

Statement of Emergency Animal Disease Biosecurity Policies and Programs for the State of Queensland

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1 Introduction

The State of Queensland, through the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), is required under Clause 14 (c) (ii) of the Government and Livestock Industry Cost Sharing Deed In Respect Of Emergency Animal Disease Responses (the Deed), to provide a biosecurity statement that outlines the Queensland Government's policies and programs that underpin its responsibilities in reducing the risk of entry and spread of transmissible infectious agents that could cause emergency animal diseases. The Deed specifies that the statement outlines biosecurity policies and programs relevant to their responsibilities including feral or pest animals, public health and environmental policies.

The following is an outline of the biosecurity arrangements the State of Queensland has to minimise the impact of any animal disease emergency. While DAF is acknowledged as the lead agency for an emergency animal disease response, several other agencies have key, ongoing and supporting roles that are relevant.

The scope of this statement is limited to terrestrial and aquatic emergency animal diseases (EADs) and their hosts.

2 Biosecurity initiatives in Queensland

The Queensland Government is currently undertaking the following initiatives to ensure effective biosecurity practices are in place:

- implementation of the Queensland Biosecurity Strategy – Our Next Five Years 2018 – 2023¹
- partnering with other agencies, local governments and industry to deliver more sustainable outcomes for agriculture and aquaculture producers that may be impacted by EADs
- establishment of a refreshed Biosecurity Queensland Ministerial Advisory Council (BQMAC)
- annual biosecurity partner's forum and biosecurity roundtable events
- development of a strong social media following and use of novel engagement opportunities to increase stakeholder awareness of biosecurity and to encourage reporting of suspected EADs
- implementation of a Biosecurity Information Management System which supports timely data capture and analysis to improve the management of day-to-day business and biosecurity responses
- utilisation of a consistent risk-based decision-making process to support regulatory and policy decision-making in Queensland
- investment in building Queensland's biosecurity emergency preparedness
- active participation in the strategic delivery of programs through northern Australian biosecurity frameworks to strengthen preparedness, surveillance and response capacity across north Queensland.

¹ <https://publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/queensland-biosecurity-strategy-2018-2023/resource/408b8459-dfd5-4785-913c-a9b3d23a0ee2>

3 Collaborative service delivery

Biosecurity Queensland, a part of DAF, has a purpose to lead and promote a biosecurity system that protects Queensland's economy, environment, lifestyle and human health. Other DAF business groups also contribute to biosecurity risk management. In addition, linkages with other Queensland, interstate and Australian government agencies and foreign collaborators provide access to a range of relevant expertise across all animal production sectors, including aquatic animals. Key linkages include:

- DAF's Agri-Science Queensland business area, which provides science, innovation and associated services
- the Department of Environment and Science, and the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, which play a role in management of the natural environment and environmental pests
- the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
- Animal Health Australia
- other state and territory agricultural departments and biosecurity agencies
- animal industry peak bodies and key representative bodies, to engage in and promote biosecurity to their membership.

4 Legislation

Legislative powers for biosecurity in Queensland are provided in the *Biosecurity Act 2014*² and the Biosecurity Regulation 2016. The main purposes of the Act are to:

- provide a framework for an effective biosecurity system for Queensland that helps to minimise biosecurity risks and facilitates responding to impacts on a biosecurity consideration, including responding to biosecurity events, in a timely and effective way;
- ensure the safety and quality of animal feed, fertilisers and other agricultural inputs; and
- help align responses to biosecurity risks in the state with national and international obligations and requirements for accessing markets for animal and plant produce, including live animals and plants.

It is also a purpose of the Act to manage risks associated with the following:

- emerging, endemic and exotic pests and diseases that impact on:
 - plant and animal industries, including agriculture, aquaculture, horticulture, fisheries and forestry industries; or
 - the built environment; or
 - companion or leisure animals; or
 - biodiversity and the natural environment; or
 - tourism, lifestyle and pleasure industries; or

² Queensland legislation is available on-line at <http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/OQPCHome.htm>

- infrastructure and service industries, including power, communication, shipping and water supplies;
- the transfer of diseases from animals to humans and from humans to animals;
- biological, chemical and physical contaminants in carriers.

4.1 General biosecurity obligation

Under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, the general biosecurity obligation states individuals and organisations whose activities pose a biosecurity risk must take reasonable steps to prevent or minimise biosecurity risks. It means that each person is responsible for managing biosecurity risks that are under their control and that they know about, or should reasonably be expected to know about.

4.2 Biosecurity entities

Anyone who owns or keeps livestock, horses, bees or 100 or more poultry in Queensland must be registered as a biosecurity entity. Registration helps to manage emergency incidents by knowing where susceptible animals and beehives are and who is responsible for keeping the animals/hives. Up-to-date registration allows Biosecurity Queensland to communicate directly with biosecurity entities so action can be taken quickly in an emergency response.

- Biosecurity entity registration and the property identification code (PIC) system work together to improve biosecurity:
- A PIC relates to the land where the animals are kept
- The biosecurity entity is the person, people or organisation responsible for the day-to-day keeping and care of the animals.

4.3 Reporting obligations

Reporting of prohibited and restricted matter and notifiable incidents are significant obligations under Chapter 2 of the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. The Act stipulates what is meant by each of these terms.

- Schedule 1 of the Act lists pests, diseases, and weeds that are classified as prohibited matter in Queensland.
- Schedule 2 of the Act lists pests, diseases, and weeds that are classified as restricted matter and states the category that each is classified into (categories 1-7).
- Sections 36 and 42 of the Act identify reporting obligations for prohibited and restricted matter (categories 1 or 2) respectively.
- Section 47(7) of the Act lists the situations/events that are classified as notifiable incidents.
- Maximum acceptable levels of contaminants in carriers are prescribed under regulation subordinate to the Act.

The Act also stipulates who reports must be given to and in what timeframe. Prompt reporting aims to reduce the potential for pest and disease spread which in turn leads to greater opportunities for successful management of pests or diseases and with less impact.

5 Biosecurity Queensland Ministerial Advisory Council

The Biosecurity Queensland Ministerial Advisory Council (BQMAC) is an initiative of Biosecurity Queensland and was established in June 2010 with its membership and terms of reference refreshed in 2013 and 2019. The role of the BQMAC is to provide independent strategic expert advice to the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries on Queensland's biosecurity.

6 Biosecurity in Torres Strait and the Northern Peninsula Area

In 2016, a working group was established to progress biosecurity management in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area. Membership of the working group included Biosecurity Queensland, the Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Queensland Health, Queensland Department of Environment and Science, Torres Strait Regional Authority, Torres Shire Council, Torres Strait Islands Regional Council, Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council and other locally relevant stakeholder groups.

The Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Biosecurity Strategy (the strategy) was developed by the working group in recognition of the unique challenges and opportunities in the management of biosecurity risks in the region. It is the first over-arching biosecurity strategy developed for the region and recognises that a new approach is required for biosecurity to be meaningful to all stakeholders, particularly residents. The strategy is the result of inputs from a broad range of people, including biosecurity specialists, various local, state and Australian government agencies, and local communities. Development of the strategy was guided by the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area Biosecurity Working Group and informed by the 2016 report, *Biosecurity Risk Management in Torres Strait and the Northern Peninsula Area – Issues and Solutions*.

The strategy complements the *Queensland Biosecurity Strategy — Our Next Five Years 2018 – 2023*, as well as more specific biosecurity plans developed within the region. Action plans are being developed by Biosecurity Queensland and other relevant partners to address priority areas identified in this strategy. Biosecurity Queensland is delivering its commitment to the strategy through routine service delivery, but also through the Far Northern Biosecurity Initiative which aims to boost capacity for and understanding of biosecurity in Cape York Peninsula and Torres Strait. The initiative has a total value of \$1.7 million and will run for three years from 2019/20.

7 Biosecurity Emergency Preparedness and Response

Between 2016 and 2020, DAF delivered the Biosecurity Preparedness and Response Project in response to key findings and recommendations of the Biosecurity Queensland Capability Review. In delivering the objectives of this project, Biosecurity Queensland has improved capability and capacity to respond to EADs and other biosecurity incidents. These items include:

- A dedicated fit-for-purpose State Coordination Centre (SCC) located in Brisbane.
- A dedicated, trained, preparedness and response group; the Biosecurity Emergency Response Group (BERG). The BERG is Queensland's core response team for biosecurity emergency incidents that can be rapidly deployed in Queensland to fill key roles and support the establishment and early management of State Coordination and Local Control Centres.
- A dedicated emergency response SharePoint site that houses the Biosecurity Emergency Operations Manual (BEOM). The site contains documents, templates, training, knowledge

and skill requirements for performing each role in a response and links relating to biosecurity emergencies.

- A biosecurity network beyond existing network arrangements, which encapsulates relationships across DAF, whole of government and industry.
- A lessons management framework and system to ensure continual improvement of biosecurity emergency management in Queensland.
- A suite of emergency management training packages.
- The Biosecurity Emergency Operations team has been established to maintain the products from the project and ensure continuous improvement in Biosecurity Queensland's capability and capacity to respond to EADs and other biosecurity incidents.

8 Animal Biosecurity and Welfare Program

The Animal Biosecurity and Welfare (AB&W) Program within Biosecurity Queensland mitigates the risks and impacts to the economy, the environment, social amenity and human health that are associated with animal pests and diseases. The AB&W program is underpinned by consistent and strategic communications and engagement with relevant stakeholders.

AB&W's focus is on:

- priority terrestrial and aquatic animal pests and disease risk mitigation
- biosecurity diagnostics and other laboratory and product services
- animal welfare and management
- biosecurity incident responses, due to restricted matter, prohibited matter or notifiable incidents.

8.1 Incident prevention and preparedness

Biosecurity Queensland undertakes activities to prevent, prepare for and respond to EAD incidents with an aim to minimise EAD impacts on market access, industry profitability, human health, social amenity, the environment and the community.

Biosecurity Queensland engages with other organisations and animal industries to effectively mitigate biosecurity risks through shared responsibility and sound risk management principles. It also aims to ensure an effective response capability for EAD incidents to reduce the risk and impacts of biosecurity incidents and emergencies on Queensland's animal industries. Biosecurity Queensland maintains a core of staff that is trained and capable in dealing with incursion responses in accordance with the Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan (AUSVETPLAN).

Horizon scanning and foresighting help identify hazards and risks and guides risk mitigation measures. Investment in prevention and preparedness activities is risk-based taking into account impact areas. In working to allocate resources commensurate with risk, specific projects have been, and may be established to manage risks associated with EADs. Examples include foot-and-mouth disease, African swine fever and avian influenza projects.

Continuous improvement of emergency management functions (prevention, preparedness, response, surveillance, recovery) is informed through after action reviews and actioning identified areas for improvement.

8.2 Incident response

DAF will provide EAD response leadership working collaboratively with industry and other stakeholders to manage and reduce the severity of EAD impacts. Within Queensland, the activities involve investigating reports of suspected EADs, providing advice on EADs, and responding to all confirmed EADs.

DAF also works within the Queensland disaster management framework and may call upon the network to assist with resourcing responses to EADs. The *Disaster Management Act 2003* provides a framework in which all levels of government, government owned corporations, non-government organisations, partners and stakeholders can work collaboratively to ensure effective disaster management across the state. This is particularly important for large scale incident responses. The Queensland State Disaster Management Plan outlines the roles and responsibilities of all government agencies, including DAF. It also outlines the Queensland Disaster Management Arrangements, which are based on partnerships between the community and groups at the local, district, state and Commonwealth levels to deliver coordinated, cooperative and integrated outcomes.

8.3 Surveillance

Queensland's surveillance function provides for early detection of significant pests and diseases of animals and to support claims of Queensland's animal health status. It is also used to delimit diseases and substantiate claims of area freedom to support market access. Besides working closely with industry, AB&W works with other agencies, such as the Northern Australian Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) and the Northern Australian Biosecurity Surveillance (NABS) Framework, to broaden the surveillance network.

Biosecurity Queensland also interacts directly with animal owners and veterinarians through the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline. This service provides for early detection, provision of advice, and where necessary, implementation of response measures to contain or control the reported pest or disease.

The surveillance function also includes planning and prioritising activities, working with community and industry to capture passive surveillance data, implementation of training, assessment and auditing programs for surveillance, and maintaining information management systems for surveillance.

Queensland's surveillance components include an enhanced passive animal disease surveillance program which aims to enhance surveillance and early detection of significant and emerging diseases.

The surveillance program also coordinates Queensland's contribution to the:

- National Transmissible Spongiform Encephalitis Surveillance Program (NTSESP)
- Imported Animal Quarantine and Surveillance Scheme (IAQSS)
- Australian Ruminant Feed Ban Compliance Scheme (ARFBCS)
- Screw-Worm Fly Surveillance and Preparedness Program (SWFSPP)
- National Significant Diseases Investigation Program (NSDIP)
- National Animal Health Information System (NAHIS)
- Northern Australia Biosecurity Surveillance (NABS) Program

- National Avian Influenza in Wild Bird Surveillance (South-east Queensland) Project
- National Arbovirus Management Program (NAMP).

8.4 Control and containment

Biosecurity Queensland works closely with industry to control and contain some endemic pests and diseases and/or provide management advice. For some program areas, responsibility is being transitioned to industry for their management. Collectively, the aim is to implement measures to minimise the impact of pests and diseases on industry and the community.

The main control, surveillance and containment activity centres on cattle tick with an aim to minimise financial and social impacts to owners of susceptible hosts.

8.5 Traceability

Traceability, especially lifetime traceability, is important for biosecurity purposes, including the management of disease and chemical residues. It plays a critical role in the management of EAD outbreaks.

The National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) ensures that lifetime movements of cattle, sheep, pigs and goats can be identified and recorded within Australia. Queensland participates in the NLIS, which is supported by Queensland legislation.

8.6 Laboratory and diagnostic services

The laboratory and diagnostic services function provides scientific guidance, diagnostic testing, research support and sound decision making based on scientific advice.

There are three major activity areas:

- Biosecurity Sciences Laboratory
- Tick Fever Centre
- Chemical Residue Laboratory.

8.6.1 Biosecurity Sciences Laboratory

The Biosecurity Sciences Laboratory provides animal health diagnostic and scientific support capability and capacity that underpins the policy and operational activities of AB&W. It is critically important in identifying and investigating new and emerging animal diseases across Queensland as well as monitoring and diagnosing diseases:

- in Queensland's livestock industries
- of farmed aquatic animals
- of wildlife (e.g. in cases of mass mortality, unusual mortality or suspicion of a potential public health problem).

The laboratory has NATA accreditation ISO/IEC 17025:2017) for animal health (accreditation number 13389) and provides access to the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness as a reference laboratory for many EADs.

8.6.2 Tick Fever Centre

The Tick Fever Centre contributes to the sustained productive capacity of Queensland's livestock industries through the provision of tick fever vaccines, products and diagnostic services for the control of tick fever. It provides specific expertise and tests accredited by NATA (ISO/IEC 17025:2017) for animal health (accreditation number 13389) for the control of tick fever. The Tick Fever Centre also provides expertise in biosecurity incident preparedness and response in relation to logistics of cold-chain storage and distribution of emergency vaccines such as foot-and-mouth disease and equine influenza.

8.6.3 Chemical Residue Laboratory

The Chemical Residue Laboratory provides specialist chemical testing, formulation and advisory services.

It has NATA accreditation (ISO/IEC 17025:2005) for antibiotic and pesticide residues in food (accreditation number 5066). Its primary activities include:

- detecting antibiotic residues in meat, offal, urine and feed
- detecting pesticide residues in fruit and vegetables, animal tissues and meat fat
- providing a cattle-dip testing service for amitraz, cypermethrin/chlorfenvinphos and deltamethrin/ethion dips
- conducting diagnostic investigation of pesticides in wildlife mortalities.

8.7 Aquatic animals

Queensland supports and promotes good biosecurity practices within the aquatic industries through the collaborative development of the biosecurity guidelines and enterprise level biosecurity plans. Collectively this helps reduce the impacts of certain diseases by enabling early and effective responses, as well as by reducing the impacts on productivity.

Queensland has been participating in the development of industry-government cost sharing arrangements for future aquatic EAD events.

The Biosecurity Sciences Laboratory provides specialist diagnostic services for aquatics supporting surveillance activities for white spot syndrome virus and other pathogens of significance to Queensland and Australia.

9 Pest animal management

9.1 Focus, outcomes, expenditure

The current focus of pest animal management is to minimise existing economic and environmental impacts caused by naturalised pest species and to prevent the escape and naturalisation of potential pest species. Eradication of pest animal species that have become widespread and abundant in Queensland is currently not considered feasible due to various technical, financial, social, political and environmental reasons.

As stated previously, all Queenslanders have a general biosecurity obligation under Queensland's *Biosecurity Act 2014*. This includes preventing or minimising the biosecurity risk posed by invasive plants and animals.

Expenditure on pest animal control is largely dependent on resources allocated by individual landholders and this allocation is very dependent on viability of industries, benefits, seasons and availability of techniques, all of which vary significantly over time.

9.2 National Feral Pig Action Plan

In December 2019, the Australian Government provided \$1.4 million over 3.5 years to Australian Pork Limited (APL) to establish a National Feral Pig Management Coordinator to facilitate the delivery of feral pig management approaches on a national, regional and local scale, undertake stakeholder engagement, drive effective investment and raise awareness of feral pig issues.

The National Feral Pig Action Plan will set out a range of guiding principles to improve feral pig management in Australia. It is expected that some management activities to be progressed under the plan will assist in addressing biosecurity risks such as foot-and-mouth disease and African swine fever. The Queensland Government will contribute to the development of the plan to ensure Queensland specific concerns are considered.

9.3 Pest animal control programs

DAF encourages landholders, industry and local governments to undertake broad scale control programs primarily for wild dogs, feral pigs and for other species causing locally identified problems.

Control programs are aimed at limiting the economic and environmental impacts these pests are having now and, to a lesser extent, at their potential impacts on future exotic or endemic disease.

Most programs are applied at the discretion of landholders – local circumstances and specific issues or impacts usually drive these programs.

DAF encourages large-scale coordinated programs using best practice techniques to maximise effectiveness and efficiency.

9.4 Legislation

The management of invasive plants and animals is the shared responsibility of land managers, industry, the community and all levels of government. Shared responsibility has been made a legal requirement through the general biosecurity obligation under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. The primary responsibility rests with those who deal with biosecurity matter—they must reduce the risks that their activities create. However, a nil-tenure approach that engages all stakeholders is best practice, particularly for mobile species. In this approach, control methods are applied in a cooperative and coordinated manner across all land tenures by all stakeholders at a landscape scale rather than a property scale. It also provides the state and local governments with power to enforce control and recover control costs where landholders fail to take appropriate control.

The Department of Environment and Science is the agency responsible for the management (including feral/pest animal management) of National Parks in Queensland, through its Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS). The QPWS is also the State agency responsible for feral/pest animal management in the State's forests and reserves. In accordance with the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and *Forestry Act 1959*, QPWS is responsible for protecting and conserving the natural, cultural, productive and social values within its parks and state forests (non-plantation areas). Consistent with all other landholders, QPWS has a responsibility under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* to take all reasonable and practical steps to minimise the risks associated with plant and animal pests on lands under their control.

10 Public health

10.1 Food safety

Safe Food Queensland regulates the primary production and processing of meat, eggs, dairy, seafood and horticulture in Queensland. Their role is to ensure that:

- Queensland's food production systems meet national food safety standards
- businesses along the food supply chain know and understand their responsibilities
- potential threats to the integrity of food supply are identified and dealt with decisively
- consumers maintain their confidence in the food produced in Queensland.

Safe Food has a range of powers under the *Food Production (Safety) Act 2000* that enable them to undertake their role.

A food safety scheme is a legal document developed in consultation with government and industry. These schemes are based on reducing food safety risks ensuring public health and safety. Schemes set out minimum requirements that a primary production and/or processing business must legally meet to make sure its food is safe. There are four animal related food safety schemes, one each for meat, egg, seafood and dairy products.

10.2 One Health

Public Health threats are increasingly complex and potential implications can include economic, human and animal health, food safety, agricultural, environmental and trade issues. Queensland recognises the need for all components to work together in a One Health coordinated approach across public and private sectors, industry, professional, research and society; locally, nationally and internationally where required.

One example is an effective response to the increasing rise of antimicrobial resistance. To ensure antimicrobials remain effective for decades to come, Queensland must ensure antimicrobials are managed as a valuable shared resource, and that we contribute to the national effort to retain their usefulness to society. *Australia's National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy – 2020 and Beyond* presents a 20-year vision and seeks to further embed the One Health approach through a coordinated and sustained cross-sectoral response to antimicrobial resistance.

10.3 Zoonotic disease

Queensland regularly undertakes field or laboratory investigations for zoonotic disease (e.g. Hendra virus, brucellosis, Australian bat lyssavirus).

DAF maintains a close liaison with Queensland Health which facilitates cooperation on investigation and response to relevant zoonotic disease.

Biosecurity Queensland has a memorandum of understanding with Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and Queensland Health that formalises the principles, standards and management structures governing and optimizing a flexible, comprehensive, all-hazards and multi-agency emergency management approach to zoonotic incidents³.

³ Memorandum of Understanding for the management of Zoonotic Incidents 2019 at https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/21656/mou-management-of-zoonotic-incidents.pdf

11 Environment

QPWS actively manages pest plants and animals in parks, forests and other areas gazetted under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and *Forestry Act 1959* in order to protect the biodiversity and natural processes in these areas.

In common with all other landholders, QPWS also has a responsibility under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* to control declared plant and animal pests on its lands. QPWS has developed a Pest Management System to facilitate pest management planning and to guide on-ground pest management activities.

QPWS has identified pests declared as restricted matter under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* and pest animals including feral pigs, feral goats, feral horses, wild dogs and foxes as priorities.

11.1 Environmental legislation and obligations

Queensland has environmental legislation in place that aims to protect specific environmental values.

All businesses and citizens in Queensland have a legal duty to meet general environmental protection obligations as provided in the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*. The two primary duties that apply to everyone in Queensland are the:

- general environmental duty - not to carry out an activity that may cause harm without taking measures to prevent or minimise the harm
- duty to notify of environmental harm - to inform the relevant authority and landowners when environmental harm has occurred, or might occur.

Holders of an environmental authority for an environmentally relevant activity, must meet these general environmental obligations in addition to any environmental authority conditions.

Industry codes of practice help businesses comply with their general environmental duty for a range of activities, including environmentally relevant activities. Cattle feedlots, poultry farms and piggeries need an environmental authority under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994*. National guidelines are available for cattle feedlots and piggeries.

Aquaculture is an industry managed by several agencies at all levels of government. Approvals needed vary, and depend on the type, scale and location of the aquaculture project. Legislation underpinning these approvals varies depending on the activities being undertaken. It includes the: *Planning Act 2016*, *Land Act 1994*, *Fisheries Act 1994*, *Marine Parks Act 2004*, *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*, *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, *Food Act 2006* and *Food Production (Safety) Act 2000*.

Matters of national environmental significance, such as world heritage properties and nationally threatened species are protected under the Australian Government's *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Furthermore, Queensland's native wildlife is protected by the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. Agricultural industries may require a permit, licence or authority to collect, keep, harvest or manage wildlife under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, and related legislation. Strict regulations on the international trade of wildlife also exist.