

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **#BeZoonosisAware - Join us for Zoonosis Awareness Week!**

Zoonotic diseases pose a real risk to people working in our agricultural industries, which is why it is important to get the message out there as often as possible.

From 1-5 October, Animal Health Australia (AHA) will be posting daily on our *Livestock Biosecurity Out and About* social media pages to help raise awareness of zoonotic disease prevention, symptoms, treatment and research. Already this year there have been 308 notifications of Q fever, 122 notifications of leptospirosis and 17 notifications of brucella suis in Australia.

“It is likely that these cases are just the tip of the iceberg and that many cases of these diseases in Australia go undiagnosed,” said Jess Rummery, AHA’s Biosecurity and Extension Manager for Northern Australia.

“In 2014, I was unfortunate enough to get leptospirosis – a bacterial disease that can infect many species of animals, including humans. Overnight, I went from healthy to being so sick that I was unable to work or even leave the house.

“My symptoms were so non-specific that it took months before I finally got any answers and since then it has been a very long road to recovery. I have met many others that have had very similar experiences to my own.”

In Australia we have a range of these diseases, ranging from mild conditions such as ringworm, through to more serious diseases such as Q Fever or Hendra virus, which can be fatal to those who contract it. Through simple prevention strategies, the risks of these diseases can be significantly reduced.

Jess reasons that “Greater awareness and understanding of zoonotic diseases will help prevent infection, and also aid in a timely and accurate diagnosis when infection does occur,” Jess said.

“I often wonder, if my infection had been picked up earlier, would I have experienced the severity and length of illness that I have struggled with over the past four years?”

“If by raising awareness within our agricultural communities we can even prevent one case like mine, I would call that a success. I encourage everyone living or working around livestock, wildlife or other animals to #BeZoonosisAware and get involved.”

#### **Get involved**

Follow the conversation on Facebook or Twitter via @AHAOutAndAbout. Throughout the week we will be promoting awareness of diseases that pose a risk to people working in rural areas or in close proximity to livestock and other animals.

Join the conversation using our hashtag #BeZoonosisAware, share our posts or contribute your own stories and experiences. We also encourage other agricultural organisations to get involved this week and help in sharing this message.

Our previous zoonosis weeks have helped us reach over 40,000 people. We hope to further increase this reach this time around and get this important information out to those that need it.

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#### **About Animal Health Australia**

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