

Tracing in biosecurity emergencies

NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) in cooperation with Local Land Services (LLS) and supporting organisations coordinate tracing in biosecurity emergency responses. Tracing aims to identify where a disease/pest may have come from (trace-back) and where it may have spread to (trace-forward) during a specified period of time by:

- determining and assigning priorities to trace data
- allocating traces to tracing personnel/teams
- validating tracing data
- actioning traces

Tracing is undertaken at the Local Control Centre (LCC) and State Coordination Centre (SCC) depending on the extent of the traces e.g. local, regional, state-wide. Inter-state traces are referred to the relevant states/territories by the SCC. International traces are referred to the Commonwealth by the SCC.

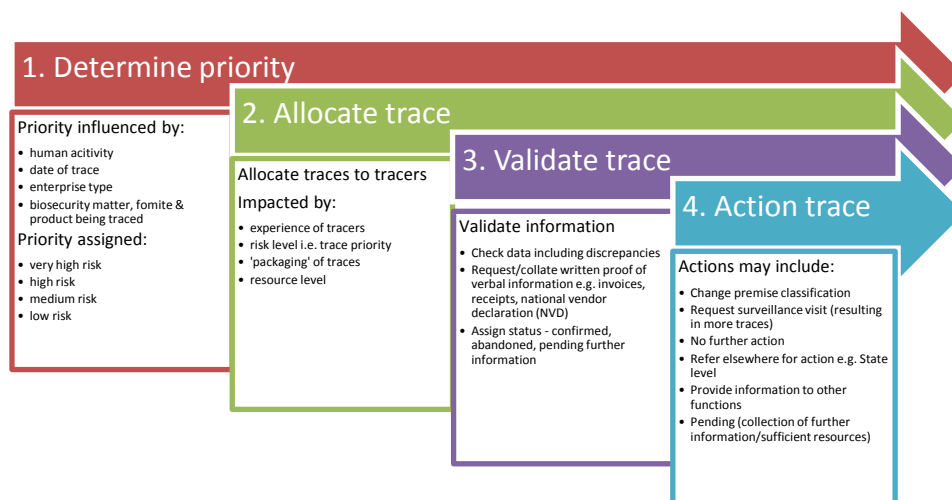
Planning considerations

- A surveillance and tracing (SAT) plan includes priorities for traces which are based on relevant industry information, plans and standards e.g. AUSVETPLAN disease strategies, response policy brief or World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) standards
- A SAT plan may vary with:
 - defined areas (emergency zones, restricted and control areas)
 - stages of the response (defining the extent of spread to proof of freedom)
 - premises risk classification
- Tracing relies on accurate data collected by surveillance teams and from a variety of other sources which may change with the stage of the response. **Tracing can identify and prioritise where surveillance needs to occur.**

Roles and responsibilities

The roles required and structure will depend on the size and complexity of the response. Refer to the Operations section of the [DPI emergency response roles](#).

Tracing



1. Determine priority

Trace data collected by surveillance teams is entered into the case management system (CMS). Traces may also be received from other LCCs and the SCC.

Each trace is assigned to a case (either existing or new). A new case is assigned an initial risk classification of TP (trace premises). Where traces are assigned to an existing case the risk classification should be reviewed if trace data affects the existing classification.

Each trace is assigned a priority (low, medium, high or very high) based on risk of transmission.

A SAT plan should state:

- definitions of suspect and confirmed cases
- criteria for risk classification of premises consistent with the [guidance document Declared areas and allocation of premises classifications](#) e.g. TP, IP (infected premises)
- timeframe for tracing biosecurity matter and carriers (e.g. target species, commodities and fomites) for trace-backs and trace-forwards
- criteria for prioritisation of risk traces for further action

2. Allocate trace

Priority traces are allocated to tracers or tracing teams by the Tracing Coordinator, and recorded and tracked in the CMS.

Allocation of traces will be determined by:

- priority of trace – very high risks are usually addressed first
- knowledge of tracers - commodity specialists (e.g. milk) may be assigned all traces regardless of priority
- packaging of traces – trace-forward and trace-back from an IP or a particular area may be allocated for completion regardless of priority

3. Validate trace

Allocated traces are validated to ensure:

- written evidence is available to support verbal records
- inconsistencies and discrepancies are investigated and resolved

To validate a trace, tracers may require:

- assistance from Industry Liaison Officers (ILO)
- knowledge of target species distribution, routine movements and/or access to data sources e.g. National Livestock Identification System (NLIS)
- local and regional contacts for key stakeholders
- access to landholder and community reporting
- understanding of disease/pest dynamics, biology, incubation period, spread mechanism and transmission routes
- authority to request evidence from landholders/owners/managers

Validated traces are assigned a status in the CMS and approved by the Tracing Coordinator:

Trace status	Details	Possible actions
Confirmed	Movement (i.e. trace) is confirmed when written/electronic records are available to support subsequent decisions and actions	Request surveillance visit Change premises classification from TP Refer elsewhere e.g. SCC Provide information to other functions
Pending further information	Insufficient or conflicting information that requires further investigation	Request surveillance visit Information requested from key stakeholder, industry liaison etc
Abandoned	Low risk traces with little or no supporting information	No further action Change premises classification from TP

4. Action trace

Each allocated trace should have a status of either confirmed, pending or abandoned (see table above).

Premises classification is changed when the Tracing Coordinator submits a request to the Investigations Manager for approval. Criteria for premises classifications are in the SAT plan.

Surveillance visit requests are assigned to the Surveillance Coordinator for action in the CMS.

Reporting

Tracing information for situation reports includes:

- number of traces by priority e.g. total, very high, high, medium and low risk
- number by risk priority that have been completed (confirmed or abandoned), in progress (pending), to do

Tracing Coordinator to provide:

- suggested changes or improvements on SAT plan to Planning function via Investigations Manager
- feedback to the surveillance teams about the quality of the data collected

Resources

- Access to information systems e.g. NLIS, GIS, Live Trace
- Access to local/regional information and key contacts
- Devices (e.g. computer/tablet) with internet access to collate information
- Phone preferably with hands-free headset

Safety

Safety issues must be addressed by implementing appropriate controls. Risks may include:

- [Dealing with aggressive stakeholders](#)
- [Driving vehicles](#)
- [Fatigue management](#)
- [Manual handling](#)
- [Property visits](#)

Further information

NSW Department of Primary Industries – [Operations resources and publications](#)

[AUSVETPLAN Guidance document: Tracing and surveillance](#)

[AUSVETPLAN Guidance document: Declared areas and allocation of premises classifications in an EAD response](#)

[PLANTPLAN](#)