



Animal health surveillance in Western Australia

By Dr Marion Seymour, Animal Health Surveillance Project Manager

Western Australia has a well-deserved reputation for producing healthy livestock free from diseases and residues that could harm human health or damage our ability to sell livestock within Australia or overseas.

This reputation is based on a rigorous biosecurity system within a national framework that demonstrates to a scientific standard that our livestock are fit to trade.

The Western Australian animal health surveillance system is a vital part of this framework, which enables us to export 80% of our livestock and livestock product annually. This generated the state of Western Australia \$2 billion in export income in 2015/16.

How does our animal health surveillance system work?

Western Australia's animal health surveillance system consists of a set of programs designed to look for evidence that animals are free from specific diseases that could affect trade (such as foot-and-mouth disease or bluetongue disease), or human health (such as mad cow disease or highly pathogenic avian influenza).

Our surveillance system also looks for new or emerging diseases – including in wildlife – that could affect trade or human health.



We gain data about the presence or absence of these diseases when a producer or other member of the livestock industries calls a vet to investigate sick animals and to submit samples to the laboratory for testing.

Data from this information is crucial for proving to international markets that we are free of these diseases.

The producer also benefits from getting a diagnosis of what is causing the problem, which enables them to prevent further losses and optimise their production.

To encourage producers to report sick animals, the Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia (DAFWA) subsidises laboratory testing and veterinary costs for diseases where there are unusual numbers of animal deaths or the signs that look similar to those that could affect public health or market access.

We also gain data via targeted surveillance programs such as the National Arbovirus Monitoring Program (NAMP). Through NAMP, DAFWA works with WA producers to monitor for bluetongue virus in cattle and for presence of insects that could spread the virus. This allows parts of WA to claim area freedom for bluetongue virus and so trade into additional high-value markets.



Important disclaimer

The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Agriculture and Food and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from use or release of this information or any part of it.

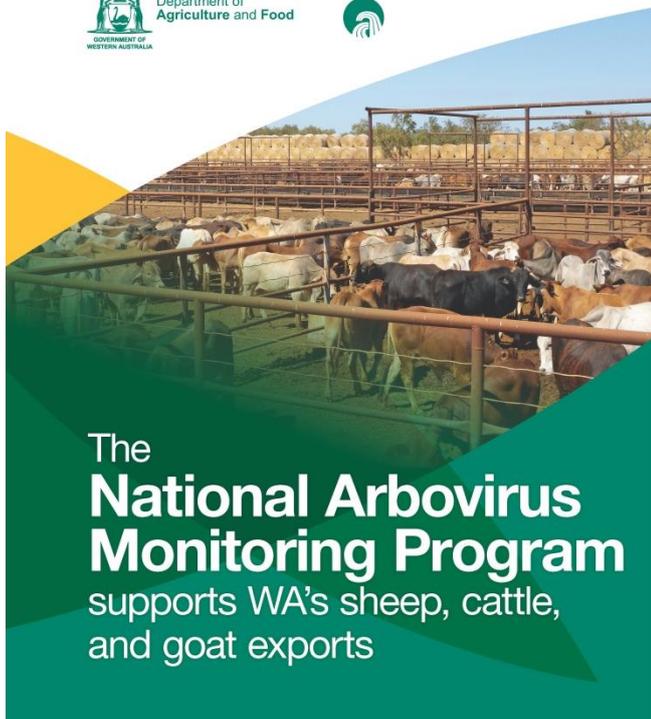
Our surveillance systems are designed to find diseases early, so that we can eradicate them more quickly, reducing the cost of control and impact on our markets. Trading partners regularly examine our surveillance capacity and judge how quickly we could detect a new disease.

What part do I play in making sure our surveillance system works?

Everyone who works with livestock, including producers, vets, stock agents, transporters and processors, is a frontline member of WA's animal health surveillance team.

To keep Western Australia's livestock healthy and markets open:

- It is most important to look at your stock frequently and closely for any signs of disease. If several animals are sick or die, call a vet to investigate. Talk to your private or DAFWA vet about subsidies available for livestock disease investigations.
- Remember that exotic diseases can look similar to common diseases. Know the signs of emergency animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease and call your vet or the Emergency Animal Disease hotline on 1800 675 888 immediately if you see signs of the disease.



The
**National Arbovirus
Monitoring Program**
supports WA's sheep, cattle,
and goat exports



Department of
Agriculture and Food

**Help prove
Australia
is free
of mad cow disease
and scrapie**

To maintain beef exports we need to show Australia is free from mad cow disease and scrapie.

We do this by testing cattle and sheep showing signs such as:

- staggering, lack of coordination
- constant trembling
- increased sensitivity to sound and touch
- persistent itchiness (sheep only).

If your animals develop any of these signs, ask your vet about a disease investigation subsidised through the Department of Agriculture and Food.

- You can subscribe to DAFWA's Surveillance e-newsletter, the *WA Livestock Disease Outlook*, for regular updates about diseases to watch for in your area. Search 'WALDO' on the DAFWA website (agric.wa.gov.au) to subscribe.

Thank you for playing your critical role in WA's animal health surveillance system.

More information

For more information about animal health surveillance in Western Australia, visit DAFWA's website agric.wa.gov.au and search 'livestock surveillance' or contact your local vet.

Accessibility

Copies of this document are available in alternative formats upon request.

Contact: 3 Baron-Hay Court South Perth WA 6151

t: +61 (0)8 9368 3342 e: enquiries@agric.wa.gov.au w: agric.wa.gov.au