need prompt solutions and this is something I love to do..."

out of making business decisions. It allows for more precise planning, helping to minimise surprises.

It also ensures producers know exactly how their animals are tracking and aids in problem solving, forecasting sales and usages (of fodder, vet chemicals, etc.).

Analysing kill data feedback from meat processors can also help you make comparisons with previous kills, look for trends or possibly see the effect a herd management decision has caused.

## What do you love about your job and the industry more broadly?

I love that no two days are the same!

Getting the business name out there without selling systems and gear has also been difficult.

Because I have no affiliation with any of the current businesses in this space, producers don't often understand how I could add value to their business without first purchasing a product.

## What do you love about being on a property?

Chris and I manage 1,500 head of cattle with a focus on producing a quality, pasture fed-only animal. We are both passionate about the grass-fed industry and have always supported the Cattle Council of Australia in their endeavours to keep it moving.

The variety of work keeps me on my toes and moving all the time. One day I have multiple spreadsheets open and paperwork everywhere in the office, the next day I am mustering cows, branding in the afternoon and pulling up on dusk to have a beer and watch the sun go down. You just cannot match something like that living in the big smoke.

For me, the best part of living on a property is the wide open spaces, the sunsets, being able to see the stars, the beauty of the countryside and the abundance of room for extra dogs and horses! I also get to work with my best friend and partner in crime, Chris, and together we are building not only a business, but also a home.

My job presents challenges that need prompt solutions and this is something I love to do, especially if it makes someone's life easier. Nothing else makes my day more complete than if I catch up with a client and they state that everything is working well – it's even better if they have discovered a few new things on their own regarding their interface or data capture.

## What have been some challenges?

Trying to show producers that there is hidden value in collecting data and analysing it further. The answers they are looking for are right in front of them.



[www.boscagri.com](http://www.boscagri.com)



# O-fish-ial business

## Animal Health Australia

**AHA's aquatic expert Helen Jenkins has been travelling around northern Australia and chatting with producers as part of her Aquatic Biosecurity Liaison Officer role.**

Two of the producers Helen met left an impression – Noel Herbst, Owner of Gold Coast Marine Aquaculture's Logan River Prawn Farm, Queensland and Bob Richards from Humpty Doo Barramundi in the Northern Territory.

For Noel, the past few years have been a challenge. His farm was the largest affected by the 2016 outbreak of white-spot disease in prawns, which meant that he was unable to produce prawns on his farm for over two years. Now, three years on, Noel has made significant

progress, with the farm producing over 850 tonnes of tiger prawns this year.

*"Despite the hardship, Noel was determined not to let the outbreak win and invested in significant infrastructure changes to mitigate risks and get back up and running," said Helen.*

Some of these significant changes included the installation of three large drum filtration systems that filters the water down to 50 microns and treats it with an approved chemical to kill off any outside residue or pathogens. It's then held in a 'storage' lake before being distributed onto the farm. Other biosecurity measures included modified farm layouts and fishing restrictions, which have been put in place around the prawn farms on the Logan River.

Bob, who was recently awarded the Industry Ambassador Award at the NT Seafood Industry Awards, is also a strong believer in biosecurity.

*"He employed a consultant to write specific biosecurity plans tailored to his farm and has quarantine processes and rules around visitor access already in place to minimise disease risks," said Helen.*

With 75% of Australia's seafood being imported, Bob is also passionate about Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL). Industry bodies have been pushing this for over a decade to give consumers evidence that the seafood they're consuming is either Australian or imported. It's mandatory in retail but it's difficult to achieve consistency across the hospitality sector.

A biosecurity review commissioned by the Australian Barramundi Farmers Association identified there was a significant disease risk to Australia's wild and farmed barramundi posed by a small proportion of fish imported into Australia. Bob called for importation of this high risk material to be stopped until further investigation was undertaken to clarify the risk and the measures that might be required to control it.

Helen will continue travelling around Northern Australia, meeting with producers to hear their stories and raise awareness of the importance of biosecurity and emergency preparedness in the aquatic sector.



[www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au](http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au)

## AgForce's biosecurity all-rounder

### Animal Health Australia

It's not every day that you meet someone with a passion for weeds, but Marie Vitelli has cultivated (see what we did there?) a 35-year career out of her love for weeds and grazing management.

Marie's green thumb started in the mid-1980s while she was based at the Tropical Weeds Research Centre in Charters Towers, North Queensland. Since then, she has traversed North Queensland on weed research and biocontrol projects such as rubber vine.

Marie brought her extensive knowledge to AgForce 10 years ago, where she has focussed on a broad spectrum of biosecurity issues tied to weed and farm management. Significant achievements include coordinating cash and in-kind pledges from western Queensland producers severely affected by cattle deaths due to the toxic native plant *Pimelea* and improving the understanding about farm biosecurity amongst other land-users such as powerline utilities.

More recently, Marie was appointed as AgForce's Biosecurity Policy Officer, a position created in response to the growing importance of on-farm biosecurity for Queensland producers, and one which reflects AgForce's



commitment to empower producers to make biosecurity part of their daily routine.

*"I understand how biosecurity is part of everyday business for livestock producers. Through my diverse and broad experience across Queensland, I strive to represent producer issues across the wide diversity of biosecurity legislation and policies," said Marie.*



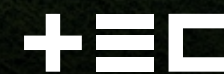
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# Growing the grassroots

**Jennie Curtis**, President and **Alex James**, Project Coordinator, Small Farms Network Capital Region

**The Small Farms Network Capital Region is a grassroots community association making a big difference to producers in the Canberra area.**

Established in 2016 by a group of farmers, community stakeholders and government, the network is designed to meet the educational and advocacy needs of people managing small farms in the NSW Southern Tablelands, said Alex James, Small Farms Network Capital Region's Project Coordinator.

*"Small farmers typically work off-farm during the week and are enthusiastic but relatively inexperienced farmers. They can be surprisingly innovative and productive on often poor-quality land but are faced with challenges*

*such as lack of practical farm skills and poor access to equipment. Many of the animal husbandry and land management issues may be the same as for larger farms but the solutions need to be different,"* said Ms James.

*"With over 537,500 hectares of rural land within 100 km of Canberra being managed in small lots under 40 hectares, servicing the needs of this group of rural land managers is essential to deliver good biosecurity and natural resource outcomes."*

Accessing some vaccinations and treatments can be prohibitively expensive for people managing farms with small numbers of stock. For example, vaccination packs

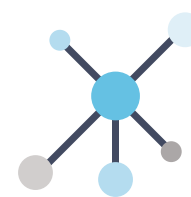
**"There is no such thing as a silly question! The network allows participants to learn, share, make mistakes and above all create a sense of belonging,"**

often contain a minimum of 100 doses, can only be used for a short time after opening and the smallest container size for many drenches is five litres. After being told by local district veterinarians that Johne's disease was prevalent in the region, the network organised a mobile Gudair vaccination clinic so that lambs in local small flocks could be vaccinated by two fast-moving veterinarians. Sharing the vaccine pack in this way made the vaccination accessible to small farmers.



Small farmers learning about sheep health checks at a workshop led by NSW Local Land Services District Veterinarian Lou Baskind.

## What is the Small Farms Network?



**The Small Farms Network is a collaborative program, with support from government agencies**

The network has also tackled the knowledge gap by running carefully designed workshops. A winning combination has been to have a volunteer management committee of small farmers guiding



**To help small farmers build their knowledge on topics such as animal husbandry and biosecurity**

the work of a project coordinator. Based on input from members of the network, the committee identifies topics, ideas and content for workshops that the project



**The network has hosted 32 events in the capital region alone**

coordinator, Alex James, then brings to life.

The workshops cover topics such as animal husbandry and health, biosecurity, weeds, practical farm skills, managing water and local Indigenous natural resource management. Events include a hands-on component and opportunities to socialise.

*"There is no such thing as a silly question! The network allows participants to learn, share, make mistakes and above all create a sense of belonging,"* said Ms James.

This project received grant funding from the Australian Government through the National Landcare Program and in-kind support from South East Local Land Services.



[www.smallfarmscapital.org](http://www.smallfarmscapital.org)



# Collaboration: the pièce de résistance

## Animal Health Australia

**In November 2018, the inaugural Australian Veterinary Antimicrobial Stewardship (AVAMS) conference was held in Queensland.**

Delegates from veterinary, research, government, industry and producer backgrounds attended, along with international guests.

The conference was born out of chicken meat, red meat, pork, egg and dairy industry representatives joining forces in an informal communications network to keep each other up-to-date on what antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) meant and how they could best support their respective

industries, said Dr Kylie Hewson, Deputy Executive Director of the Australian Chicken Meat Federation.

*"We soon realised that many AMS stakeholders all had the same questions. It made sense to bring the key experts into the one place through AVAMS, so that everyone who wanted to know about AMS in Australian animals could hear the same information at the same time, but also identify opportunities for improving stewardship in Australian animal industries more collaboratively,"* said Dr Hewson.

The overall hope was that AVAMS would provide a better, larger platform for collaboration and knowledge-sharing between stakeholders, with national and

international experts providing a broad range of perspectives on retailer and consumer concerns, regulatory environments and the progress and issues in specific animal industries, all in line with Australia's first *National Antimicrobial Resistance [AMR] Strategy 2015–2019*.

A key feature of the conference was having the Australian Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Mark Schipp and Australia's Chief Medical Officer, Dr Brendan Murphy present on the effects of AMR on both animal and human health.

*"Stakeholders in human health have been undertaking collaborative initiatives on AMR/AMS for many years and AVAMS highlighted the importance for animal industries to start improving their collaborative efforts,"* explained Dr Hewson.

**"...AVAMS highlighted the importance for animal industries to start improving their collaborative efforts..."**



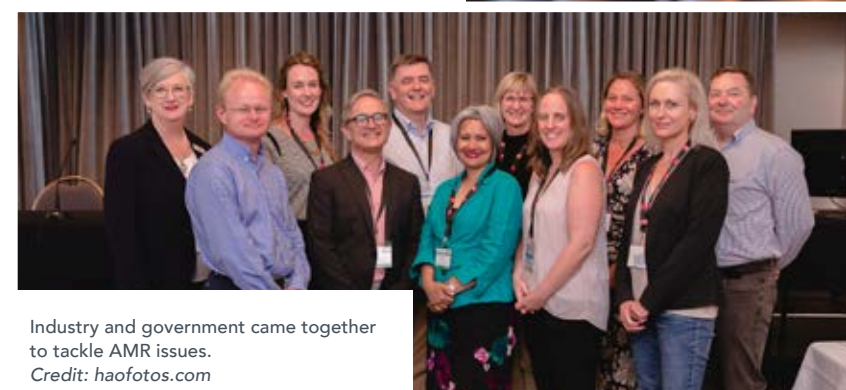
Delegates hearing from the Australian Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Mark Schipp on a national One Health approach to AMR. Credit: haofotos.com

## So what's next?

Planning for the next AVAMS conference is underway with the next conference to be held in November 2020. Major livestock industries have begun to develop the *Animal Industry AMS Research, Development and Extension Strategy*, with the aim of providing a mechanism for collaborative investments in animal AMS initiatives. Implementation is planned for the end of 2019.



<http://avams2018.w.yrd.currinda.com/>



Industry and government came together to tackle AMR issues. Credit: haofotos.com

Australia's Chief Medical Officer, Dr Brendan Murphy addressing delegates. Credit: haofotos.com



## AMR/AMS: what do they mean?

AMR is one of the biggest threats to human and animal health that we're facing today. AMR occurs when the germs or bacteria that cause infection become resistant to the medicines (such as antibiotics) that are used to treat them. This can affect humans and animals of any age, anywhere in the world.

To combat this, AMS is a collective set of strategies outlining preventative actions to minimise the need for antimicrobials and detailing how to use them responsibly when their use is required.

To find out more about AMS in Australian livestock industries read the report at [www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/antimicrobial-stewardship-in-australian-livestock-industries](http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/antimicrobial-stewardship-in-australian-livestock-industries)



# Measuring up

**A transition to using animal welfare as the key measure for livestock exports is supported by the industry, government and the wider community. But in practice, it's not an easy task.**

Welfare is both a scientific and an ethical concept, not a finite or absolute measure. For example, can you say the welfare state of an animal with a foot abscess is better or worse than one that is fearful? The goal is finding a way to be as objective as possible, and to include both physical and mental aspects.

**Renee Willis, PhD**  
researcher,  
Murdoch University,  
Livestock Export Program



Renee Willis is a vet, and undertaking PhD research in a team from the School of Veterinary Medicine at Murdoch University trying to come up with a way to make comparisons like this.

*"You can't write regulations based on animal welfare unless you can assess different animals in multiple situations with varying external factors being taken into account,"* said Dr Willis.

*"We are testing a suite of animal welfare indicators from farm to the in-market feedlot, with the aim of developing protocols on what makes a representative sample, how often, what time of day."*

The work is being funded by LiveCorp and Meat & Livestock

Australia through the Livestock Export Research and Development Program, with matching funding from the Australian Government.

Dr Willis is spending much of her time at farms and feedlots in Australia, on board export vessels, and at holding facilities overseas collecting data.

There are many animal welfare indicators being tested for cattle and sheep, such as standing versus lying behaviour, whether stock seem calm or anxious, and signs of ill health such as lameness. In addition, data is being collected on factors that might influence welfare, such as access to feed and water, temperature, sea swell, shelter, breed and stocking density.

*"The key is to work out which combination of indicators tell us something useful – do they provide a measure of welfare that can be benchmarked over time and used to predict or mitigate risks?"*

The project is due to finish in early 2021.

 [www.livecorp.com.au](http://www.livecorp.com.au)



Renee Willis is helping to test animal welfare indicators for cattle and sheep.

# Novel approach for livestock exports

LiveCorp

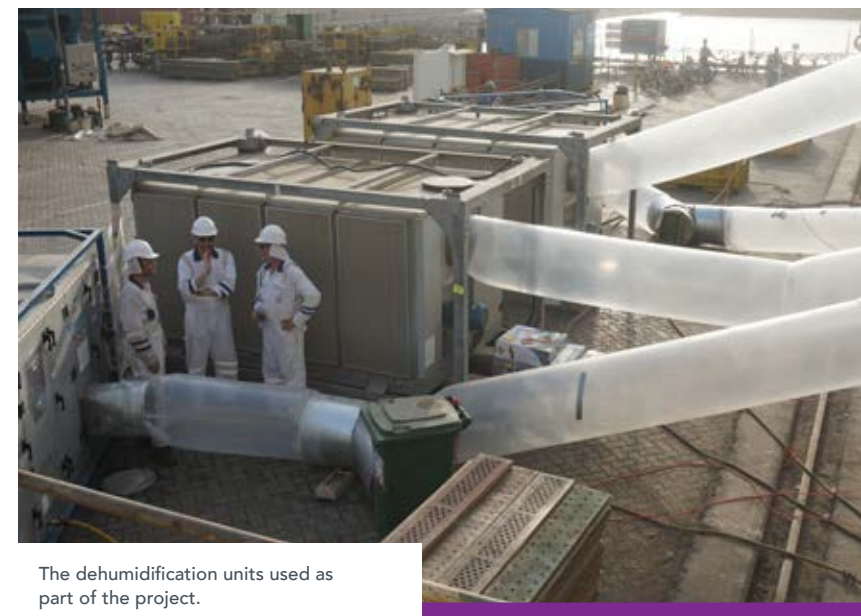
**A global search has put the spotlight on more than 130 technologies across 16 countries and 27 industries, seeking to identify solutions for managing heat stress of sheep on livestock export vessels.**

One shortlisted technology was dehumidification, which has now been tested by research body LiveCorp, fast-tracked by a \$2.2 million grant from the Australian Government.

Heat stress is a complex issue, and not something that can be easily 'solved'. Many factors influence the level of risk, including that some animals – like humans – are affected by heat more or less than others in the same conditions.

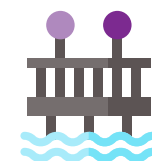
This is a blue-sky project. The key now is understanding whether the shortlisted technologies – whether alone, or in combination – offer sufficient promise as a commercial solution to warrant continued investigation.

 [www.livecorp.com.au](http://www.livecorp.com.au)



The dehumidification units used as part of the project.

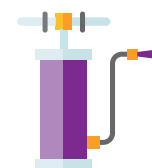
## How did the project work?



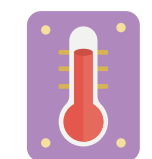
Dehumidification units were set up on a wharf in the Middle East in summer



A ship was tied alongside the wharf. There were no livestock involved to remove the risk to animal welfare



Dehumidified air was pumped into several decks at different rates, with the ship's ventilation system set at different speeds over several days



Automated loggers measured temperature and relative humidity, as well as the combined, all-important wet-bulb temperature



The data is now being analysed to see what dehumidification effect was achieved



# SMS to SOS

**WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development**

**More than 170 cattle producers in the shires of Albany, Denmark and Plantagenet in southern Western Australia have had the opportunity to participate in a new cattle surveillance network and keep up-to-date with cattle health issues in the area.**

The pilot network, which is coordinated by the WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD), is trialling the use of SMS technology to help protect Western Australia's biosecurity and livestock markets.

**“Western Australia's reputation for producing healthy cattle is based on a biosecurity system...”**

The network involves producers responding to SMS messages each fortnight, asking if they have seen any new signs of illness in their cattle. The responses are collated and de-identified to form part of a monthly cattle health report that is emailed to participants.

DPIRD veterinary officer Andrew Larkins said the data collected by the Great Southern Cattle Surveillance Network has assisted in ensuring market access for WA cattle and cattle products and improved the state's ability to detect exotic or emerging disease early.

*“Western Australia's reputation for producing healthy cattle is based on a biosecurity system that demonstrates to a scientific standard that our stock are fit for trade,” Dr Larkins said.*

*“This new pilot network has helped to strengthen this system*

*while also giving valuable feedback to producers in the form of local information on the prevalence and causes of illness.”*

*“The monthly reports outline what cattle illnesses have been occurring in the area, common causes and what producers can do about them. The idea is to give producers more information about what the current biosecurity risks might be for their property,” Dr Larkins said.*

*“Members who report signs of illness in their cattle can request a follow-up phone call from a DPIRD vet. The purpose of the call is to learn more about the case and discuss what support we may be able to provide. This might include services such as disease investigations and post-mortem sampling to try and get a definite diagnosis on the case or it may be to refer them to their local private vet.”*

Sheena Smith, a beef producer and agriculture event coordinator from Narrikup, is an industry advocate assisting in the promotion and coordination of the network.

*“I see the network as a great opportunity for cattle producers to learn more about the diseases that might be causing trouble on their farm and in the region and the management changes that can be put in place to minimise the immediate impact,” Mrs Smith said.*



Sheena Smith (left) with Dr Andrew Larkins.

**“This information enables producers to assess their biosecurity measures early and protect their herd.”**

*“The monthly reports provided by DPIRD are a chance for producers to have a look at what illnesses have been occurring in their region as a whole and compare that to what is going on at home. This information enables producers*

*to assess their biosecurity measures early and protect their herd.”*

The pilot project is facilitated by DPIRD and is currently under evaluation. The project was funded

through a grant from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture.


[www.agric.wa.gov.au](http://www.agric.wa.gov.au)



# Wildlife on watch

**You might already know that diseases can spread amongst livestock, but did you know that wildlife can carry diseases that can infect you and your animals?**

Avian Influenza (AI) (commonly known as 'bird flu') is one of these conditions. AI viruses circulate in many species of wild birds, predominantly in waterfowl such as ducks, geese and swans, and wading birds. However, poultry such as chickens, turkeys and quail can also be infected when they mix with wild waterfowl, or pick up the virus from faecal contamination of water, feed, or the environment.

In 2005, the Australian Government increased AI surveillance activities in response to the highly

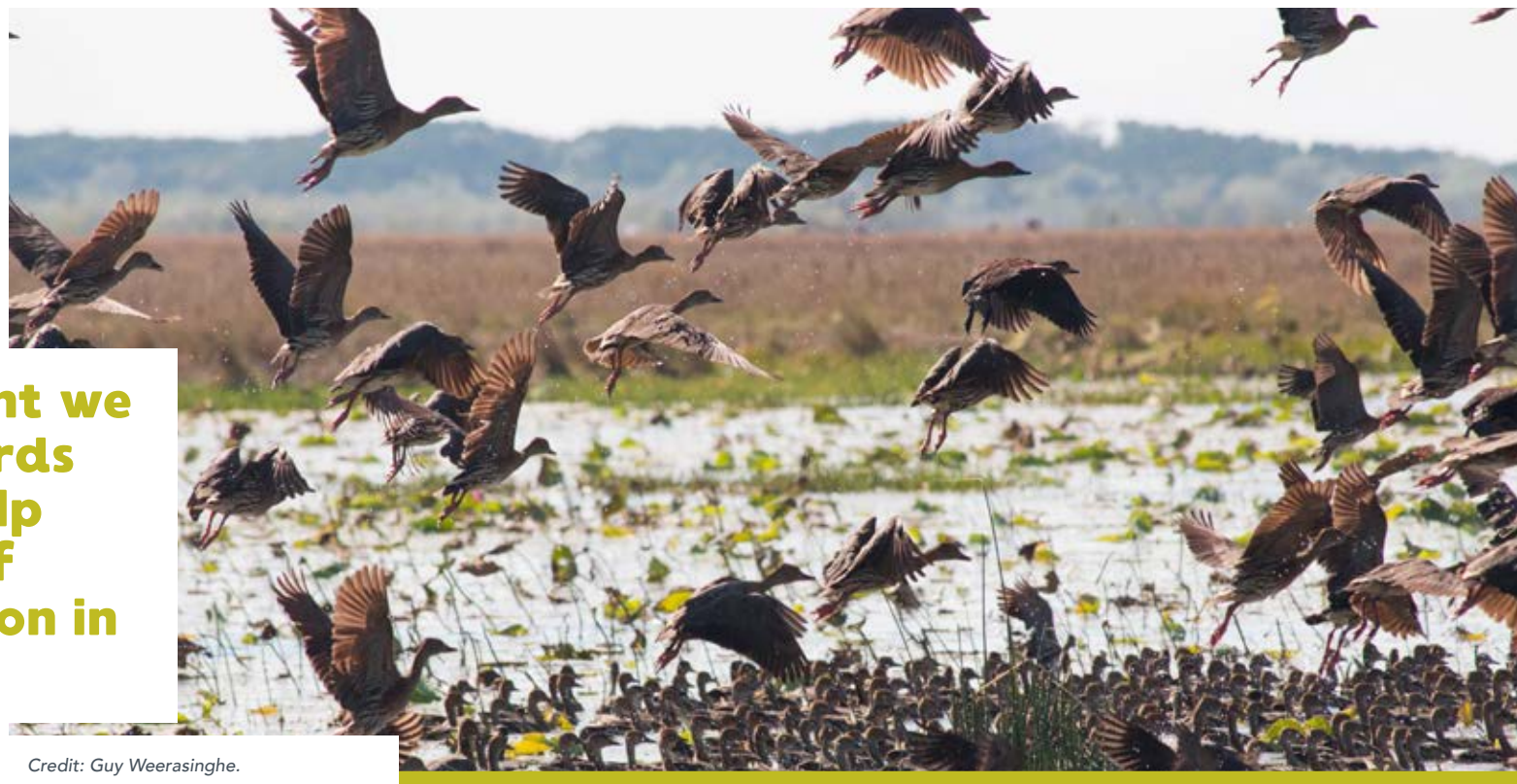
pathogenic H5N1 strain of the virus circulating in Asia. This led to the establishment of the National Avian Influenza Wild Bird (NAIWB) Surveillance Program in 2006 as part of a broader, national approach to identifying and managing the AI risks to Australia. NAIWB activities are conducted nationally and a steering group ensures the national coordination and collaboration of wild bird AI surveillance activities.

## Wildlife Health Australia

In Australia, the risk of an AI outbreak being introduced from overseas is relatively low, thanks to our geographic positioning. The main source of information relating to AI viruses circulating in Australia is from samples obtained from wild bird species (mostly waterfowl and waders). Australia is fortunate that AI is rarely detected in our poultry, despite the continued challenge of managing outbreaks in poultry overseas by continuously changing AI viruses.

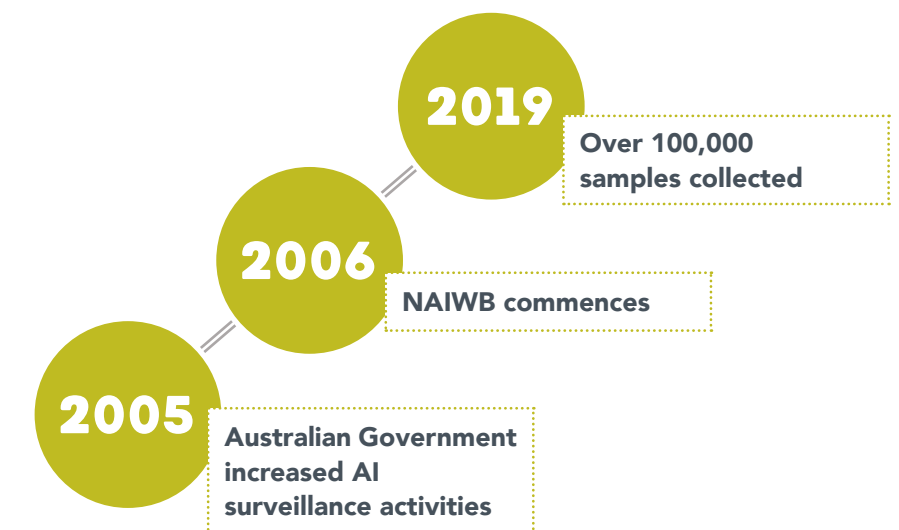
Tiggy Grillo, National Coordinator, Wildlife Health Australia (WHA) says the surveillance program provides key information to assist in managing the risk of AI to Australia's poultry industry.

*"The program ensures that strains of AI virus circulating in Australia can be detected, and surveillance helps to pinpoint periods where there is higher risk of transmission to poultry (e.g. after periods of high rainfall followed by drought). Considering the number of outbreaks in Australian poultry has been low, maintenance of diagnostic tests in Australian laboratories rely on wild bird samples."*



Credit: Guy Weerasinghe.

**"It's so important we monitor wild birds nationally to help us keep track of ongoing evolution in the viruses..."**



Since the start of NAIWB, over 100,000 samples have been collected from migratory shorebirds and nomadic waterfowl species from across the country. There have been no highly pathogenic AI viruses detected in wild birds.

*"It's so important we monitor wild birds nationally to help us keep track of ongoing evolution in the viruses over time and ensure our diagnostic tests can detect new strains circulating in Australia and emerging virus strains overseas. The wild bird samples help to monitor the changes in these viruses over time,"* said Ms Grillo.

NAIWB surveillance activities are conducted Australia-wide with funding provided by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and significant in-kind support from jurisdictional agencies, researchers and representative's institutions.

 [www.wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au](http://www.wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au)

## National Wildlife Biosecurity Guidelines available now

WHA recently released a valuable resource to help Australians working in the wildlife sector – the *National Wildlife Biosecurity Guidelines*.

It's well known in Australia that the majority of new infectious diseases that are found arise from wildlife. These not only pose risks to public health and agriculture, they also contribute to the decline of threatened species.

CEO of WHA, Rupert Woods said, *"These new Guidelines draw together the latest information and insights on how wildlife workers in all fields and working across Australia can adopt best practices in applying biosecurity controls to every aspect of their work."*



# A shared responsibility

Australian Livestock and Rural Transporters Association

**It may not be the first thing that springs to mind when you think about animal welfare, but managing livestock effluent in transit is an important consideration for the Australian Livestock and Rural Transporters Association (ALRTA).**

Effluent is a primary vector for the spread of damaging pests and diseases such as Johne's disease. However, while many parties in the livestock supply chain contribute to, and have responsibility for,

controlling risks relating to animal effluent during land transport, there is no national strategy for its management.

ALRTA has taken a number of steps to engage with governments and parties in the livestock supply chain to implement practical solutions to address the issue of effluent loss on public roadways, said Mick Debenham, ALRTA Animal Welfare Committee Chair.

*"For example, we've adopted a policy encouraging members to fit effluent capture tanks to all new trailers, to help reduce effluent loss in transit. However, effluent capture tanks are currently of limited value as there is a lack of roadside effluent disposal facilities in Australia,"* said Mr Debenham.

## Who is ALRTA?

ALRTA is a national association representing more than 700 road transport companies based in the small communities of regional and rural Australia, who provide the 'first and last' link of the supply chain for Australia's agricultural industries.

*"That's why, in 2017, ALRTA representatives travelled to New Zealand to inspect their network of roadside effluent facilities. In 2018, ALRTA was successful in receiving federal grant funding to build a pilot site in Australia. This project is in the early stages of development, with a number of suitable sites in south-east Queensland under consideration. Longer term, it is hoped that government and industry will work together to establish a network of such sites at strategic locations."*

The ALRTA has also received grant funding under the Heavy Vehicle Safety Initiative to develop a registered industry code of practice for managing livestock effluent in transit.

Certainly, more can be done to address livestock effluent loss in transit through further research, identification of best practice, communication and cooperation among parties in the supply chain and the provision of infrastructure at strategic locations across Australia.

 [www.alrta.org.au](http://www.alrta.org.au)



NZ roadside effluent disposal facility.

# LIVEXCHANGE

# 19

## 30-31 October 2019

### The Ville Resort, Townsville, QLD

**LIVEXchange is a joint venture between the Australian Livestock Export Corporation (LiveCorp) and the Australian Livestock Exporters Corporation (ALEC) and is the key biennial event for the Australian livestock export industry.**

LIVEXchange provides a unique opportunity for exporters, producers and industry stakeholders to come together and discuss important opportunities and challenges for the livestock export trade, focused around the continual improvements of supply chain capabilities, animal welfare outcomes and market opportunities.

LIVEXchange'19 is proudly sponsored by:



For more information and sponsorship opportunities email: [LIVEX@livecorp.com.au](mailto:LIVEX@livecorp.com.au)

# LIVEXCHANGE

Australian Livestock Exporters' Council **ALEC**

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**QLEA**  
Queensland Livestock Exporters Association

## [www.livexchangeconference.com.au](http://www.livexchangeconference.com.au)



# The wheels reinvented: what's next?

## It's been an incredible journey for the wonderful war horse Savesomtimetodream.\*

After 113 race starts netting him more than \$220,000 in prize money and several country cups, retirement beckoned for the 10-year-old; however a new career was soon on the horizon.

Harness Racing Australia (HRA) had a plan to create a series of resources aimed at assisting those with retired Standardbreds to make the most of their retraining and encourage those considering the breed for equestrian pursuits to take the plunge. The aim was to demonstrate the transition a Standardbred makes from the racetrack to a riding horse in a detailed step-by-step process that was easy to follow and replicate.

Savesomtimetodream (better known as Buck) began his retraining with HRA's Equine Welfare Manager Kathleen Mullan at the beginning of May 2018. He progressed quickly from a shaggy and ungainly old racehorse to a sleek, muscled show horse, disproving the old adage; it is indeed possible to teach an old dog new tricks.

\* See the first part of this story in *The Link*, Issue 2 - [www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au](http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au)

Buck's first public outing was to compete at the Seymour Agricultural Show.

*"He caused quite the stir around the arena as he scooped the pool, taking out the Supreme Led and Champion ridden Standardbred awards as well as the Alabar HERO Series qualifier, giving him the right to compete in the final in January 2019,"* said Ms Mullan.

*"Buck has since taken out a number of other Standardbred titles and now has an impressive list of credentials"*



Kathleen Mullan, HRA's Equine Health and Welfare Coordinator, with Buck.

### Harness Racing Australia

The next chapter of Buck's journey will begin with the search for a suitable new stable to take over the reins in his burgeoning show horse career. He will remain the property of his racing family with a guaranteed permanent retirement home at the end of his equestrian days. However, HRA feel the opportunity for him to continue his career with a dedicated new rider is the best possible demonstration of a successful transition from track to hack.



[www.thereisnofinishline.com.au](http://www.thereisnofinishline.com.au)

# Biosecurity program makes a lot of sense

## Victorian Farmers' Federation

## The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) extension team, Stock Sense, has entered its seventh year and its longevity is no accident.

The project has constantly evolved, but has remained true to its original mission to increase biosecurity standards on farms in Victoria. How has it managed to survive so long when other similar programs have fallen by the wayside?

When the project was established it was a unique, producer-driven, biosecurity extension project, originally proposed because

of concerns raised by the VFF Livestock Council in 2010 about the need to improve biosecurity awareness across the value chain in Victoria.

Now, the project delivers a number of workshops every year throughout the state, holding one workshop in each Catchment Management Authority region per year, said Dr Patrick Kluver, Senior Livestock Project Specialist.

*"We aim to cover areas that aren't always serviced, the majority of producers will have a workshop within an hour's drive at least every second year. Each workshop is tailored to the region and the seasonal conditions. This is achieved by establishing a local advisory committee consisting of producers, consultants and*

*government regulatory officers. The goal is to make sure that each workshop is relevant to the target audience which maximises numbers and maximises impact."*

In agricultural extension, participants self-nominate for projects aimed at farm productivity. However, in biosecurity extension the audience is much broader and they may or may not be interested in implementing change.

*"No single organisation has the scope or capacity to be able to contact all producers all the time but to maximise impact, organisations need to work collaboratively. The project has always strived to work collaboratively with stakeholders and other organisations such as Agriculture Victoria, Birchip Cropping Group, Meat & Livestock Australia, Australian Wool Innovation and Cattle Council of Australia,"* said Dr Kluver.

Towards the end of 2016, a clear gap in the original project was identified. The project as it stood was predominately aimed at professional or commercial producers and the specific needs of lifestyle or hobby farmers were not always being met. This led to the development of a second project, specifically targeting the peri-urban community. The project commenced in 2018 with weekend workshops and several more events planned for 2019.



[www.vff.org.au/stocksense](http://www.vff.org.au/stocksense)

## 2017-18

The project ran



39 workshops

with

2,443 attendees



at an average of



63 producers per event



# Giving lambs a leg up

**Sheep Producers Australia and WoolProducers Australia**

**Improving on-farm lamb survivability is a key priority for Australian sheep and wool producers.**

WoolProducers Australia, Sheep Producers Australia, Meat & Livestock Australia and Australian Wool Innovation have committed to developing a joint *Sheep Reproduction RD&E Strategy 2019-2024* for the Australian sheep and wool industries.

The collaborative plan being developed by the organisations will identify ways that producers, peak councils and the Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) can work towards achieving increased lamb survivability, said William Oldfield, Sheep Health and Welfare Policy Manager.

*"The Strategy will focus on increasing lamb survival through targeted industry RD&E and adoption of relevant on-farm management practices. To facilitate this, the peak councils and the RDCs will continue to invest in extension of research outcomes*

*and drive increased uptake by producers,"* said Mr Oldfield.

The first development phase of the implementation plan will be an independent review of existing benefits, costs and impacts of current RD&E activities in sheep reproduction and lamb survival against key industry performance targets. Consultation with industry stakeholders will begin shortly.

[www.sheepproducers.com.au](http://www.sheepproducers.com.au)  
[www.woolproducers.com.au](http://www.woolproducers.com.au)



Credit: Taryn Mokotupu.

# The fence that's saving the outback

**Remote Area Planning and Development Board**

**Wild dogs cost jobs and livelihoods for many in the Australian agricultural sector.**

Each year millions of dollars' worth of livestock are killed or maimed by wild dogs. In Western Queensland alone, the region has seen a 75% drop in sheep numbers.

This negative impact reaches beyond the farm and into the social and economic fabric of outback communities, said Rob Chandler, Chairman, Remote Area Planning and Development (RAPAD).

*"Populations are declining, employment prospects are*

*dwindling, shopfronts in the main streets are increasingly vacant and there is little economic stimulus,"* said Cr Chandler.

These effects were felt by producers in Central Western Queensland. To address this, in 2016, RAPAD partnered with the Queensland and Australian governments to build fences around groups of properties to stop wild dogs and bring back the sheep. The RAPAD Queensland Feral Pest Initiative (QFPI) Cluster Fence project was born.

With the support of RAPAD and QFPI, neighbours in the area

agreed to work together to build 1.5 metre-high fences around groups of properties.

Cr Chandler said the fence does more than just control the number of wild dogs on their properties.

*"It also creates jobs and enables wool growers to have better and more predictable productivity,"* said Cr Chandler.

**"It also creates jobs and enables wool growers to have better and more predictable productivity."**

Once the fences were built, the proportion of lambs surviving the vulnerable period after their birth increased in some properties from 30% to 80%. That's more than doubling the number of lambs surviving through to maturity.

The project's long-term goal is to be the catalyst for achieving significant improvement in the profitability of regional businesses both rural and non-rural, a more stable community, social growth, and better environmental and biosecurity control.

[www.notjustafence.org](http://www.notjustafence.org)



**Top:** Completed fence at North Barcoo.  
**Bottom:** Final section of Glenaras fence being completed.





# No weak link in this chain

**The red meat industry is progressively moving towards a fully quality assured status across the supply chain. Part of the Meat & Livestock Australia red meat strategy is to identify and fix any weak links in the chain.**

However, the saleyard sector as a link in the supply chain has been well-served by a long-standing industry quality assurance system - the National Saleyard Quality Assurance (NSQA) program.

Mark McDonald, NSQA's Executive Officer, said accessibility has

been one of the main aims of the program since its introduction in the early 2000s.

*"The way our system is designed is to help all saleyards regardless of their size and location,"* said Mr McDonald.

The system is backed by relevant national and industry standards and best practice, where applicable. It also includes a manual which covers a wide range of saleyard-related topics, such as food safety, product quality, stock identification and traceability to ensure saleyards meet and maintain recognised national standards in the handling of livestock through all stages of the red meat market.

**National Saleyards Quality Assurance Inc.**

**"The system is backed by relevant national and industry standards..."**

*"Saleyard staff work through the NSQA manual to determine their compliance and identify areas for improvement,"* said Mr McDonald.

Steve Bourne, Director of Operations at Naracoorte Lucindale Council knows firsthand the benefits of being a member of the NSQA program.

*"The NSQA provides a program to support internal auditing and annual independent external audits. The Naracoorte Regional Livestock Exchange (NRLE) utilises the audit findings to first, ensure we are compliant, and second, to improve the service we provide by addressing any required corrective actions. NSQA is a great program that has assisted the NRLE to develop to the high-quality selling facility it is today,"* said Mr Bourne.



[www.nsqa.com.au](http://www.nsqa.com.au)



Colac Saleyards are a member of NSQA.

# Take me to your leader

**Russell Hunter,**  
Biosecurity Tasmania

**What is leadership? This is a question ripe for subjective interpretation. Even academically, there is no single, agreed definition.**

A 2016 report from the Melbourne Centre for Workplace Leadership titled *Leadership at Work: Do Australian leaders have what it takes?* highlighted this fact. Moreover, leadership takes on many guises and is highly context-dependent - leading a military battalion is surely different to leading a team creating a product advertisement.

So, notwithstanding the lack of a definition, what is 'leadership' in public animal health services? First we need to answer what is 'public animal health services'?

In my research toward a Master of Veterinary Public Health Management at the University of Sydney, I have defined 'public

animal health services' to be government or government-funded organisations that focus on the health and welfare of animals and their products.

Given that definition of our context, we can now start to think about what our idea of a 'leader' and 'leadership' is.

An important concept I have come across during my study is that of 'implicit leadership theories' (ILTs). Originally defined in the 1980s, the core of this concept is that you, me, and everyone else have some subconscious idea of what constitutes a 'leader' or 'leadership' - this is termed a 'prototype'.

When external stimuli align with part of, or your entire prototype, you believe you are seeing a leader or leadership in action.

Various strata apply here: you will have concepts of a general leader (think Obama or Ghandi), a leader in a specific field such as business

(think Gail Kelly), or a much closer leader (think the head of your organisational unit, or even your supervisor).

By learning what the most common perceptions of effective leadership is in public animal health services, we have the opportunity to actively foster effective leadership practices (or, indeed, recruit the right people) for our context. A focus on this element of organisational behaviour can ensure that well into the future we, as a collective, are putting the right things in place and addressing the right risks to protect our animal industries and public health.

After all, we cannot execute our objectives as a public animal health service without people, and it is our people that are our best guides as to how they want to be led.



**"After all, we cannot execute our objectives as a public animal health service without people..."**



# Meet our members



AHA works in partnership with our members and other stakeholders to keep Australia free of new and emerging diseases, to improve animal health, strengthen biosecurity, enhance market access and foster the resilience and integrity of the Australian animal health system.

Each edition we'll introduce you to one of our 34 member organisations so you can learn more about the great work they do for the Australian agriculture industry.

This issue we're excited to profile the Australian Chicken Meat Federation (ACMF) and their Executive Director, Vivien Kite.

Formed in 1964, the ACMF aims to promote and represent the interests of the chicken meat industry at a national level. The ACMF represents all elements of the meat chicken industry, including chicken growers and processors and other parties involved in the production and distribution of chicken meat in Australia.

The ACMF plays a key role in developing policy and setting

industry standards in Australia in areas such as food safety, animal welfare, farming and processing practices, biosecurity, disease prevention and management and environmental practices. Another important role it plays is providing information about the Australian chicken meat industry, how it operates and about its products, to consumers and the broader public.

**"...ACMF aims to promote and represent the interests of the chicken meat industry at a national level."**



## Spotlight Vivien Kite

**We caught up with ACMF's Executive Director, Vivien Kite, to chat about the meat chicken industry in Australia and why she loves what she does.**

### What do you love most about the industry?

What I love about the chicken meat industry is its preparedness to embrace new technologies, attitudes and ways of operating. Despite being an intensely competitive industry, this has been the key to the chicken industry's strong growth over the past 40 years. I love to see the industry competing so successfully for the hearts and minds (and most importantly, space on the dinner plate!) of Australian consumers. I am also immensely proud of the fact that the industry puts so much trust in me to act and speak on its behalf.

### Do you have any career highlights?

Convincing the industry to embrace a number of significant initiatives, such as the voluntary discontinuation of the use of

several products and practices. One that comes to mind was the adoption of antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) programs by companies representing over 90% of total chicken production. I was also proud to have received the support of the poultry industry to manage the national Newcastle disease survey conducted in 2000. At the time, it was believed to have been the largest, active surveillance program for a poultry pathogen ever undertaken anywhere in the world.

### What are the most common misconceptions about the industry?

That hormones are fed to meat chickens! What an old nugget that one is. The truth is, Australian chickens are not fed or administered hormones and this has been the case for more than 50 years. And the notion that meat chickens are grown in cages – never have been in Australia and never will be.

### What excites you about the future of the industry?

I'm excited by the potential there is for ongoing growth across the industry. This growth will flow

**"Australian chickens are not fed or administered hormones and this has been the case for more than 50 years."**



from further efficiency gains due to improvements in feeding, husbandry, flock health and processing technologies, and also from increasing diversification of the products produced and markets served by the industry.

### Why was it so important for ACMF to be involved in the AVAMS conference last year?

It has been a source of ongoing frustration to me over the years that the chicken industry has often been blamed for the emergence of AMR, whereas in fact it has had responsible-use programs and practices in place for decades. We've also been leaders in the development and adoption of preventative measures.

The industry has largely gone unrecognised for the advances it has made in these areas. It was therefore really important for us to take the opportunity to showcase what we have done and to share with others our experiences with the adoption of AMS programs. It was also an opportunity to learn from others, both here in Australia and internationally.



[www.chicken.org.au](http://www.chicken.org.au)



# Leadership Profile

Animal Health Australia

**Head of the Melbourne Veterinary School, Professor Anna Meredith has over 26 years of veterinary clinical, teaching and research experience in wild animal health and welfare.**

With a stellar career spanning across the United Kingdom and Australia, we caught up with Anna to hear more about why she loves what she does.

**How did you feel when you found out about your appointment as Head of the Melbourne Veterinary School?**

My initial reaction was complete surprise. I hadn't expected to receive the offer so quickly after the interview and I was in the middle of the visitor centre at the Phillip Island Penguin Parade! I felt incredibly honoured and privileged to have been selected from an international field, and excited by the new adventure that lay ahead of me. After nearly 27 years in my previous role at the University of Edinburgh it was a very big

decision for myself and my family, as it meant coming to Australia on my own for the first couple of years until my son has finished school.

I felt ready to challenge myself in a new role but also a little anxious about moving halfway around the world to a new country where I knew I'd have an awful lot to learn! I needn't have worried though, as everyone has been so welcoming and helpful as I settled in, and Melbourne is a fantastic city to live in.

**What's the main thing you hope to achieve in your role?**

The University of Melbourne Veterinary School already has an excellent international reputation. I hope to bring a fresh pair of eyes and different international experiences and perspectives to be able to lead the School into the future, with a very clear vision and strategy. My main goal is to maintain and develop our excellence and impact in veterinary science through learning, teaching, research, clinical practice and engagement.

Ultimately, I think our main goal as a Veterinary School is to equip our



Anna Meredith, Head of Melbourne Veterinary School

veterinary graduates and scientists with the competencies and resilience they need to contribute effectively to animal health and welfare, and to society. This means we need to recognise, predict and respond innovatively to the rapidly changing needs of veterinary science, the veterinary profession, animal health, global health and sustainability.

**You've had quite an extensive career. What's been your highlight so far?**

I've loved every aspect of my career so far, starting off in general practice, working as a vet in zoos and running the Exotic and Wild Animal Service at Edinburgh for many years, and my research in conservation medicine. Throughout all of this runs the thread of my love of teaching, and the satisfaction of seeing others blossom and thrive.

I have to say the true highlight was being awarded an Order of the British Empire this year for services to animal welfare and the veterinary profession. Receiving the award at Buckingham Palace from Prince William was such a thrill and honour, and a moment I'll never forget. He spoke to me

about how he'd shorn a sheep for the first time the day before, and was so proud of himself. It was rather surreal!

**As a veterinarian, what are some of the biggest challenges you've come across?**

After almost 30 years in the profession, I think the biggest challenges we face surround communication and the human factors in our work. As veterinary professionals we all face so many daily challenges, whether it's dealing with difficult conversations and decisions over individual animals with their owners, facing complex health and welfare

**"...I think the biggest challenges we face surround communication and the human factors in our work."**

situations in populations, or juggling our work/life balance. Whatever branch of the profession we're in, learning and mastering the right skills to be able to balance the often conflicting viewpoints and needs of the large variety of stakeholders we have to work with, in order to achieve the best solution and outcome, can be the most difficult challenge of all.

**Do you have any advice for others looking to progress in the industry?**

Firstly, I'd remind them how fortunate they are that veterinary science training provides such an unparalleled platform from which to follow so many different options for a fascinating and satisfying career; one that can really make a difference to animal and human health. My advice is to keep an open mind and seize opportunities as they arise, as many of us don't end up where we thought our career might lead us – I never imagined when I was starting out as a vet that I would be a Head of a Veterinary School.

Secondly, I'd advise them to prioritise looking after themselves and those close to them. There is increasing recognition that the mental health and resilience of vets is a real concern, and we all need to work to improve that. The maxim to simply 'be kind' is one to live by, and that means to yourself as well as others.

Finally, I'd say that almost everyone occasionally has insecurities or feels 'imposter syndrome', even if they don't admit it. That's natural, but as long as you strive to do your best, no-one can reproach you for that.



Anna performing field anaesthesia of a red squirrel in Scotland.



# In the know

## PigPass app now available

Australian Pork Limited have finalised the development of the PigPass app. The app has been designed to make reporting to the PigPass database even simpler by enabling PigPass reporting on the run – and an active internet connection isn't required to use the app!



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## New look Farm Biosecurity website

Sourcing information on how to secure your farm against diseases, pests and weeds just became a whole lot easier with the launch of the new Farm Biosecurity website.

While it may look a little different, producers returning to the site will find the same valuable information they have come to expect from Farm Biosecurity.



[www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au)



## Country Handle with Care – Costa and Dirtgirl tackle biosecurity

ABC TV eco-warriors Dirtgirl, Scrapboy and Costa the Garden Gnome, along with some of the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy officers get together in Country - Handle with Care; a seven-episode mini-series highlighting the beauty of our country and learning what our dedicated biosecurity officers, scientists and Indigenous rangers at the frontline of protecting Australia from exotic pests and disease threats.



[www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/australia/northern-biosecurity/country-handle-with-care](http://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity/australia/northern-biosecurity/country-handle-with-care)

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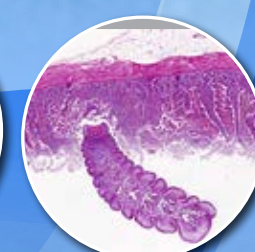
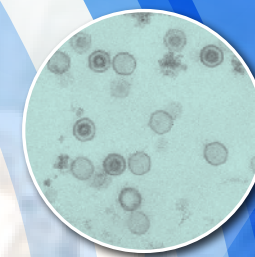
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# 2021 Australian Biosecurity Symposium

*Biosecurity collective forum*



Join us for the second Australian Biosecurity Symposium – hosted by Animal Health Australia, the Invasive Species Council and the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions.

**The Symposium will focus on:**

- preventative biosecurity practices
- innovation and outside-of-the-box thinking
- the exchange of knowledge and ideas across the biosecurity collective - plants, animals, pest animals, weeds, wildlife, aquatics, humans and the environment
- progressing the five-point plan to future-proof Australia's biosecurity system, launched at the 2019 Symposium.

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