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DISEASE WATCH HOTLINE: 1800 675 888

The Disease Watch Hotline is a toll-free telephone number that connects callers to the relevant state or territory officer to report concerns about any potential emergency disease situation. Anyone suspecting an emergency disease outbreak should use this number to get immediate advice and assistance.
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1 Introduction

Effective responses to emergency animal disease (EAD) incidents require planning at national, state and territory, and district levels. They also require the involvement of animal health authorities, livestock and affiliated industries, organisations in affected communities, and emergency management organisations.

AUSVETPLAN — the Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan — contains the nationally agreed approach for the response to an incident or suspected incident of an EAD in Australia.
2 Purpose of AUSVETPLAN

AUSVETPLAN documents the nationally agreed roles, responsibilities, coordination arrangements, policies, strategies and procedures for the response to EAD incidents\(^1\) in Australia.

It has been developed and agreed upon by governments and relevant industries in non-outbreak times to ensure that a fast, efficient and effective EAD response can be implemented consistently across Australia with minimal delay.

In meeting this purpose, AUSVETPLAN:

- addresses foreseeable disease risks
- provides a framework for policy development for unforeseen risks that occur during an EAD response
- serves as nationally agreed reference material for EAD training and exercises
- assists governments and industries to fulfil their roles and meet their responsibilities under the Government and Livestock Industry Cost Sharing Deed in Respect of Emergency Animal Disease Responses (Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement; EADRA)
- contributes to identifying deficiencies in technical knowledge
- informs research priorities
- facilitates Australia’s access to export markets by supporting trading partners’ evaluation of the competency of Australia’s animal health services.

3 Structure of AUSVETPLAN

AUSVETPLAN is documented in disease-specific strategies and response policies, operational manuals, enterprise manuals and management manuals. Additional supporting information is available in guidance and resource documents. The complete series of AUSVETPLAN manuals and documents is available on the Animal Health Australia website.2

3.1 AUSVETPLAN: Overview

AUSVETPLAN: Overview (this document) provides background information about the components of AUSVETPLAN and their functional relationships, and on the development and approval of AUSVETPLAN.

3.2 Disease-specific strategies and response policies

For each disease listed in the EADRA, a disease-specific strategy or response policy has been developed. These contain the agreed policy (and supporting technical information) for the response to an incident — or suspected incident — of the disease in Australia. The majority of EADRA-listed diseases are covered by response policy briefs. EADRA-listed diseases for which additional preparedness is warranted (the most serious diseases) are covered by disease strategies.

Disease strategies include detailed information on:

- the nature of the disease (aetiology, host range, geographic distribution, incubation period, transmission, clinical signs, diagnosis, the development of immunity, and the availability of vaccination and treatment)
- principles of control and eradication (critical factors for formulating a response strategy, and options for control or eradication based on these factors)
- policy and rationale (the agreed Australian response policy and strategies for its implementation — such as stamping out, tracing and surveillance, vaccination, treatment, disposal, decontamination, wild animal and vector control, public awareness and media)
- use of declared areas and premises classifications
- recommended quarantine and movement controls
- procedures for surveillance and proof of freedom.

3.3 Operational manuals

Operational procedures manuals describe in detail the recommended procedures for activities that are common to most EAD responses. The manuals are as follows:

- **Destruction of animals** — provides clear guidance on acceptable euthanasia techniques for most species in the most likely situations as part of disease control measures in an EAD response.

- **Disposal** — addresses the issues to be considered and provides a decision-making framework for disposing of waste, including animal carcasses and products, for disease control purposes.

- **Decontamination** — outlines the properties of the causative agents of diseases covered by AUSVETPLAN, the disinfectants and other methods available to inactivate them, and the decontamination procedures that need to form part of a decontamination plan. It also provides decontamination strategies for particular disease agents or groups of agents.

- **Livestock welfare and management** — describes the husbandry strategies, assessment procedures, roles and decision-making processes to be implemented in the event of an EAD incident to ensure that animal welfare requirements are met.

- **Valuation and compensation** — describes the operational procedures for valuation and compensation for animals and property that are destroyed, and animals that die, as a result of an EAD incident or of disease control measures in the response to the incident.

- **Wild animal response** — provides information on the management of wild animals in an EAD incident, including information to underpin strategic planning; decision-making frameworks; and operational guidelines outlining procedures and techniques for surveys, sampling, population reduction and containment, multispecies operations and response management functions.

3.4 Enterprise manuals

Enterprise manuals are developed for specific types of enterprises that pose special economic or disease eradication problems, or are important in the spread or impact of certain EADs. They provide information and guidance on the structure and operations of the relevant type of enterprise, the key risks to enterprises — and posed by enterprises — in EAD incidents, and how these may be managed in an EAD response.

Enterprise manuals target personnel:

- involved in EAD response and decision making who may be unfamiliar with the operations of that enterprise or industry

- working in the enterprise or industry and seeking guidance on the
  - operational procedures that may be used in an EAD incident to exclude, contain or eradicate a disease
  - development of EAD preparedness, including contingency plans.
The manuals cover:
• artificial breeding centres
• feedlots
• meat processing
• pig industry
• poultry industry
• wool industry
• saleyards and transport
• zoos.

3.5 Management manuals

3.5.1 Control centres management (Parts 1 and 2)

The Control Centres Management Manual provides a management structure for handling an EAD outbreak at national, state and territory, and local levels:
• Part 1 describes the principles and arrangements for managing a response to an EAD, and introduces the structures for managing the response. It promotes consistent but flexible frameworks for response management across all jurisdictions, and is aligned with contemporary incident management systems.
• Part 2 describes the specific functions of state, territory and local EAD control centres and forward command posts, and their response personnel during a response.

3.5.2 Laboratory preparedness

The purpose of the Laboratory Preparedness Manual is to assist veterinary laboratories to prepare an EAD contingency plan for an EAD emergency. It includes information on the Laboratories for Emergency Animal Disease Diagnosis and Response (LEADDR) network and how laboratories will cooperate to form an effective diagnostic network in a response.

3.6 Supporting documents

Guidance and resource documents support AUSVETPLAN manuals by providing guidance on particular topics and additional information to stakeholders. These supporting documents may be referenced in AUSVETPLAN manuals.

3.7 Other documentation

Nationally agreed standard operating procedures (NASOPs) have been developed for use by jurisdictions during responses to EAD incidents and emergencies. NASOPs do

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3 LEADDR is a national network of laboratories established in 2009 to effectively prepare for, and respond to, an Australian EAD incident. The network reports directly to the Animal Health Committee.
not form part of AUSVETPLAN; however, they underpin elements of AUSVETPLAN and describe in detail specific actions undertaken during a response to an incident. NASOPs cross-reference AUSVETPLAN manuals where appropriate.

States and territories also have their own standard operating procedures to guide activities within the jurisdiction. These are supported by jurisdiction-specific work instructions, and forms and templates (nationally agreed or jurisdiction specific).
4 Development and approval

Development and approval of AUSVETPLAN is a collaborative process between Animal Health Australia (AHA), its government and industry members, and other stakeholders as required. This process aims to ensure that AUSVETPLAN is fit for purpose, and is used by governments and industries in the response to EAD incidents.

The six phases in the development and approval process for AUSVETPLAN are identification, prioritisation, drafting, consultation, approvals and publication. Figure 1 provides an indicative outline of this process.
AHA = Animal Health Australia; AHC = Animal Health Committee; TRG = AUSVETPLAN Technical Review Group; OIE = World Organisation for Animal Health

Figure 1  Outline of the process for development and approval of AUSVETPLAN (text, manuals and documents)
4.1 Phase 1: Identification of need for revisions to AUSVETPLAN

The need for revisions to AUSVETPLAN can arise in a number of ways, including from:

• routine (including time-based) review
• changes in international standards
• feedback from relevant exercises or EAD incidents in Australia or overseas
• changes in scientific or technical knowledge
• significant changes in disease epidemiology
• technological or other advances
• changes to EAD management arrangements in Australia.

4.2 Phase 2: Prioritisation of AUSVETPLAN work plan

Once the need for revision to AUSVETPLAN has been identified, the revision is considered for inclusion in the AUSVETPLAN work plan. Prioritisation of AUSVETPLAN work is risk based. The work plan is reviewed and endorsed on an annual basis by AHA’s government and industry members through AHA’s business planning process.

4.3 Phase 3: Drafting

Drafting of AUSVETPLAN documents is usually done by expert writing groups convened by AHA, but may also be done by the proponent of a particular change (e.g., AHA, the AHA AUSVETPLAN Technical Review Group, AHA’s government or industry members).

4.4 Phase 4: Consultation

The aim of the consultation phase is to ensure that any underpinning scientific and technical information is accurate, that it informs policy appropriately, and that any significant concerns with the proposed policies and text have been addressed before final approval of the draft is sought. During this phase, AHA consults with its government and industry members, and with relevant nonmember stakeholders.

4.5 Phase 5: Approvals

Once the consultation phase has been completed (and all significant issues are adequately addressed), AUSVETPLAN drafts undergo approval. The aim of this phase is to ensure that only appropriately authorised AUSVETPLAN documents are published and made publicly available.

4 AHA convenes and chairs the AUSVETPLAN Technical Review Group to provide scientific and technical support to the development of AUSVETPLAN.

5 If the drafts involve only Type 1 changes (changes that are clear matters of fact or minor operational procedures), they typically proceed directly to the approvals phase.
Under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity, the National Biosecurity Committee (NBC) has the authority to approve AUSVETPLAN manuals. The NBC will only authorise AUSVETPLAN publications if support is demonstrated from all relevant government and industry signatories to the EADRA. The NBC has delegated authority for the approval of certain types of AUSVETPLAN amendments and for certain AUSVETPLAN documents to the Animal Health Committee, AHA or the AHA AUSVETPLAN Technical Review Group. The types of amendments, and their delegated authorisation, are:

- **Type 1**– changes to an existing manual are clear matters of fact or minor operational procedures (authorisation: AHA)
- **Type 2**– more substantial changes to an existing manual, relating to significant technical issues or operational policies and procedures (authorisation: the Animal Health Committee)
- **Type 3**– all new manuals and significant policy changes to an existing manual that have financial implications for stakeholders (authorisation: the NBC).

### 4.6 Phase 6: Publication

Following final approval, AUSVETPLAN manuals and documents are professionally edited and are then published on the AHA website.

Further information on the development and approval of AUSVETPLAN is available from AHA.

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5 How AUSVETPLAN is used

An overview of Australia’s EAD response structures and governance is provided in the Control Centres Management Manual and summarised below to highlight the role of AUSVETPLAN.

The chief veterinary officer (CVO) in the state or territory in which the incident occurs is responsible for instituting animal disease control action within that state or territory. The strategies to control the disease, including the budget for the proposed response actions, are documented in an Emergency Animal Disease Response Plan (EADRP). Where the EAD is suspected or confirmed to be a zoonosis, the EADRP is developed in collaboration with the chief medical officer (CMO) of the state or territory.

For a response to be cost shared under the EADRA, EADRP must be consistent with, and guided by, any relevant AUSVETPLAN manuals. For responses that are not cost shared under the EADRA, the development of response plans consistent with AUSVETPLAN is voluntary and is usual practice. AUSVETPLAN therefore serves as the authoritative reference on policies and guidelines for the management of EADs in Australia.11

The CVO is responsible for recommending the EADRP to the Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases (CCEAD). Unaffected jurisdictions may also need to develop response plans to address jurisdictional activities that may be eligible for cost sharing.

The CCEAD provides technical review of the EADRP and may recommend it to the National Management Group (NMG) convened for the incident. The NMG decides on whether cost sharing will be invoked (following advice from the CCEAD) and whether to approve the EADRP.

CVOs and, where relevant, CMOs implement disease control measures as agreed in the EADRP and in accordance with relevant legislation. They make ongoing decisions on follow-up disease control measures — including termination of the response — in consultation with the CCEAD and, where applicable, the NMG, based on epidemiological information about the outbreak.

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11 Because of the potentially wide range of circumstances occurring during an EAD incident, EADRP may deviate from the described policies and guidelines in AUSVETPLAN with the agreement of the CCEAD and, where applicable, the NMG.
### Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal Health Committee</td>
<td>A committee whose members are the Australian and state and territory CVOs, the Director of the CSIRO Australian Animal Health Laboratory, and the Director of Environmental Biosecurity in the Australian Government Department of the Environment. The committee provides advice to the National Biosecurity Committee on animal health matters, focusing on technical issues and regulatory policy (formerly called the Veterinary Committee). <em>See also</em> National Biosecurity Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal products</td>
<td>Meat, meat products and other products of animal origin (eg eggs, milk) for human consumption or for use in animal feedstuff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Chief Veterinary Officer</td>
<td>The nominated senior veterinarian in the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources who manages international animal health commitments and the Australian Government’s response to an animal disease outbreak. <em>See also</em> Chief veterinary officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUSVETPLAN</td>
<td><em>Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan</em>. A series of technical response plans that describe the proposed Australian approach to an emergency animal disease incident. The documents provide guidance based on sound analysis, linking policy, strategies, implementation, coordination and emergency-management plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carcass</td>
<td>The body of an animal that died in the field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief veterinary officer (CVO)</td>
<td>The senior veterinarian of the animal health authority in each jurisdiction (national, state or territory) who has responsibility for animal disease control in that jurisdiction. <em>See also</em> Australian Chief Veterinary Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>The sum of money paid by government to an owner for livestock or property that are destroyed for the purpose of eradication or prevention of the spread of an emergency animal disease, and livestock that have died of the emergency animal disease. <em>See also</em> Cost-sharing arrangements, Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases (CCEAD)</td>
<td>The key technical coordinating body for animal health emergencies. Members are state and territory CVOs, representatives of CSIRO-AAHL and the relevant industries, and the Australian CVO as chair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost-sharing arrangements</td>
<td>Arrangements agreed between governments (national and states/territories) and livestock industries for sharing the costs of emergency animal disease responses. See also Compensation, Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declared area</td>
<td>A defined tract of land that is subjected to disease control restrictions under emergency animal disease legislation. There are two types of declared areas: restricted area and control area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decontamination</td>
<td>Includes all stages of cleaning and disinfection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destroy (animals)</td>
<td>To kill animals humanely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disease agent</td>
<td>A general term for a transmissible organism or other factor that causes an infectious disease.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disease Watch Hotline</td>
<td>24-hour freecall service for reporting suspected incidences of exotic diseases — 1800 675 888.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disinfectant</td>
<td>A chemical used to destroy disease agents outside a living animal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disinfection</td>
<td>The application, after thorough cleansing, of procedures intended to destroy the infectious or parasitic agents of animal diseases, including zoonoses; applies to premises, vehicles and different objects that may have been directly or indirectly contaminated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposal</td>
<td>Sanitary removal of animal carcasses, animal products, materials and wastes by burial, burning or some other process so as to prevent the spread of disease.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency animal disease</td>
<td>A disease that is (a) exotic to Australia or (b) a variant of an endemic disease or (c) a serious infectious disease of unknown or uncertain cause or (d) a severe outbreak of a known endemic disease, and that is considered to be of national significance with serious social or trade implications. See also Endemic animal disease, Exotic animal disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
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| Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement | Agreement between the Australian and state/territory governments and livestock industries on the management of emergency animal disease responses. Provisions include participatory decision making, risk management, cost sharing, the use of appropriately trained personnel and existing standards such as AUSVETPLAN.  
*See also* Compensation, Cost-sharing arrangements |
| Endemic animal disease                    | A disease affecting animals (which may include humans) that is known to occur in Australia.  
*See also* Emergency animal disease, Exotic animal disease |
| Enterprise                                | *See* Risk enterprise                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Epidemiology                              | The study of disease in populations and of factors that determine its occurrence.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Exotic animal disease                     | A disease affecting animals (which may include humans) that does not normally occur in Australia.  
*See also* Emergency animal disease, Endemic animal disease |
| Exotic fauna/feral animals                | *See* Wild animals                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Incubation period                         | The period that elapses between the introduction of the pathogen into the animal and the first clinical signs of the disease.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Movement control                          | Restrictions placed on the movement of animals, people and other things to prevent the spread of disease.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| National Biosecurity Committee (NBC)      | The NBC was formally established under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity (IGAB). The IGAB was signed on 13 January 2012, and signatories include all states and territories except Tasmania. The NBC provides advice to the Agriculture Senior Officials Committee and the Agriculture Ministers’ Forum on national biosecurity issues, and on the IGAB.                      |
| National Management Group (NMG)           | A group established to approve (or not approve) the invoking of cost sharing under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement. NMG members are the Secretary of the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources as chair, the chief executive officers of the state and territory government parties, and the president (or analogous officer) of each of the relevant industry parties. |
| Native wildlife                            | *See* Wild animals                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
Operational procedures
Detailed instructions for carrying out specific disease control activities, such as disposal, destruction, decontamination and valuation.

Premises
A tract of land including its buildings, or a separate farm or facility that is maintained by a single set of services and personnel.

Quarantine
Legal restrictions imposed on a place or a tract of land by the serving of a notice limiting access or egress of specified animals, persons or things.

Risk enterprise
A defined livestock or related enterprise that is potentially a major source of infection for many other premises. Includes intensive piggeries, feedlots, abattoirs, knackeries, saleyards, calf scales, milk factories, tanneries, skin sheds, game meat establishments, cold stores, artificial insemination centres, veterinary laboratories and hospitals, road and rail freight depots, showgrounds, field days, weighbridges, garbage depots.

Stamping out
The strategy of eliminating infection from premises through the destruction of animals in accordance with the particular AUSVETPLAN manual, and in a manner that permits appropriate disposal of carcasses and decontamination of the site.

Surveillance
A systematic program of investigation designed to establish the presence, extent or absence of a disease, or of infection or contamination with the causative organism. It includes the examination of animals for clinical signs, antibodies or the causative organism.

Susceptible animals
Animals that can be infected with a particular disease.

Tracing
The process of locating animals, persons or other items that may be implicated in the spread of disease, so that appropriate action can be taken.

Vaccination
Inoculation of individuals with a vaccine to provide active immunity.

Vector
A living organism (frequently an arthropod) that transmits an infectious agent from one host to another. A biological vector is one in which the infectious agent must develop or multiply before becoming infective to a recipient host. A mechanical vector is one that transmits an infectious agent from one host to another but is not essential to the life cycle of the agent.
### Wild animals

- **native wildlife**
  Animals that are indigenous to Australia and may be susceptible to emergency animal diseases (e.g., bats, dingoes, marsupials).

- **feral animals**
  Animals of domestic species that are not confined or under control (e.g., cats, horses, pigs).

- **exotic fauna**
  Nondomestic animal species that are not indigenous to Australia (e.g., foxes).

### Zoonosis
A disease of animals that can be transmitted to humans.
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Full title</th>
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<tr>
<td>AAHL</td>
<td>Australian Animal Health Laboratory</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUSVETPLAN</td>
<td>Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCEAD</td>
<td>Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSIRO</td>
<td>Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVO</td>
<td>chief veterinary officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAD</td>
<td>emergency animal disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EADRA</td>
<td>Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EADRPLAN</td>
<td>Emergency Animal Disease Response Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>NMG</td>
<td>National Management Group</td>
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