

MEDIA RELEASE

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STAYING ONE STEP AHEAD OF FMD

Some of Australia's greatest research minds in the field of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) converged on Canberra in September to discuss the work they are undertaking to prepare Australia for a major disease outbreak like FMD.

Animal Health Australia (AHA) hosted the annual workshop as part of the Improved Surveillance, Preparedness and Return to Trade for Emergency Animal Disease Incursions Using FMD as a Model Project (The Project).

Principal Research Scientist at the Commonwealth Science and Industrial Research Organisation's (CSIRO) Australian Animal Health Laboratory, Dr Wilna Vosloo, said Australia is free from FMD due to our strict biosecurity measures. However, an outbreak of the disease would cost Australia's livestock industries billions of dollars, mainly because of restrictions on the exports of animals and animal products.

"This Project includes a number of sub-projects, all of which are looking at different ways we can effectively prepare for, control and contain an FMD outbreak as efficiently and quickly as possible," said Dr Vosloo.

"In particular, these sub-projects involve studying vaccine options, demonstrating the value of farmer-led partnerships in animal health surveillance, improving outbreak modelling capability and developing tools that would assist in determining how farm-to-farm spread is occurring.

"The workshop allowed research and funding partners to come together and discuss the progress we've made.

"I'm pleased to report we're on track, with some great work done in establishing the farmer-led surveillance study and gene sequencing to track the spread of the virus. We've also established a research project website and social media presence to keep everyone up-to-date," said Dr Vosloo.

The Project is supported by Meat & Livestock Australia, through funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources 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 CSIRO, CSU through the Graham Centre for Agricultural Innovation, the Bureau of Meteorology and the Australian Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, supported by AHA.

For more information about The Project visit <http://research.csiro.au/fmd/>

ENDS

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.

Media enquiries: Danika Barnard 02 6203 3904 / dbarnard@animalhealthaustralia.com.au