



# **Guidelines for the Development of a Cooperative Biosecurity Plan for Grazing Livestock**

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## AIM

Provide guidelines for producer groups to set up and maintain a cooperative biosecurity plan (CBP) for an endemic disease in grazing livestock. The cooperative may be based on a region or an industry group such as local dairy producers or a stud breed society.

These Guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive but only to outline approaches and elements that may be considered as determined necessary by a group proposing to establish a CBP.

## BACKGROUND

A CBP is a set of agreed actions that a group of producers with common goals implement to prevent the incursion of disease(s) into herds or flocks within the group and to manage disease if it occurs. It may outline measures including (but not limited to) conditions on animal movements into the area, vaccine policy and response to disease detection.

The use of a property biosecurity plan for each property within the region is important to underpin a CBP. The *National Farm Biosecurity Reference Manual for Grazing Livestock Production* is available at [www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au). It is available as a reference document to assist in developing a livestock property biosecurity plan. Each production system could have a different set of biosecurity threats, challenges and operating environments, which can be addressed utilising the principles and approaches identified in the reference manual.

## GUIDELINES FOR A COOPERATIVE BIOSECURITY PLAN

A CBP that covers one or more endemic diseases **could** include the following components (note, not all of these components will be relevant for all groups, depending on the species and diseases of interest).

### Essential elements:

- a) ***Demonstrable producer commitment from all producers within the cooperative biosecurity group to protect the disease status of the region or group, including agreed aims and objectives of the group and disease(s) covered by the CBP.***
- b) ***All members of the CBP have a property biosecurity plan in place.***

### Optional elements:

- c) ***monitoring of stock and suspect cases are investigated and reported.***
- d) ***Technical information and operational aspects of the CBP are actively communicated to producers, agents and advisors.***
- e) ***Entry requirements for animals moving into the group are set and followed***
- f) ***Provision of health status information is required for all stock moving into, and recommended for stock moving out of, the CBP; e.g. Cattle Health Declaration.***
- g) ***Develop a formal industry-government partnership to provide the recognition necessary for industry to successfully implement and manage the CBP.***
- h) ***Active surveillance<sup>1</sup> appropriate to the disease(s) of concern is undertaken to detect disease early. Active surveillance may be a mandatory element for groups wishing to use their status for a trading/marketing advantage, such as for Johne's disease.***

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<sup>1</sup> A planned surveillance program based on on-farm or abattoir screening

- i) Technical assistance<sup>2</sup> is available for all herds or flocks that are suspected or infected with disease.***
- j) Control or eradication programs (as appropriate) are implemented on infected properties.***
- k) Tracing of high risk movements backward and forward and high risk neighbours (if appropriate).***
- l) Compliance is verified and performance is reported at an agreed frequency.***

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<sup>2</sup> May be provided by government or private veterinarians or other suitably qualified person(s)

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COOPERATIVE BIOSECURITY PLAN FRAMEWORK AND CHECKLIST

**NOTE: Below are some examples of how the CBP framework and checklists may look. These are examples only and have been developed to assist potential groups of producers understand how the criteria may be met.**

### STEP 1. FORMATION OF THE GROUP

- Cooperative biosecurity groups will be an aggregation of producers from a defined geographical region or a defined group of producers with common interests and production systems who are all committed to working together to prevent and respond to an incursion of specified disease(s).
- The group may be initiated by several enthusiastic farmers, farm advisors/vets from a local area or members of a trading group with common goals (for example a group breeding scheme or breed society who have a common desire to reduce or maintain the level of disease in their area or group).
- Alternatively, the group may already be established and could include existing grower groups.
- Support from potential members of the group should be demonstrated (for example through a survey or poll, or producers have to sign up to be a part of the CBP).
- The group should nominate a coordinator or a chairperson and should name the group.

### STEP 2. ACCOUNTABILITY/RESPONSIBILITY

The group should determine responsibilities for each member of the group and identify the activities required to develop and maintain a CBP.

Example responsibilities of producers may include:

- ✓ Implement property biosecurity plans that are consistent with the CBP
- ✓ Comply with the CBP requirements
- ✓ Maintain records of any stock movements
- ✓ Meet the annual audit requirements (if required)
- ✓ Regularly monitor their stock for signs of disease
- ✓ If infection is suspected or confirmed, develop a Property Disease Management Plan and carry out management practices under the Property Disease Management Plan, covering costs of management practices as required.

## Essential elements

- a) Demonstrable producer commitment from all producers within the cooperative biosecurity group to protect the disease status of the region or group, including agreed aims and objectives of the group and disease(s) covered by the CBP.**

OBJECTIVE: Producers within the cooperative biosecurity group are able to demonstrate that they are committed to protecting and maintaining the disease status of the region or group.

HOW (example actions): The group needs to decide on the following principles and record these:

- ✓ Discuss and agree on the expectations of the group
- ✓ Identify specific diseases or conditions of concern to the group
- ✓ Agree on the disease(s) that will be included in the CBP
- ✓ Determine and agree on the aims and objectives for the specified disease(s) in the CBP, for:
  - the cooperative biosecurity group as a whole; and
  - at the individual property level of each property within the CBP
- ✓ Determine the roles and responsibilities of each member of the group for:
  - their involvement with the group; and
  - what they will do on their property to meet the criteria of the biosecurity plan.
- ✓ Identify resources available to the group, including means of promoting and maintaining awareness of the CBP and sources of consistent technical advice
- ✓ Outline clear strategies for protecting the group from incursion and responding to suspect and confirmed infection with diseases of concern and include a process for protection against high risk neighbours.
- ✓ Develop a set of clear business/operating rules for the group that aim to reduce the risk of personal conflict within the group (review these at least annually)
- ✓ A copy of the CBP (and business rules) should be distributed to all members of the group

- b) All members of the CBP have a property biosecurity plan in place**

OBJECTIVE: CBPs are underpinned by the implementation of property biosecurity plans by all members of the group.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ The *National Farm Biosecurity Reference Manual for Grazing Livestock Production* is available at [www.farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au). It is a reference document for use in developing a property livestock biosecurity plan.
- ✓ Each production system could have a different range of biosecurity threats, challenges and operating environments, which must be addressed with relevant approaches based on the principles identified in the manual or with advice from qualified advisors.

- ✓ Property biosecurity plans should be consistent with the agreed strategies and rules of the CBP, and include measures to prevent introduction of relevant diseases and to limit spread and clinical impact of diseases should they occur.
- ✓ For relevant diseases, plans must comply with acts and regulations within the relevant jurisdiction(s).

## Optional elements

### ***c) Regular monitoring of stock and suspect cases are investigated and reported.***

OBJECTIVE: Any suspect case is investigated by a nominated technical advisor (see point i, below)

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ In consultation with the nominated technical advisor, develop a policy to resolve cases of suspicion, depending on the specific disease
- ✓ Any suspect case is investigated by the nominated technical advisor as soon as possible
- ✓ The group's strategy for dealing with suspect and confirmed infection should be implemented
- ✓ This process should include a risk assessment and may include a range of strategies

### ***d) Technical information and operational aspects of the CBP are actively communicated to producers, agents and advisors.***

OBJECTIVE: Technical information and operational aspects of the CBP are actively communicated to producers, agents and advisors.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ The group should identify the key aspects of the plan that need to be communicated and how they will achieve the communication goals to ensure producers are aware of the requirements.
- ✓ The group should consider whether signs into the area or at other strategic locations such as entrances to properties, are required.
- ✓ The group should also determine opportunities for the area that may provide trading advantages for them.
- ✓ All property owners in the group should be provided with a copy of the CBP and business rules

### ***e) Entry requirements for stock moving into the group are set and followed.***

OBJECTIVE: Minimum entry standards developed in line with the level of risk that is acceptable to the group are in place.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ The entry requirements for stock will be determined by the group and should consider the level of risk that is acceptable to the group.
- ✓ Introductions of stock of a higher standard than the minimum entry requirements are encouraged.
- ✓ In order to trade into another state/region with a CBP, it is the group's responsibility to ensure that their CBP satisfies the standards of the state/region/group that you are trading into, this includes entry requirements.
- ✓ Conversely, to allow stock from another state/region/group with a CBP to trade into your area, it is the group's responsibility to ensure that their CBP satisfies your group's standards.

***f) Provision of health status information is required for all stock moving into, and recommended for stock moving out of, the CBP; e.g. Cattle Health Declaration.***

OBJECTIVE: Agreement and mechanism to provide relevant health status information as needed by the buyer for all movements into and within the group.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ All livestock movements into and within the group covered by the CBP must be accompanied by a National Vendor Declaration (NVD) and a Health Statement for the relevant species. These documents should be retained for at least five years.
- ✓ Always provide a Health Statement when selling animals (exceptions may be applied for stock sold for slaughter or within the CBG).
- ✓ Ensure that records are maintained.

***g) Develop a formal cooperative industry-government partnership to provide the recognition necessary for industry to successfully implement and manage the CBP.***

OBJECTIVE: A formal cooperative biosecurity group (ideally with input from industry and government) is established and a CBP is written.

HOW (example actions): Following agreement on a) above:

- ✓ Work out who needs to be involved in the group and what resources are required
- ✓ Develop a written CBP (with input from all stakeholders) and distribute to all members of the group
- ✓ Collaborate with regional, state and national industry bodies and governments to achieve recognition and support for cooperative biosecurity activities and outcomes.
- ✓ If tracing backward and forward is a preferred strategy (see under (g) above), establish group/government guidelines on how this is to be done

***h) Active surveillance<sup>3</sup> appropriate to the disease(s) of concern is undertaken to detect disease early. Active surveillance may be a mandatory element for groups wishing to use their status for a trading/marketing advantage, such as for Johne's disease.***

OBJECTIVE: Surveillance is undertaken by all members of the group to maintain the group status and to ensure early detection.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ The group, in consultation with their technical advisor(s), determines appropriate surveillance and monitoring strategies for each of the diseases of concern, including methods, frequency and reporting/documentation requirements.
- ✓ Surveillance and monitoring may be by on-farm screening, or by use of abattoir monitoring, depending on the disease and the agreed approach.
- ✓ All members of the group implement the agreed surveillance/monitoring activities and report outcomes as agreed in the CBP
- ✓ positive detections of disease are dealt with as agreed in the plan

***i) Technical assistance<sup>4</sup> is available for all herds or flocks that are suspected or infected with disease.***

OBJECTIVE: Technical assistance is available and is provided to herds or flocks that are known or suspected to be infected with any disease of concern or is available for other herds and flocks as required.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ Nominate one or more veterinary advisor(s) (either government or private practitioners) who are familiar with the group's CBP and the epidemiology of the disease(s) being covered.
- ✓ Example responsibilities of the technical advisors could include:
  - Understand the CBP aims, objectives and requirements
  - Comply with the relevant acts and regulations
  - Provide advice and assistance for the development of biosecurity plans
  - Provide advice, to help producers develop their understanding of the disease(s), the risks involved, its management and control
  - Assist with implementation of agreed surveillance and monitoring activities, as appropriate
  - Assist with the investigation and testing of any suspect herds or flocks
  - Conduct risk assessments with individual producers as required
  - Carry out testing on high risk introductions and, with agreement, high risk neighbouring herds or flocks

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<sup>3</sup> A planned surveillance program based on on-farm or abattoir screening

<sup>4</sup> May be provided by government or private veterinarians or other suitably qualified person(s)



- Assist to undertake tracing backward and forward of animal movements if required. (This would most efficiently be done by tracing movements through the NLIS database, which is a government role.)
- Report to the group as required.

***j) Control or eradication programs (as appropriate) are implemented on infected properties.***

OBJECTIVE: Effective control/eradication programs are implemented on infected properties as soon as the disease is suspected or confirmed.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ In consultation with the nominated technical advisor, develop a strategy for dealing with suspect and infected herds or flocks.
- ✓ The strategy for dealing with confirmed infection should be implemented whenever an infected herd or flock is detected.
- ✓ Immediate neighbours of the infected property should be notified of the confirmed infection and all individual producers of the cooperative biosecurity group should ensure that their biosecurity procedures are implemented. For example, boundary fences should be checked to ensure that stock cannot stray onto neighbouring properties.

***k) Tracing of high risk movements backward and forward and high risk neighbours (if appropriate).***

OBJECTIVE: High risk movements backward and forward (including straying or environmental spread between neighbours) are traced to determine whether the infection has spread and minimise the potential for spread.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ Owners of infected herds or flocks are encouraged to notify owners of herds or flocks from which they have introduced confirmed-infected animals or to which they have sold high-risk animals
- ✓ Request government assistance in tracing high risk movements, both backwards and forwards, using NLIS and the Health Statements.
- ✓ Use of NLIS data for tracing is limited for producers: they can only see the current PICs of their devices which are active. Comprehensive tracing of devices to all properties and translation of PICs to real contact details can only be done by government advisors.
- ✓ High risk movements are identified and notified to the receivers of those movements.
- ✓ High risk movements to or within the group are investigated further.
- ✓ Owners of high risk herds or flocks (depending on disease and level of risk) should notify neighbouring herds or flocks

**Note there will be a need to develop a formal cooperative industry-government partnership if there is an intention to request government assistance for tracing activities (see section (h) above).**

***l) Compliance is verified and performance is reported at an agreed frequency.***

OBJECTIVE: Compliance with the CBP should be monitored or audited and performance of the group is reported at an agreed frequency to the leader or chair of the group for the consequences to be evaluated and/or remedies to be implemented.

HOW (example actions):

- ✓ The group should be audited on a regular basis. Ideally, and subject to funding, the audit should be undertaken by an independent auditor of the group's choice or by the department of primary industries.
- ✓ The frequency of auditing should reflect the level of robustness expected by the group.
- ✓ The auditor(s) should ensure the group adequately meets the criteria set out in the CBP. Outcomes of the audit including any corrective actions should be implemented as soon as possible.
- ✓ The group should meet to prepare for the CBP audit and to review the CBP. The CBP should be assessed for its level of support by the producers, its effectiveness and its benefits and costs, both past and future.
- ✓ The group should consider release of the audit report to other industry groups including other CBP groups and the state CVO.