

Biosecurity preparedness and response

Australia's geographic isolation has meant we have relatively few of the pests and diseases that affect agricultural industries overseas. Staying that way relies on good business as usual on-farm practices, early detection and effective prevention and response arrangements at a national level.

The term given to protecting our economy, the environment and the community from risks related to pests and diseases entering, emerging, establishing or spreading is 'biosecurity'.

It is extremely important to the future profitability and sustainability of Australia agriculture because:

- Biosecurity risks can affect animal health and productivity and damage the quality and reputation of our products with significant consequences for farmers and the industry.
- The sustainability and profitability of Australia's sheep meat industry relies on our ability to export. Biosecurity allows us to preserve existing trade opportunities by ensuring we can continue providing safe, high-quality meat and show that we take biosecurity seriously by having strong, national systems in place.
- An outbreak of foot and mouth disease has the potential to devastate Australia's livestock industries, [costing \\$80bn](#) (including more than \$12bn in lost revenue for the sheep industry) and threatening businesses, jobs and the economy.

Vigilance and preparedness are the best safeguards. Biosecurity measures are implemented off-shore, at our border and on-farm.

A united response to keep Australia protected

Australia has advanced surveillance systems, agreements and protocols in place to rapidly detect and respond to emergency animal disease incursions if needed. Under the [National Livestock Identification System](#) (NLIS) every farm has a unique Property Identification Code, all livestock are identified with an accredited NLIS tag or device from their property of birth, and all livestock movements are recorded in a national database.

This means that every sheep is traceable through the supply chain from birth to processing. If there is a disease outbreak or a biosecurity threat sheep can be rapidly and reliably traced to identify the source of a disease or issue, contain it and minimise impacts.

The Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA) and [AUSVETPLAN](#), which are administered by Animal Health Australia, set out government and industry obligations in the event of an outbreak, and provide guidance on the management and control measures that may take place.

These are both administered by Animal Health Australia (AHA), an independent national body that brings government and industry together to deliver animal health and security. Sheep producers contribute to AHA's funding via industry levies they pay, and SPA works closely with AHA on projects those levies contribute towards.

The main benefit of the Agreement is the ability to respond quickly and effectively to an emergency animal disease while minimising uncertainty over management and funding arrangements. All signatories have agreed to work collectively to reduce the risk of emergency animal disease incursions and share the approved costs of responses. The Agreement defines cost sharing arrangements and response arrangements for a raft of different diseases and categories. It is supported by extensive disease response manuals that specify actions to be taken and how efforts will be coordinated.

How Sheep Producers Australia contributes

Our biosecurity policy is focused on improving on-farm practices, increasing government investment, advising on practical federal and state regulation and facilitating partnerships between industry and governments. We also have a joint [National Sheep Industry Biosecurity Strategy](#) with WoolProducers Australia.

As a signatory to the EADRA, Sheep Producers also has a range of commitments. For example, we work with other sheep industry and government bodies to ensure response plans are in place on a national scale and that there are sufficient trained personnel for responding to an outbreak. We also participate in consultation and decision-making processes and communicate with producers to ensure Australia is as prepared as possible if an outbreak occurs.

Producer responsibilities

Producers play a critical role in biosecurity by implementing on-farm practices.

Ensuring livestock are free from serious infectious diseases allows producers to maximise farm productivity and minimise animal discomfort, stock losses and medical costs, as well as comply with the Livestock Production Assurance program.

Measures to minimise the risk and spread of infectious diseases include:

- having a formal, documented Farm Biosecurity Plan
- check the health status of new livestock, via a National Sheep Health Declaration
- inspecting existing and introduced livestock (on arrival) for signs of ill health or disease and undertaking appropriate action, including isolation, if they do
- minimising the risk of livestock straying onto or from the property
- keeping records of livestock, vehicle and visitor movements where reasonable
- reporting possible biosecurity threats to the Emergency Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888.

More detail is available at: <https://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au>.