

9

REGIONAL ANIMAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

Australia's involvement in regional animal health initiatives is through the provision of aid and research activities.

Australia collaborates with many countries to improve the health of their livestock. Concerns expressed by international public health agencies about the potential impact of zoonotic diseases have led to increased public and official attention being given to animal disease control.

Australia's involvement in regional animal health initiatives is through the provision of aid and research activities. Aid activities are primarily resourced through the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), and research activities are primarily resourced through the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). In addition, Australia is involved through direct liaison between the government agencies, veterinary associations and private organisations of collaborating countries.

Australia continues to provide technical and financial assistance at global and regional levels by supporting the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific. Support to these international animal health collaborators ensures that Australia's involvement in regional projects addresses important animal health issues and requirements for Australia as well as for the collaborating countries.

This chapter summarises Australia's main areas of activity in terrestrial animal health through AusAID and ACIAR in the Asia-Pacific and African regions. Information on regional aquatic animal health initiatives is provided in Chapter 3.

Overseas aid

Australia's overseas aid program aims to assist developing countries to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development in line with Australia's national interest. Australia is part of the global effort to progress towards the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Achieving MDG1 (eradicate extreme hunger and poverty) requires attention to key drivers of economic growth, including rural productivity, private sector development and trade. The health MDGs are a central focus for Australian aid, while the Government's First National Security Statement (December 2008) recognises the potential security threat posed by pandemic disease. In this context, animal health initiatives are very relevant. Animal disease control and capacity building can have major benefits on productivity at the farm level and may improve the trading potential of a developing country by increasing its capacity to meet trade-related sanitary requirements. Since many devastating human diseases originate in animals, control at the source is fundamental to a comprehensive health security strategy.

Most of Australia's aid is designed, delivered and subsequently assessed in conjunction with collaborating countries' governments and other agencies to meet their most pressing development needs. AusAID's clear focus on a whole-of-government approach to key development issues was recently commended by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). AusAID responds to challenges in the region by drawing upon broad expertise in government, business, academia and the community.

Australia's contribution to the global development effort focuses primarily on the Asia-Pacific region, where a majority of the world's poor live. Assistance to Africa will also increase as the aid program scales up to 0.5% of gross national income by 2015.



AusAID

Current AusAID projects that include animal health activities are described below.

OIE Southeast Asia Foot-and-Mouth Disease Campaign

Australia has supported the OIE Southeast Asia Foot-and-Mouth Disease (SEAFMD) Campaign since 1997. The goals of this project are to control and eradicate foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in eight countries in the ASEAN region, to increase food security and to alleviate poverty among rural smallholder producers of livestock. The participating countries are Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Although free from FMD, Indonesia is a member of the campaign.

The SEAFMD Campaign is coordinated through an OIE Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) in Bangkok, Thailand. The unit has five staff, including a regional coordinator, and delivers the program as agreed by the OIE subcommission in Southeast Asia.

Major achievements recorded in 2008 included:

- the recognition of the SEAFMD RCU as a model of excellence for regional coordination in animal health
- continued development of the SEAFMD 2020 Roadmap Toolkit by member countries
- development of approaches to improve reporting of FMD outbreaks using a web-based system through the ASEAN Regional Animal Health Information System and OIE's World Animal Health Information System
- acceptance by the OIE Biological Commission of the Pakchong laboratory in Thailand as an OIE reference laboratory for FMD
- enhancing communications and public awareness processes focused on FMD in Southeast Asia.

Sanitary and Phytosanitary Capacity Building Program

The Sanitary and Phytosanitary Capacity Building Program (SPSCBP) is in its final year of implementation and will complete its animal health activities in mid-2009.

The SPSCBP aims to increase the capacity of ASEAN countries to meet international sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) standards consistent with the World Trade Organization Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. This will be achieved by boosting their ability to describe and manage animal and plant health, and to implement SPS measures.

With funding of \$3.9 million over three years, the program aims to strengthen the technical, scientific and managerial capacities of regional and national agencies that are responsible for managing SPS matters.

All ASEAN countries participate in the SPSCBP. The Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Burma (Myanmar) are sponsored under the program; Singapore and Brunei meet their own costs; and Malaysia shares costs with the program. Animal health activities to complete the program include:

- publication of a simply worded booklet explaining the SPS Agreement and its relevance to plant and animal health (English, Bahasa Indonesia and Vietnamese language versions published in 2007; Thai and Lao versions to be published in early 2009)
- continuing support for an FMD epidemiological capacity network
- a study of livestock movement patterns affecting the SEAFMD Campaign
- a series of training workshops on integrated risk management of livestock diseases and zoning strategies, and an SPS awareness workshop in the Philippines for middle managers working in animal health.

Avian influenza and other emerging infectious diseases in Asia

Australia continues to be at risk from avian influenza (AI) outbreaks in the Asia-Pacific region and has invested in a coordinated regional response to avian and pandemic influenza. In 2006, AusAID released the *Pandemics and Emerging Infectious Diseases Strategy 2006–2010*,⁸² which details how Australia's aid program will assist partner countries to strengthen their national systems for human and animal health. Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste are identified as priorities under this strategy. Other countries at risk receive Australian assistance, mostly

⁸² <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/publications/pdf/pandemics.pdf>

through regional or multilateral agencies such as ASEAN, APEC, the SPC, the World Bank, WHO, the FAO and the OIE.

Recently funded projects and activities include contributions to:

- the Multi-Donor Avian and Human Influenza Trust Fund administered by the World Bank, for activities in the East Asia, Pacific and Africa regions
- the OIE project to strengthen veterinary services to combat AI and other priority diseases in Southeast Asia
- a program focusing on piloting models and approaches for strengthening capacity, at the community and local level, for highly pathogenic AI (HPAI) prevention, surveillance and response in Cambodia, Laos, Burma and Vietnam
- the Pacific Regional Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Project, to help build the capacity of Pacific Island countries and territories
- initiatives through APEC to build capacity in areas such as surveillance
- ASEAN + 3 (ASEAN countries plus South Korea, China and Japan) Emerging Infectious Disease Program Phase II, to reduce the economic, social and disease burden that results from emerging diseases threatening the region, through activities including risk communication, outbreak investigation and response and exercise management
- Indonesian assistance (national-level support, disease surveillance and response, and capacity building), including
 - FAO projects for the control of AI in poultry in Indonesia
 - Veterinary Laboratory Strengthening Program
 - a comprehensive capacity-building initiative, being implemented by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) Australian Animal Health Laboratory in partnership with the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture, focusing on developing a reliable veterinary laboratory network in Indonesia
 - animal health support for South and West Sulawesi — implemented by CSIRO, the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture and the FAO to strengthen disease surveillance and response, and to strengthen animal health services
 - strengthening the animal quarantine system to control HPAI — delivered by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) in collaboration with the Indonesian Agency for Agricultural Quarantine
- a Papua New Guinean response to emerging infectious disease; projects include
 - the Avian Influenza Enhanced Surveillance and Reporting Project, implemented by AQIS in collaboration with the Papua New Guinea National Department of Health and the National Agricultural Quarantine and Inspection Authority (NAQIA)
 - extension of the health radio network to improve coverage and reporting procedures in areas deemed to be at high risk of AI
 - a twinning arrangement between AQIS and NAQIA to build longer term relationships and capacity
 - a communications officer position in the Torres Strait for early warning of animal disease outbreaks
- a biosecurity strengthening project in Timor-Leste, implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the FAO, to improve preparedness, prevention and response to AI.

Since the detection of human AI cases in Indonesia in 2005 and subsequent spread of AI to Europe and Africa, support to control AI at its source in Southeast Asia has increased among a wide range of international donors.

Overseas animal health research

Australia funds international animal health research mainly through ACIAR. ACIAR's 14 research programs⁸³ include Animal Health, in which projects of three to five years are commissioned to meet the research priorities of partner countries and Australia, and to have the widest possible impact.

Most ACIAR projects are located in Asia and the Pacific, with funds allocated as follows:

- Southeast Asia — more than 45%
- Papua New Guinea and Pacific Island nations — approximately 20%
- South Asia — approximately 15%
- North Asia — less than 15%
- Southern Africa — less than 5%.

⁸³ <http://www.aciar.gov.au>

Animal Health program

The ACIAR Animal Health program supports research organisations in Australia and partner countries to use a multidisciplinary approach to solve problems in animal production and health. The program is focused on Indonesia, the greater Mekong region (with emphasis on Cambodia and Laos) and Papua New Guinea. A major technical focus is on transboundary animal disease (TAD) control in cooperation with regional agencies and, in partnership with national institutions, on diseases that affect livestock production and human health.

AI in Indonesia continues to be a major concern for poultry and human health. A cluster of projects provides some of the research required to implement effective control programs; these include:

- epidemiology and control of AI in ducks
- appropriate methods of disease surveillance for major TADs
- control and characterisation of HPAI strains in poultry
- biosecurity in nonindustrial commercial poultry production.

Anthrax, brucellosis and rabies remain important animal diseases that affect humans; and livestock movement causes spread of AI, classical swine fever and FMD. A group of projects is undertaking research on surveillance systems, control programs and risk analysis to support decentralised strategies, including:

- development of a vaccine for the control of infectious bursal disease (or Gumboro) in village and small poultry holdings
- identification of policy responses to minimise negative socioeconomic impacts of an AI epidemic
- production of a vaccine for the control of Jembrana disease
- improving veterinary service delivery in a decentralised Indonesia
- livestock movement and managing disease in eastern Indonesia and eastern Australia.

Diseases of livestock have a major impact on household income in upland Laos. Given the position of Laos as a major livestock transit route, rapidly spreading viral diseases are important. Projects assessing the risks of livestock movement, improving diagnosis and developing control strategies in the northern provinces include:

- understanding livestock movement and the risk of spread of TADs
- forage legumes for supplementing village pigs
- best-practice health and husbandry of cattle and buffalo
- management of pig-associated zoonoses
- management of classical swine fever and FMD at the village level.

Domestic and regional trade in cattle is emerging as important for Cambodian agriculture. An integrated program of cattle health and production projects is focused on the constraints of disease, poor reproductive management and inadequate nutrition, including:

- best-practice cattle health and husbandry
- improved feeding systems for more efficient beef cattle production
- understanding livestock movement and the risk of spread of TADs.

Livestock and plant biosecurity is high among the agreed priorities for Papua New Guinea. Animal research projects include:

- development of animal health surveillance systems
- assessment of the potential economic impacts of the *Varroa* bee mite on the pollination of major crops.



Kevin Evans, AusAID