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## **ANIMAL HEALTH AUSTRALIA TESTS ANIMAL EMERGENCY DISEASE RESPONSE PLANNING**

Animal Health Australia (AHA) will next week play a key role in the management of a simulated 'outbreak' of bluetongue disease in sheep as part of a major national training event called Exercise *Phantom Fox*.

The exercise, which runs from 15-18 May at the Wayville Showgrounds in Adelaide, is being hosted by Biosecurity South Australia and will involve a total of 150 personnel from around Australia, including the national Rapid Response Team (RRT).

The RRT is a group of 50 personnel from all state, territory and Commonwealth governments with expertise in managing outbreaks of emergency animal diseases wherever they occur in the country.

Bluetongue causes disease mostly in sheep, however other species including goats, cattle, buffalo, camels, llamas and deer can also be infected.

Animal Health Australia's Training Manager, Dr Kathy Gibson, said AHA has been actively engaged in planning Exercise *Phantom Fox* since 2010, along with Biosecurity SA and the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

"These types of exercise are regularly conducted around the country and are vital in testing the policies, systems and procedures to improve the way we respond to an emergency animal disease outbreak," Dr Gibson said.

Representatives from livestock industries will also practise their response roles during Exercise *Phantom Fox*.

"AHA has worked closely with our industry members to train people to take on the role of Industry Liaison Officer (ILO) in an emergency response," Dr Gibson said. "This exercise is the perfect opportunity for some of the trained ILOs to practise their roles, as well as expand their professional development and networks.

"Industry consultation and involvement would be crucial in a real life emergency response."

AHA livestock industry members directly involved in Exercise *Phantom Fox* include the Australian Alpaca Association, Goat Industry Council of Australia, Wool Producers Australia, Sheep Meat Council of Australia, the Cattle Council of Australia and the Australian Lot Feeders' Association.

This latest exercise builds on previous AHA training activities, including an exercise conducted last year which tested the challenges of responding to an animal emergency disease in a remote location.

AHA is a not-for-profit company established by the Australian Government, state and territory governments and major national livestock industries.

With a focus on national animal health and welfare issues, the company facilitates sustainable partnerships between members and provides leadership in securing outcomes that position Australia as a world leader in terms of its animal health status and services.

[www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au](http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au)

***For further information contact Lisa Borthwick, Communications Manager, Animal Health Australia on (02) 62 6203 3942.***