

Biosecurity - Surveillance for diseases of animals and aquatic pests

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1. Purpose

This policy describes what surveillance activities the NSW Government will do in relation to significant diseases of animals and aquatic pests that pose a risk to economy, community and environment of New South Wales.

These surveillance activities aim to:

- detect and exclude prohibited matter and significant emerging diseases of animals and aquatic pests before they become established in NSW
- detect and exclude other notifiable diseases of animals and aquatic pests before they spread further within NSW
- investigate significant outbreaks of endemic diseases of animals and aquatic pests
- report property, district, region and state-wide disease statuses to support market access, including providing evidence of absence of disease where appropriate
- effectively evaluate progress control programs for animal diseases and aquatic pests, and
- provide field, laboratory and research services.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI), an office within the NSW Department of Regional NSW and Local and Services (LLS) implementing activities in their roles as authorised officers under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* (the Act) and the *Local Land Services Act 2013*.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the overarching policy [Management of animal biosecurity in NSW](#).

The policy applies to disease surveillance activities of government veterinarians and other staff who are authorised to investigate outbreaks of suspected notifiable diseases of animals and/or aquatic pests under the:

- *Biosecurity Act 2015*
- *Local Lands Services Act 2013*
- *Veterinary Practice Act 2003*.

This policy applies to surveillance for diseases in terrestrial animals, and aquatic animals such finfish, crustaceans and molluscs.

This policy applies to domestic animals, animals held in captivity, and wildlife (free-living animals and feral animals). The procedure – [Wildlife biosecurity – Management of pests and diseases of wildlife](#) - outlines when and how wildlife health incidents are managed by NSW DPI and LLS. Links to specific procedures can be found at the end of this policy document.

In this policy, diseases of animals include diseases caused by both infestation and infection with disease agents, formerly referred to in animal biosecurity policies and procedures as 'pests and diseases of animals'.

This policy also applies to surveillance for aquatic pests.

3. Safety requirements

The *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* places an obligation on the agency (NSW DPI and LLS) as a person conducting a business or undertaking and workers to provide a safe and healthy workplace. Safe Work Method Statements that support activities included in this policy must be used in identifying, assessing and controlling risks.

NSW DPI and LLS will work together to create a safe and supportive work environment when undertaking any activities for this policy.

4. Outcomes

4.1 Surveillance activities in NSW are prioritised according to a consistent, robust and systematic decision-making process.

- a. Risk assessment is a tool used to determine which diseases of animals and aquatic pests are classified as notifiable and surveillance priorities are targeted accordingly
- b. Risk assessment identifies risks to the surveillance system from other sources, including risks from community behaviour e.g. non-reporting, and risks from organisational sources e.g. poor data recording
- c. National (i.e. Commonwealth) and international (i.e. World Organisation for Animal Health – OIE) agreed priorities are considered when prioritising animal health surveillance activities in NSW

4.1.1 Activities

- NSW DPI regularly reviews the list of notifiable diseases of animals in NSW using evidence-based risk assessment. NSW contributes to the biennial review of the National Agreed List of Notifiable Animal Diseases and Australia's National List of Reportable Diseases of Aquatic Animals. The NSW lists contain all the nationally notifiable diseases of animals, as its minimum. (4.1a)
- NSW DPI and LLS identify risks to the Surveillance Program from other sources by conducting an annual risk assessment. Appropriate actions are incorporated into the Surveillance section of the NSW Animal Biosecurity and Welfare Business Plan (4.1b)
- NSW DPI reports to the Commonwealth to support national animal health surveillance (4.1c)
- NSW DPI ensures that the interests of the NSW animal industries are considered in the development of national animal health surveillance plans and programs (4.1c).

4.2 NSW DPI and LLS minimise the incidence and impact of notifiable and significant diseases of animals in NSW by implementing a Surveillance Program

- a. Classification of certain diseases of animals and aquatic pests as notifiable, reporting provisions for notifiable diseases of animals and aquatic pests, and powers of Authorised Officers are prescribed in the *Biosecurity Act 2015*
- b. Surveillance activities in NSW are consistent with Australia's obligations to the OIE contained in the *OIE Terrestrial Code* and the *OIE Aquatic Code*
- c. NSW has a documented Surveillance Program that integrates field investigation, reporting, laboratory, and research components which aims to demonstrate that NSW meets or exceeds OIE, National, NSW DPI and LLS standards for surveillance of diseases of animals
- d. Improved epidemiological understanding of priority diseases of animals and aquatic pests is achieved by active surveillance and data analysis

- e. Incidents and outbreaks of suspected notifiable and emerging diseases of animals in NSW are rapidly detected, reported and accurately investigated as prescribed in the *Biosecurity Act 2015*
- f. LLS regions facilitate the field investigation component of the Surveillance Program by:
 - o effective risk-based allocation of resources and business continuity
 - o rapid response by authorised officers, based on geographic and enterprise risk rankings
 - o sharing surveillance responsibilities with local stakeholders
 - o development of surveillance skills in authorised officers relevant to the diseases of animals likely to occur in that LLS region
- g. Information management systems on disease surveillance support market access, livestock traceability, and surveillance management
- h. National Association of Testing Authorities, Australia (NATA) accredited veterinary laboratory services support the official surveillance system with accurate laboratory diagnoses and confirmation of the presence or absence of diseases of animals
- i. Surveillance activities are enhanced through research and technology that improves animal biosecurity and farm profitability.

4.2.1 Activities

- NSW DPI periodically reviews the Act and its subordinate legislation to ensure that the legislation which underpins the surveillance program remains current and contemporary (4.2a)
- NSW DPI and LLS consider the *OIE Terrestrial and Aquatic Codes* when undertaking Surveillance Program planning and management activities to deliver official surveillance objectives at national, state and regional levels (4.2b)
- NSW DPI and LLS regularly evaluate and review the Surveillance Program (4.2c)
- NSW DPI and LLS undertake surveillance for priority diseases of animals and aquatic pests where appropriate. This may include enhanced passive or targeted active surveillance for emerging pest and disease threats (4.2d)
- NSW DPI and LLS support the training and development of authorised officers in surveillance and disease investigation activities (4.2e) (4.2f)
- NSW DPI encourages non-government veterinarians to investigate and report significant disease incidents in animals or wildlife (4.2e)
- NSW DPI and LLS provide animal biosecurity advice to the surveillance data management systems database administrators to ensure the database is fit for purpose (4.2g)
- NSW DPI and LLS record information from disease investigations in data management system to develop intelligence which supports surveillance program objectives including certification requirements (4.2g)
- NSW DPI and LLS contribute to the maintenance and improvement of systems such as the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) to rapidly trace all livestock and verify their disease status (4.2g)
- NSW DPI maintains the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute Laboratory to provide high quality diagnostic support for the Surveillance Program and ensures that it has surge capacity for emergency response surveillance activities (4.2h)
- The Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute Laboratory develops and maintains the capacity and capability for the diagnosis of priority and emerging diseases of animals (4.2h)
- NSW DPI and LLS contribute to research on animal biosecurity problems relevant to disease surveillance, including the development and validation of diagnostic tests for diseases of animals (4.2i)

4.3 Stakeholders are empowered to support and implement best practice surveillance for significant and notifiable diseases of animals and aquatic pests

- a. The community, including animal owners, managers, wildlife carers and veterinarians, promptly report suspected notifiable diseases of animals
- b. Stakeholders make decisions about the management of significant endemic and zoonotic diseases based on accurate surveillance intelligence about diseases of animals
- c. Stakeholders support and have confidence in the Surveillance Program.

4.3.1 Activities:

- NSW DPI communicates with stakeholders about surveillance for diseases of animals by various means including the DPI website, CVO Bulletins, Boardtalk articles and engagement with industry groups. (4.3a) (4.3b) (4.3c)
- NSW LLS develop and implement regionally specific stakeholder engagement plans that include surveillance (4.3a) (4.3b) (4.3c)
- NSW DPI and LLS provide information to stakeholders about the reporting requirements under the Act for suspected notifiable diseases of animals and biosecurity events (4.3a)
- NSW DPI provides diagnostic support for suspected notifiable disease incidents to remove disincentives to report, except in cases of clear private benefit or when a policy decision has been made to not fund laboratory testing in certain circumstances, (4.3a) (4.3c)
- NSW DPI and LLS regularly meet with key stakeholders to facilitate sharing of information and expertise (4.3b)
- NSW DPI and LLS provide epidemiological reports to industry stakeholders to assist them to manage diseases of animals and aquatic pests control programs (4.3b) (4.3c)
- NSW DPI and LLS improve best practice for surveillance of diseases of animals and aquatic pests through contribution to scientific publications and participation in scientific conferences (4.3c).

4.4 Point of care testing

- a. Testing for biosecurity matter using point of care testing and reporting of the test results must be in accordance with the *Biosecurity Act 2015*.

Note: Testing for prohibited matter using point of care testing is prohibited under *Biosecurity Act 2015*. This is because it is an offence under [section 28 of the Biosecurity Act 2015](#) to deal with prohibited matter, and [clause 4 of the Biosecurity Regulation](#) states that testing for the presence of biosecurity matter is a dealing with biosecurity matter.

- b. Any point of care test used must be fit for purpose
- c. Point of care tests must be conducted as per the manufacturers instruction or as described in the validated test method.

4.4.1 Activities:

- Point of care testing for prohibited matter will not be performed unless an [exemption order](#) or [prohibited matter permit](#) has been issued for that particular test (4.4a)
- If point of care testing for prohibited matter is to be included in an EADRP, no point of care testing will be performed till such time as an exemption order or prohibited matter permit allowing the point of care test has been issued.(4.4a)
- Point of care test results will be reported as required by the relevant pest or disease procedure and the [Procedure - Reporting notifiable pests and diseases of animals and biosecurity events](#). (4.4a))
- If a point of care test is to be used to test for prohibited matter or a notifiable disease, validation as fit for purpose will require SCHALS or OIE test approval or equivalent. (4.4b)
- If a point of care tests is to be used to test for biosecurity matter other than prohibited matter or a notifiable disease, users should make their own assessment if fit for purpose. (4.4b)

- Point of care tests will be conducted as per the manufacturers instruction or as described in the validated test method to ensure accuracy and robustness under field conditions. This extends to equipment that is used to conduct the test where re-calibration would be required when the equipment is moved. (4.4c)

5. Definitions and acronyms

animal	Includes terrestrial and aquatic animals, as defined in the Biosecurity Regulation clause 3
CVO	Chief Veterinary Officer
disease	As defined in the Biosecurity Act 2015 section 7
Disease agent	As defined in the Biosecurity Act 2015 section 7
LHMS	Livestock Health & Management System
LLS	Local Land Services
NAHIS	National Animal Health Information System
NATA	National Association of Testing Authorities, Australia
NLIS	National Livestock Identification System
Notifiable diseases other than prohibited matter	as listed under the Biosecurity Regulation Schedule 1
NSW DPI	NSW Department of Primary Industries
OIE	World Organisation for Animal Health
pest	As defined in the Biosecurity Act 2015 section 7
Prohibited matter	as listed under the Biosecurity Act 2015 Schedule 2
SCAHLs	Animal Health Committee Sub-committee on Animal Health Laboratory Standards

6. Legislation

Animal Research Act 1985

Biosecurity Act 2015

Exhibited Animals Protection Act 1986

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

Government Sector Employment Act 2013

Local Land Services Act 2013

Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979

State Records Act 1998

Veterinary Practice Act 2003

Work Health and Safety Act 2011

7. Other related documents

[Policy – Biosecurity - Management of animal biosecurity in NSW](#)

[Policy – Aquatic biosecurity pests and diseases](#)

[Policy – Biosecurity - Prohibited matter pests and diseases of animals](#)

[Policy – Biosecurity - Endemic diseases of animals](#)

[Policy – Biosecurity - Chemically affected food-producing animals, animal food commodities and stock food](#)

[Policy – Biosecurity collection, use and disclosure of information](#)

[Policy – Wildlife biosecurity – Management of pests and diseases of wildlife](#)

Policy - Records Management (IND-I-177)

Policy - Information Security (IND-I-197)

Policy - Classified Information (IND-I-196)

Policy - Government Information (Public Access) (IND-I-178)
 Procedure – Biosecurity - Export certification (published on intranet)
[Procedure – Biosecurity - Reporting notifiable pests and diseases of animals and biosecurity events](#)
[Procedure - Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies Freedom Assurance Program](#)
[Procedure – Wildlife biosecurity - Management of pests and diseases of wildlife](#)
[Procedure – Biosecurity - Collection, use and disclosure of information](#)
[Procedure - Prohibited matter pests and diseases of animals - investigation and alert phase](#)
[Procedure - Aquatic fieldwork hygiene](#)
[Procedure - Aquatic pests and diseases - responding to reports](#)
 Terrestrial animal health surveillance program (published on intranet)
 Terrestrial animal health surveillance plan 2020-24 (published on intranet)
 Aquatic animal health strategic surveillance plan 2019-24
 LHMS data entry manual
 Guidelines for purchasing laboratory test information
 Guidelines for auditing the surveillance program (*under development*)
 OIE Terrestrial Code
 NAHIS Business Plan – Animal Health Australia
 National Significant Disease Investigation Program – Animal Health Australia
 National Arbovirus Monitoring Program – Animal Health Australia
 National Animal Disease Surveillance Strategy and Business Plans
 Primefact – Notifiable pests, diseases and biosecurity events in NSW
 Work instruction – Notifiable pests and diseases of animals – listing and de-listing (published on intranet)

8. Revision history

Version	Date issued	Notes	By
1.0	01/07/2017	New policy developed in response to the <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i> .	Animal Biosecurity and Welfare
2.0	30/09/2021	Minor update to clarify that diseases of wildlife and aquatic animals, and aquatic pests, are in scope. Add section of point of care testing	Animal Biosecurity

9. Contact

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