FARM BIOSECURITY

2017 Producer Survey Summary

Background and summary

Animal Health Australia (AHA) and Plant Health Australia (PHA), through our partnership in the Farm Biosecurity Program, are committed to undertaking regular producer surveys to track trends in attitudes towards farm biosecurity and measure producer awareness of the program and its key messages.

The most recent survey was commissioned and conducted in 2017 and was undertaken by the KG2 rural research company. The survey was designed so that results could be compared with similar results from the surveys conducted in 2010 and 2013.

The survey was conducted in May–June 2017, by telephone, involving a total 1,203 producers across the main producer groups of livestock and crops. Producers interviewed did not include hobby or 'lifestyle' farmers.

The following is a summary of the survey's key findings. These results reflect some positive changing attitudes to practicing good on-farm biosecurity and a greater awareness about the Farm Biosecurity Program specifically. Equally, this summary identifies areas where improvements can be made to increase producer awareness and practice of good on-farm biosecurity. With three datasets, trends are now emerging, giving us confidence in the results.

For AHA and PHA, as partners in delivering the Farm Biosecurity Program, this survey will be a valuable tool in guiding future strategic directions with the aim of improving awareness and practice of biosecurity amongst Australian livestock and crop producers to help them secure their farm and their business future.

*The information contained in this summary is a guide only. Please contact info@farmbiosecurity.com.au if you wish to verify or use any data in this summary.

QUESTION CATEGORY	SUMMARY OF PRODUCER RESPONSES
Understanding of biosecurity	
The overall level of understanding of biosecurity amongst Australian producers was improved in 2017.	• Without any prompting, 56% all producers surveyed related the term 'controlling diseases, pests and weeds' to biosecurity. There has been a stepwise increase from the 37% who reported this in 2010 and 47% in 2013. • A further 22% thought, without prompting, that biosecurity meant 'border protection/quarantine'. This was the same result as reported in 2010 and 2013. • There was also a reduction in the proportion of producers surveyed who responded 'nothing' or 'don't know' when they hear the term 'biosecurity'. The answer 'don't know' has decreased stepwise from 21% in 2010, to 15% in 2013, and 8% in 2017. • When prompted with four different statements to choose from, 88% of all respondents identified 'Measures taken to protect farm production from disease, pests and weeds' as the best definition of biosecurity. This is similar to the 87% observed in 2013.
Current practices undertaken to protect crops and livestock	
Most producers surveyed continued to implement the same practices they reported in 2010 and 2013, with some increases in the practices of weed control and livestock monitoring.	• A broad range of activities were reported by producers in answer to the question about **current practices** undertaken to protect crops or livestock from diseases, pests and weeds. Activities generally were related to *controlling* existing pests and diseases, rather than activities that could *prevent* new pests, diseases and weeds from entering and becoming established. • At 30%, 'controlling weeds' was the most reported practice, with 'controlling livestock/cropping pests and diseases' the next most reported activities. • Overall, there appears to be a decrease in the number of producers monitoring their crops or livestock: a large drop from 26 to 14% and 21 to 7% was seen among plant and grain producers respectively, and a drop from 31 to 17% in livestock producers reporting 'monitoring livestock'. This trend is at odds with the prompted responses seen in the section 'On-farm biosecurity monitoring' below. • When prompted about biosecurity practices undertaken **in the last two years**, answers indicated an overall increase since 2010 for record keeping, monitoring stored products, inspecting on purchase, restricting access to properties, cleaning machinery and equipment coming onto farms and controlling visitor movement.

Sources of animal health, crop protection & biosecurity information	
Producers seek and gather information from a wide variety of sources.	• As seen in 2013, there were many sources of information on animal or crop protection reported, tending to fall along producer lines – vets for livestock producers (39%) and agronomists for plant and grain producers (34% and 58% respectively). • Industry bodies (26%) and rural press (25%) were the most important sources overall. • When asked what information was needed about biosecurity, the top answers were 'identifying pest and disease types and symptoms' (34%, up from 24%), biosecurity warnings and alerts (33%, up from 26%), and 'solutions/practices to reduce risk/prevent disease' (18%, up from 11%). • 53% of producers overall prefer to receive information by email, an increase since 2013 and 2010 (48% and 34% respectively). However, 29% still preferred a hard copy in the mail.
Awareness of the Farm Biosecurity Program	
Awareness of the Farm Biosecurity Program has increased since 2010.	• A total of 40% of respondents said they had heard of the Farm Biosecurity Program, up from 36% in 2013 and 28% in 2010. Awareness was similar across producer types. • When asked where they had heard about it, most said local or rural newspapers (30%) or via an industry association (25%).
On-farm biosecurity monitoring	
When asked who monitors crops or livestock for disease or pests, most producers identified themselves or their family or staff. There has been an increase in the use of a range of different people for monitoring activities.	• 94% of producers did their own monitoring, up from 82% in 2013, while 67% relied on family or staff, which is more than double the 31% reported in 2013. • 43% of all producers monitored daily but it varied from 22% of grain producers to 47% of livestock producers. Daily monitoring increased, from 41% in 2010, to 50% in 2017. • 58% of plant and 80% of grain producers used agronomists or cropping consultants in 2017, up from 35 and 54% in 2013, respectively • The use of a vet or animal consultant by livestock producers also increased, from 15% in 2013 to 25% in 2017. • 44% of producers kept records of monitoring, down from 60% in 2013 and 46% in 2010. • Most producers were willing to share monitoring records with departments of agriculture, agronomists, neighbours and vets.

Identifying and reporting new or unusual pests and diseases	
Almost all producers surveyed said they would report an unusual pest or disease on their property.	• Producers reported a variety of ways to identify a pest or disease. Most grain producers (66%) and plant producers (49%) named an agronomist or advisor, while 49% of livestock producers named a vet. • Use of the internet to search for information has increased from 10%, to 12% and 22% in the three surveys. • Nearly all producers said they would report a new pest or disease found on their property. • Departments of agriculture were still favoured by most producers to report a pest or disease at 53%, but this is down from 59% in 2013 and 65% in 2010. • 41% of livestock producers would report to a vet, while 51% of grain growers would report it to an agronomist or local consultant.
Benefits of implementing biosecurity practices	
'Freedom from diseases, pests and weeds' and 'protection of incomes and livelihoods' were the most often cited reasons to implement biosecurity practices.	• 'Freedom from diseases, pests and weeds' was the main benefit, reported by 54% of producers. • The next most reported benefit was 'protect livelihood/income' at 37%. • 'Continued or improved market access' was fairly steady at 15%, while 'not losing income' increased from 7% to 11%.