



BIOSECURITY ACT 2015

Discussion Paper: Enzootic Bovine Leucosis

December 2015



Photo: © NSW Department of Primary Industries

Comments on this paper close on 12 February 2016

Email your comments to: submissions.biosecuritylegislation@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Post your comments to: Biosecurity Act 2015
NSW Department of Primary Industries
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Published December 2015

For more information

See: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurityact

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Ref: INT15/132982

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Summary

The *Biosecurity Act 2015* (the Act) will repeal the *Stock Diseases Act 1923*, which currently includes regulatory controls with respect to enzootic bovine leucosis (EBL).

Having considered existing management arrangements and risks associated with EBL, it is proposed that the management of EBL in NSW will continue to be led by the NSW dairy industry with similar regulatory management arrangements under the Act. Specifically it is proposed that EBL will be managed under the **General Biosecurity Duty (GBD)** with a supporting **mandatory measure** to notify.

Background Information

EBL is caused by a virus which infects white blood cells and persists for the life of the animal. This virus is also known as Bovine Leukemia Virus (BLV). Only about 1 in 20 infected animals show any evidence of the disease. EBL can take many forms depending on what body systems are affected. Affected animals go off their feed and become weak and debilitated. Sometimes enlarged lymph nodes can be felt as lumps under the skin.

The virus can be transmitted from infected cows to their unborn calves but it is usually spread between animals by tiny amounts of blood that can be exchanged during routine activities like vaccination, castration, ear tagging, dehorning, rectal examination or natural mating.

A national program has been very successful in eradicating the infection from the Australian dairy herd. Confirmed freedom in dairy herds was declared in 2012.

What is the problem?

Some beef herds in Australia may still have a low level of EBL and it is important that farmers planning to introduce beef bulls or other beef animals to their dairy herd check that they are free of EBL.

Why is it important?

We seek to support the dairy industry to ensure the NSW dairy herd maintains its EBL free status.

What is the outcome we are seeking?

That people working on dairy farms such as farmers, veterinarians and artificial insemination technicians comply with dairy industry advice on EBL so that the dairy sector remains free of EBL.

Current management arrangements

Following the successful industry and Government partnership that led to dairies being regarded as free of EBL, the dairy industry has assumed management of EBL. EBL is declared as a notifiable disease under the *Stock Diseases Act 1923*.

Proposed Management under the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015

It is proposed that the risk of EBL in NSW will be managed under the **General Biosecurity Duty** with a **mandatory measure** to notify the presence or suspected presence of EBL in cattle.

The Act introduces the concept of shared responsibility via the inclusion of a GBD. The GBD requires any person (e.g., farmer) dealing with biosecurity matter (e.g., cattle) or a carrier of biosecurity matter (e.g., agricultural implements such as branding or tagging equipment) and who knows or ought to know of the biosecurity risks associated with that activity to take measures to prevent, minimise or eliminate the risk as far as is reasonably practicable.

In the case of EBL a farmer can discharge his or her biosecurity duty by preventing, minimising, or eliminating the risks as far as reasonably practical. For example, beef animals of unknown EBL status must either not be introduced to a dairy, or if introduced, should be isolated until tested negative for EBL.

In addition, people working with animals in a dairy herd such as veterinarians and artificial insemination technicians also have a GBD. They should for example, if using implements that have previously been used for procedures on beef cattle such as for ear tagging, castration or disbudding, ensure those implements have been sterilised before using them to conduct any procedure on dairy cattle.

Managing risks of EBL is a shared responsibility and all people dealing with dairy cattle should take reasonable precautions against the introduction and spread of EBL. Requesting a National Cattle Health Statement when purchasing or agisting beef cattle will assist to manage this risk.

Authorised officers have powers under the *Biosecurity Act 2015* to respond to circumstances where diseases such as EBL are not being dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the Act. For example, they may issue a biosecurity direction or accept a biosecurity undertaking from a person requiring that person to take certain action.

How you can discharge your GBD may be outlined in Industry Standards, Codes of Practice, guidelines or through other advisory or education material.

What do you think?

We value your comments on how we can improve our biosecurity system and look forward to receiving your input into this important process.

Please complete the following survey on 'EBL' at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/EBL1>.

Alternatively, submit your feedback **by Friday, 12 February 2016** via **email** or post to:

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For more information about the *Biosecurity Act 2015* and regulatory framework, please visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/biosecurityact.

Appendix

Summary of current and proposed management of EBL

