The development of Emergency Aquatic Animal Disease Response Arrangements

1. What are emergency response arrangements?

Australia has a number of emergency response arrangements—including formal agreements—which outline how industry and governments manage and pay for responses to pest and disease outbreaks.

Three emergency response agreements have been ratified in Australia:
- for diseases of terrestrial animals
- for plant pests
- for biosecurity incidents that primarily impact the environment.

Each agreement details roles and responsibilities for all participants, including who should contribute and agreed formulae for calculating how much that contribution should be.

The Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA) describes how governments and industry will manage the costs and responsibilities for responding to terrestrial animal disease outbreaks.

The EADRA is a formal, legally binding agreement (also known as a Deed) between Animal Health Australia, the Australian government, all state and territory governments, and currently fourteen livestock industry signatories. The EADRA covers the management and funding of responses to emergency animal disease (EAD) incidents. The EADRA was ratified in March 2002.

2. Is a Deed the only way to strengthen management of emergency aquatic animal diseases?

No, but a formal, legally binding agreement or Deed has been identified as the strongest option and is the agreed preferred goal. Other options, such as a memorandum of understanding, will be examined as we work through the issues in trying to develop a Deed.

3. What is required for aquatic animal industries?

The existing agreements do not cover diseases affecting aquatic animals or the industries that rely on them. Extending the existing terrestrial EADRA has been considered for aquatic animal industries but found not to be appropriate for several reasons, including the different operating environment and the wide range of stakeholders other than ‘farmers’ as is the case for the EADRA.

Aquatic industries and governments have recognised that stronger cooperative arrangements are desirable to improve the management of aquatic EADs. These arrangements could take several possible forms but a formal EAD response agreement, tailored to aquatic animal industries, is highly desirable. Work toward development of an Aquatic Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement has commenced in close consultation with the abalone aquaculture and commercial harvest sectors.
Abalone industry sectors are closely involved in the first part of the project to provide continuity with previous work, but other aquatic industry sectors will be invited to participate as well.

The project is managed by Animal Health Australia and funded by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture.

**What would be the overall purpose of aquatic EAD response arrangements?**

Aquatic EAD response arrangements would support signatory parties to enable them to respond to emergency disease outbreaks. Such arrangements would state the parameters for an emergency response to an aquatic animal disease outbreak and define roles and responsibilities of government and industry. Key elements to be included in aquatic EAD response arrangements would address:

- participation and cooperation
- risk management
- detection and response
- arrangements to share response costs
- training
- communication and education.

The goal of aquatic EAD response arrangements is to facilitate rapid and effective responses to emergency aquatic animal diseases. The aim of a response is to limit the impact of diseases by eradication, or control and containment. Like the EADRA, aquatic EAD response arrangements will establish mechanisms that:

- define risk mitigation obligations of parties to reduce the likelihood of a disease outbreak
- define the EAD preparedness responsibilities of parties
- facilitate immediate reporting of suspect EADs by removing financial disincentives for reporting
- facilitate an early and comprehensive response to an EAD, to define the nature of the disease and contain its spread
- provide parties that fund a response a role in decision making
- define funding responsibilities up to certain limits for each EAD including providing a framework wherein:
  - the beneficiaries of the eradication or containment of a disease pay an appropriate and equitable proportion of the costs of mounting a response
  - no one person/organisation is made better or worse off as a result of reporting a disease incident or suspected disease incident, and
  - there is appropriate accountability by a party to all of the parties who fund a response to an EAD.

4. **Under the EADRA, do parties have obligations other than cost sharing?**

Yes. Parties have reporting, biosecurity and resourcing obligations under the EADRA. Similar reporting obligations would apply under a similar arrangement for emergency aquatic diseases.
For example, under the EADRA, industry parties are required to develop and apply biosecurity plans to minimise disease risks, and monitor, manage and keep records of the health of stock in their care. Industry parties must also notify the relevant government authority within 24 hours of becoming aware of an EAD incident. Government parties must ensure there are appropriate surveillance systems, quarantine powers and diagnostic capabilities in place.

On-going biosecurity obligations are aimed at reducing the risk of an EAD incident occurring in the first place. Animal Health Australia manages a national biosecurity planning and implementation program under which industry parties develop industry biosecurity plans that describe how each industry will promote improvements to existing biosecurity measures. The program also obliges government parties to develop biosecurity statements that outline biosecurity policies and programs relevant to their responsibilities, including feral animal, public health and environmental policies. For more detail and copies of all of the plans and statements see www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/programs/biosecurity/biosecurity-planning/.

Furthermore, the EADRA obliges government parties to determine existing and required resource commitments and to define the costs that a state or territory consider to be ‘normal’. Industry parties are also developing complementary normal commitments. Only costs above that baseline level should be cost sharable. The EADRA Guidance document on normal commitments provides more information – see EADRA website www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/programs/emergency-animal-disease-preparedness/eadra-guidance-documents/.

5. Who will look after the Aquatic Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement?

The ongoing maintenance of aquatic EAD response arrangements, once they are negotiated and finalised, has not been resolved.

It is worth noting that in non-outbreak times, Animal Health Australia manages the review process for the EADRA, which includes regular workshops with representatives of all parties. In this way, Animal Health Australia ensures that the EADRA remains current, credible and effective. Experience gained from applying the EADRA in an EAD event flows into the review process.

Usually, an updated version of the EADRA is published once a year. Increasingly, supporting ‘guidance documents’ are also prepared and provide more detail on specific aspects of the EADRA (please refer to the EADRA website www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/programs/emergency-animal-disease-preparedness/ead-response-agreement/).

6. What is an Emergency Animal Disease?

An EAD is a disease that is likely to have significant effects on stock – potentially resulting in stock deaths, production loss, and in some cases, impacts on human health and the environment.

Aquatic EADs are likely to include:

- Introduced diseases – i.e. diseases not previously known to be in Australia
• Emerging diseases – i.e. diseases that have recently been identified to be present in
Australia and which have a limited distribution

Aquatic EADs will not include widespread diseases that occur as part of normal production.

Under the EADRA, it is considered to be in the national interest to be free from EADs. Other
defining characteristics of EADs include that:
• it is a known disease that does not occur in Australia
• it is a variant of an endemic disease
• it is a serious infectious disease of unknown or uncertain cause
• it is a known endemic disease, but its impacts are far beyond the severity expected.

7. Who would be covered by the Aquatic Emergency Animal Disease Response
Agreement?

The intent is that the aquatic EAD response arrangements will include all governments
(federal, state and territory) and be attractive to all major aquatic industry sectors. Smaller
aquatic industry sectors will also be encouraged to join.

Parties to the terrestrial EADRA include Animal Health Australia, the Australian government,
all state and territory governments, and a number of livestock industry sectors.

8. Which diseases would qualify for coverage under the Aquatic Emergency Animal
Disease Response Agreement?

The diseases to be covered by aquatic EAD response arrangements will be negotiated by
signatory parties. Experience has demonstrated that aquatic animals in Australia can be
particularly susceptible to emerging diseases (i.e. diseases that have recently been identified
to be present in Australia and which have a limited distribution) as well as introduced
diseases (i.e. diseases not previously known to be in Australia).

The aquatic EAD response arrangements will refer to known diseases but it will also need to
cover new and emerging diseases.

There are 65 diseases that are covered by the terrestrial EADRA. There is also a mechanism
to cover non-listed EADs, under a set of conditions.

9. What would be the benefits of an Aquatic Emergency Animal Disease Response
Agreement?

The most substantial benefit of aquatic EAD response arrangements is the ability to respond
quickly and effectively to an EAD incident while minimising uncertainty over management
and funding arrangements. With an agreement in place, parties to that agreement can ‘get
on with the job’ of emergency response. An agreement such as this enables a faster
streamlined and effective response enabling us to return to markets more quickly and
thereby reducing the potential impact on farmers.

Other key benefits are:
• Participation and cooperation is encouraged and supported
• Risk management is emphasised, with a strong focus on prevention
Detection and response is coordinated and fast
Arrangements to share response costs are fair, agreed and documented
Training to agreed and recognised standards
Communication and education achieves common messaging and shared understanding
Reduced likelihood of a disease outbreak through implementation of sector wide risk minimisation measures
Facilitation of early response to new incursions
Australia-wide improvement in biosecurity (all industry members operating to a similar standard)
Improved cooperation across sectors
Industry is directly and from the outset involved in decision-making about mounting and managing an EAD response.

10. What does ‘cost sharing’ mean?
Parties to aquatic EAD response arrangements will have an agreed mechanism for sharing the cost of a response. The proportions will vary, based on who potentially benefits from the response and to what extent.

The underlying principles of the terrestrial EADRA are that:
- those that benefit from (i.e. the beneficiaries) the eradication or containment of a disease pay an appropriate and equitable proportion of the costs of mounting a response
- no one person/organisation is made better or worse off as a result of reporting a disease incident or suspected disease incident.

11. What type of expenses can be cost shared under the EADRA?
Under the terrestrial EADRA cost sharing can apply for salaries and wages, operating expenses, owner reimbursement and capital costs under certain circumstances.

12. How would a response be coordinated?
In the case of terrestrial EADs, Governments and potentially affected industries that are signatories to the agreement coordinate the response via an agreed Emergency Animal Disease Response plan. Specific working groups are established to assist and provide advice: one group is established to make technical recommendations, another for financial decision-making. Affected industries that are signatories to the agreement are represented at and participate in decision making.
13. How much do government and industry pay in total?

How much potentially affected industries and Governments pay is yet to be determined for aquatic EAD response arrangements. Each response will differ in cost, but parties agree in advance to an upper limit.

In the EADRA, the default agreed limit for a party is that party’s proportional share of 1% of the GVP of the Industries affected by the EAD (2% in the case of foot-and-mouth disease). Where the agreed limit may be exceeded, parties can consider altering the proportional shares of the affected parties. In such cases, the EAD Response Plan should document an agreed long term control program, or any other alterations made to the EAD Response Plan.

14. What is the relative proportion that industry and governments pay?

The proportion is determined based on the expected public and private benefits of a response. For aquatic animal diseases we need to consider a different flow of benefits among industries (including commercial fisheries and aquaculture), recreational fishing, Indigenous interests, and the environment and social amenity. Determining the flow of benefits identifies who should contribute to the costs of a response.

A consultant has been commissioned to investigate how parties might benefit from a response and provide recommendations for aquatic EAD response arrangements. This work is due for completion by the end of 2015.

In the EADRA diseases are placed in one of 4 categories to determine the proportions paid by government and industry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of Disease</th>
<th>Govt Funding</th>
<th>Industry Funding</th>
<th>Impacts</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category 1</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>Serious effects on human health &amp;/or the environment but minimal direct consequences to the livestock industries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 2</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Major national socio-economic consequences, very serious international trade losses, national market disruptions, very severe production losses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 3</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Significant (but generally moderate) national socio-economic consequences through international trade losses, market disruptions involving two or more states and severe production losses to affected industries, but have minimal or no effect on human health or the environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 4</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>Mainly production loss diseases: there may be international trade losses and local market disruptions, but would not significantly affect the national economy. The main beneficiaries would be the affected livestock industry(s)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
15. What if there is an outbreak of new disease?

New diseases are likely in aquatic environments. Aquatic EAD response arrangements will need to include a mechanism to deal with this. In the EADRA mechanisms have been defined to allow this to occur so that the response to an EAD can get underway without delay.

16. How are the costs for individual governments and individual industries worked out?

The mechanism to calculate Government and industry contributions to a response is yet to be determined for aquatic EAD response arrangements.

Under the terrestrial EADRA, industry costs are determined in relation to industries’ GVP. Government costs are shared 50% by the Australian government, with the remainder shared by the state and territory governments based on the size of the affected industries in those jurisdictions.

Government funding is shared between government parties, i.e. the Commonwealth, the six states and the two territories. For each disease, the Commonwealth share is 50% of the total government share. The split between states and territory governments is worked out using a set of detailed formulae based on population and GVP.

The split of costs eligible for cost sharing between the industry parties where an EAD affects more than one species, or concerns more than one industry party for a species, are determined on the basis of the GVP of each industry.

17. How does industry meet its cost sharing obligation?

Parties to the EADRA must have plans in place to meet their costs should a response occur. These can be levies, fixed amounts held in reserve, or other mechanisms agreed by industry participants. Parties to aquatic EAD response arrangements will also need to have plans in place to meet their contribution to response costs.

In the terrestrial EADRA, the Commonwealth may initially meet an industry’s cost sharing obligations. That industry would then repay the Commonwealth within a reasonable time period. It is likely that a mechanism similar to the terrestrial EADRA will be available to aquatic industries.

Parties to the EADRA can establish an EAD response levy to meet financial liabilities for responses under the EADRA. Usually, the EAD response levy is set to zero and activated only in an EAD incident.

18. What is owner reimbursement?

Under the EADRA, where appropriate, owners of livestock that are culled in a response effort may be eligible for reimbursement for the culled animals.

Aquatic EAD response arrangements are likely to include similar provisions.
19. Would reimbursement be paid if an industry is not a party to the Aquatic Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement?

Based on the provisions of other agreements, such as the EADRA, if the industry is not represented by a signatory, there will usually be no reimbursement.

Under the EADRA, participants in industries for which there is no representative body, or for which the representative body is not a party to the EADRA, are not eligible for compensation if the GVP of that industry is greater than $20 million. If the GVP is less than $20 million, such participants may be eligible for compensation under the EADRA.

20. What about businesses that are not members of the signatory peak body (when that peak body is signatory to an agreement)?

Only the signatories to an agreement are represented in national forums that make recommendations or decisions about the funding and disease control aspects of the response. Individual businesses cannot participate in these national forums. A business must be a member of the signatory peak body to be represented.

Sometimes industries which are not signatory to the agreement are invited to provide input on matters that affect their industry, but this isn’t always the case. Non-signatory industries would not contribute to consensus decision making and they would not be eligible for reimbursement under an agreement.

21. How is the most appropriate response to an Emergency Animal Disease determined?

For the EADRA, appropriate response measures have been collaboratively developed and pre-agreed by all parties.

For all diseases listed in the EADRA, there is a preferred approach to an outbreak. These have been developed and agreed upon by governments and relevant industries in non-outbreak times and are captured in AUSVETPLAN, the Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan (please refer to the AUSVETPLAN website www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/programs/emergency-animal-disease-preparedness/ausvetplan/). AUSVETPLAN Disease strategies provide information about the nature of the disease, principles of control and eradication, the preferred response policy and its rationale.

An EAD Response Plan must be developed by the state or territory chief veterinary officer of the jurisdiction where the EAD incident has occurred. It must be consistent with relevant AUSVETPLAN manuals.

22. What is AQUAVETPLAN?

AQUAVETPLAN is the aquatic equivalent to AUSVETPLAN; it is the Australian Aquatic Veterinary Emergency Plan. It is a series of manuals that outline Australia’s approach to national disease preparedness and proposes the technical response and control strategies to be activated in an aquatic animal disease emergency. (see AQUAVETPLAN website www.agriculture.gov.au/animal/aquatic/aquavetplan ).
AQUAVETPLAN would be referred to in any aquatic agreement to provide technical guidance and to provide the preferred approach for an emergency response.

23. How is industry represented in an emergency response?

Under the EADRA, governments and potentially affected industries that are signatories to the agreement coordinate the response via an Emergency Animal Disease Response plan. Specific working groups are established to assist and provide advice: one group is established to make technical recommendations, another for financial decision-making. Affected industries that are signatories to the agreement participate in this decision making.

Glossary

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<th>Australian Aquatic Veterinary Emergency Plan</th>
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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>
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<td>EAD</td>
<td>Emergency animal disease</td>
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For more information on the terrestrial EADRA please visit: