

NATIONAL MANAGEMENT GROUP
ON TSEs AND FMD
REPORT TO PIMC
MARCH 2002

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Purpose

1. To provide Ministers with an update, and make recommendations, on progress of the implementation of activities identified in the National Management Group (NMG) on transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) and foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) Reports of 1 May and 19 August 2001.

Background

2. The devastation of the United Kingdom (UK) and European meat and livestock industries, as a result of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and FMD has provided some valuable lessons for Australia (most recently, Japan's confirmation of BSE has led to wide reaching developments with a program to test all cattle and to remove specified risk materials from cattle and sheep at slaughter). It is widely recognised by government and industry, that these lessons must be applied to Australia's animal health, production and emergency management systems. Failure to do so could be not only devastating for the agricultural sector, but also for the broader economy as a whole.
3. As a result, the NMG was established in March 2001 by the then Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand (ARMCANZ). The task of the NMG was to analyse Australia's capabilities in preventing and, worst case, detecting and eradicating BSE and FMD. In May 2001, the NMG presented its initial findings to ARMCANZ and recommended a number of strategies designed to enhance Australia's protection against exotic animal diseases such as BSE and FMD within the pre-border, border and post-border continuum. With Ministers' endorsement, NMG has sought to advance these initiatives. In August 2001, the NMG provided Ministers with an update on progress on these issues, and made further recommendations designed to enhance Australia's animal health emergency management arrangements.
4. Details of the NMG meetings, terms of reference and operational arrangements are at Annexes A, B and C respectively.

Recommendations

5. For ease of reference, the recommendations immediately follow the area of discussion to which each refers and are consolidated at Annex D. In general, the work of the NMG on animal health prevention, preparedness and response systems is progressing. However, there is an ongoing need for a continuous improvement approach to these systems.
6. Overall, the NMG recommends that PIMC agree to recommendations (A) through (W) which follow (and are listed at Annex D)

General

7. **Ongoing commitment by jurisdictions will be fundamental to building response capacity of animal health emergency response infrastructure and to maintain the momentum of continuous improvement.** Animal diseases such as FMD and BSE have impacted animal production and risk management arrangements in ways and timeframes never before experienced. Within a very short period of time governments, across jurisdictions, and industry have advanced a range of strategies to keep Australia at the forefront of animal disease emergency management. Economically, Australia relies heavily on its agricultural exports, it is fundamentally important that we remain at the forefront of animal health emergency management.
8. Following the May 2001 ARMCANZ meeting, the NMG was given the responsibility to oversee the development and implementation of ARMCANZ resolutions. In August 2001, NMG provided Ministers with an update on progress of resolutions, and recommended additional strategies designed to further enhance Australian animal health emergency response systems.
9. Annex E provides a status report on agreed actions based on reports received from stakeholders responsible for their delivery. Key issues for PIMC consideration are outlined in the following sections.

Recommendation A

- **NOTES** progress on the implementation of ARMCANZ resolutions, including implications for agricultural productions systems and **SUPPORTS** an ongoing commitment to enhancing Australia's emergency animal disease infrastructure.

International

FMD

10. In December 2001, Dr Gardner Murray (Australian Chief Veterinary Officer) represented Australia at the International Conference on the Control and Prevention of Foot and Mouth Disease, organised by Belgium (under its presidency of the European Union (EU)), the European Commission (EC), the Netherlands and the UK. The conference confirmed that **eradication remains the objective of FMD control** and recognised that the following are required:
 - a proactive approach to FMD that involves all stakeholders;
 - an integrated view of food production systems including livestock transport;
 - a good communication policy;
 - adequate resources for quarantine services in order to prevent the entry of FMD and more rigorous inspections at border posts;
 - adequate resources for veterinary services to meet the objectives of early diagnosis and eradication;
 - contingency plans for all elements of the response including information exchange between jurisdictions;
 - a good emergency disease management strategy. A slaughter policy would be appropriate in some circumstance and in others emergency vaccination would be more appropriate;

- urgent need to progress international validation of diagnostic tests that detect infection in vaccinated animals;
 - research and development on vaccines and diagnostic methods;
 - an international approach which includes assistance to endemic countries to deal with risk at source; and
 - an appreciation of the animal welfare and ethical dimensions and thus the need for international standards for humane slaughter and disposal.
11. An expert committee has been established to write a final report of the conference. If agreed by member states, the report will then be used in the international discussion in the EU – Agricultural Council, annual meeting of the OIE 2002, FAO and WTO.
 12. The NMG is confident that these measures being considered by the EU do not include anything that has not already been discussed in the Australian context.

FMD in the UK

13. The last infected premise in the UK was confirmed on Sunday 30 September 2001. The UK's Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs website reported that, as at 23 January, the total number of confirmed infected premises was 2030 and the total number of affected farms on which animals have been destroyed is 9996. As at January 32 there were 4,073,000 animals destroyed (593,000 cattle, 3,334,000 sheep, 142,000 pigs, 2,000 goats, 1,000 deer and 1,000 other animals).
14. On 21 January 2002, the OIE granted the UK FMD-free status without vaccination. Australia, the United States and other countries are currently evaluating whether or not to lift a ban on meat products from the UK. The EC has agreed to lift restrictions on exports and imports of British meat, animal products and livestock.

BSE in Japan

15. On 22 September, Japanese authorities advised that a reference laboratory in the UK had confirmed BSE in an indigenous cow, the first case outside Europe in native-born cattle. Subsequently two further cases of BSE in Japan were confirmed in November following the introduction of rapid BSE testing of all cattle at slaughter from 18 October. It has been reported that all three BSE cases are Holstein dairy cows born during March-April 1996. ANZFA announced a ban on imported beef and beef products of Japanese origin on 24 September. Australia's quarantine restrictions for Japanese animals and animal products were also reviewed at this time to ensure they were adequate.
16. Japan is understood to have imported MBM from BSE affected countries in Europe. Many more BSE cases in Japanese cattle could be diagnosed as a result of the extent of MBM use in cattle feed and through increased surveillance and testing.
17. Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) reports indicate that Japanese consumer reaction to these announcements has seen up to a 70% decrease in chilled beef sales at retail outlets. It is difficult to predict the medium term impact of this reaction on demand for Australian chilled and frozen beef in the Japanese market (worth \$A1.7 billion in 2000/01). Both MLA and companies in Japan are promoting the safety of Australian beef with a view to improving demand and sales.

18. There are concerns that the approximately 17,000 live cattle that are exported annually from Australia to Japan will be subject to testing with rapid BSE tests at slaughter, with possible false positive test results. AFFA sought assurances from Japanese authorities that they will advise Australian authorities if a positive rapid-BSE test result is obtained on an animal of Australian origin in order to be able to provide technical and laboratory assistance in the verification of the test result before an announcement is made public. A SAFEMEAT/Veterinary Committee working group on the application of DNA identification systems to cattle exported to Japan has been established, with the aim of providing a means of verifying the Australian origin (or otherwise) of cattle which might be the subject of one or more disputed BSE test results in Japan.

BSE in Europe

19. BSE continues to spread in Europe and as a consequence European policy for control of BSE continues to evolve. The application of the new EC TSE regulation to third countries came into force in October 2001. Countries that did not provide a submission on their BSE status by 1 January 2002 were to be placed in the highest risk category. For countries that met this deadline (including Australia), the previous GBR rating system will continue to be used until the new assessment process is finalised sometime in 2002, although advice is that there will be no automatic translation to the new system. Australia's updated BSE submission was lodged in late December 2001. It is expected that this submission will be used as the basis for responding to any similar requests from other trading partners. The submission was based on information supplied by Biosecurity Australia (BA), the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS), State Governments and others.
20. The extent of BSE infection in Europe changed significantly during 2001 after Member States started using rapid tests to screen suspect cattle and also those over 30 months of age at slaughter. During 2001 there were reports of BSE cases in native-born animals for the first time in Germany, Spain, Italy, Greece, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Finland and Austria (Sweden is the only EU member not to have reported a case). A number of eastern European countries have a history of importing either live cattle or MBM from countries with BSE and therefore more may detect BSE cases through the introduction of increased BSE surveillance and testing.
21. Developments in Europe are being monitored in regard to the theoretical risk of BSE in sheep. The UK Food Standards Agency (FSA) held an open stakeholder meeting on this issue on 18 December 2001, and a report will be issued for consultation. The Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee will be advising the FSA on research published in *Nature* (10 January 2002). That article assumes that BSE has entered the UK sheep flock and then estimates the potential number of BSE cases in the UK sheep population, the number of additional variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD) cases that might result through consumption of BSE contaminated sheep meat, and how such risks could be reduced through additional restrictions on sheep products. Another paper on the same matter arrived at significantly less pessimistic estimates.

US Approach to BSE

22. On 30 November, a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) commissioned study by Harvard University on BSE risks in the USA was released. Initial perusal suggests that the study is a detailed and scientifically sound assessment of risk in the USA. Not surprisingly, the study found the risk of BSE occurring in the US as very low and if it did occur, the risk of it spreading was very low. Australia has been asked to comment and SAFEMEAT is considering the study. In response to the report USDA has announced that it will:

- initiate a peer review of the study;
- more than double the number of BSE tests this fiscal year to over 12,500 cattle samples;
- issue a proposed rule to prohibit the use of certain stunning devices to immobilize cattle during slaughter;
- publish an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on regulatory options for the disposal of dead stock on farms; and
- publish a policy options paper (released 17 January) outlining possible additional regulatory actions to reduce the potential risk of exposure, such as removal of specified risk materials (e.g. brains, spinal cords) at slaughter.

23. In regard to the USDA rulemaking proposals, it is possible that other 'low risk' countries such as Australia may need to adopt similar approaches in order to underpin access for beef and beef products to this market (and NAFTA countries in general). In cooperation with the Department of Health and Ageing (DHA), AFFA will analyse the US regulatory responses to the Harvard risk assessment against current systems in place in Australia.

International Standards for BSE

24. As mentioned above (paragraph 19) the new EC TSE regulation for third countries came into force in October 2001 requiring Australia to put forward a substantial submission outlining, amongst other things, our TSE preventative measures. Additionally, a number of submissions have been presented to Japan since mid-2001. As there is no international body currently assessing countries for their BSE risk, individual submissions to Australia's trading partners on our BSE risk and preventative measures are required upon request and with significant expenditure of effort and resources on the part of AFFA.

25. NMG recognises that whilst OIE has established categorisation standards, there is a need for OIE to work with WHO and Codex to secure broader acceptance of these BSE risk categories. Therefore, NMG recommends that AFFA work towards gaining acceptance of a common standard for country categorisation.

Recommendation B

- **NOTES** that FMD and BSE remain significant threats to agricultural production systems and **AGREES** that it is essential that a whole of government approach to the management of FMD and BSE be implemented.

Recommendation C

- **SUPPORTS** Australia's engagement and leadership with other countries, multi-lateral organisations and the Quad countries on critical FMD and BSE issues.

Recommendation D

- **AGREES** to AFFA and industry analysing the US Harvard Risk Assessment on BSE with a view to ensuring equivalence for Australia's animal health systems.

Recommendation E

- **ENDORSES** the need for an international BSE country categorisation standard and that the agricultural sector to work with the health sector in a multi-disciplinary way to achieve this end.

COAG

26. In June 2001, due to the worsening situation in the United Kingdom, the Prime Minister placed the issue of national preparedness for an FMD outbreak on the agenda of the June 2001 meeting of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). COAG noted that if a significant outbreak of FMD occurred in Australia, the technical, logistical, social and financial responses needed to manage the situation would be on a whole-of-government level not experienced before in peacetime. Appropriate plans therefore need to be upgraded and tested. COAG also agreed to the development by States/Territories and the Commonwealth of whole-of-government frameworks and a need for all jurisdictions to adequately support and test these frameworks. The frameworks will describe how agricultural agencies, emergency services, support agencies and industry will work together, within and across jurisdictions, to ensure the delivery of an effective national response.
27. To facilitate this, COAG established a National FMD Task Force comprising a representative from each of the agriculture and first minister's Departments in each jurisdiction, plus a representative of the Australian Local Government Association. The Task Force is chaired and supported by AFFA. To support the national whole-of-government framework, the National FMD Task Force is preparing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Heads of Government. The MOU is to cover establishment of trigger points for activating the national plan, roles and responsibilities of the various parties and how they should act in an emergency (building on existing legislative and constitutional arrangements), principles for media/communications management, principles for managing relief and recovery, principles for use by States/Territories of powers under the Commonwealth *Quarantine Act 1908*, and principles for ensuring on-going training of staff and testing of appropriate plans. The objective is for the MOU to be signed in mid 2002.
28. To ensure that these new arrangements are well understood and tested, COAG directed that a full-scale national FMD simulation be held in 2002. Planning for this exercise is underway and is being coordinated by Emergency Management Australia with cooperation from Commonwealth and State/Territory government agencies and industry groups. It is anticipated that the FMD simulation will be held in September 2002.
29. Given the focus on continuous improvement approach to Australia's response mechanisms, there is a clear need for an ongoing program of simulation exercises to ensure our continued readiness to combat serious animal diseases such as FMD and BSE.

Recommendation F

- **NOTES AND SUPPORTS** the continued work of the COAG FMD Task Force in the development of a national whole-of-government framework and the supporting MOU.

Recommendation G

- **AGREES** to the development of an ongoing program of national animal disease simulation exercises.

Key Technical Policy Issues

30. On 15 and 16 November 2001 a forum of Commonwealth/State/Territory officials and industry leaders considered a range of unresolved but important policy issues relating to preparedness and response capabilities in dealing with FMD/BSE. In order for Australia to be able to effectively respond to an outbreak of FMD or BSE, it is essential that these issues be agreed in advance of any outbreak. These key policy issues are:

- AUSVETPLAN;
- Stock standstill;
- Livestock tracing;
- National information needs in an emergency;
- Laboratory capacity;
- Epidemiology and economic modeling;
- Vaccination policy and supply of vaccine;
- Zoning policy;
- BSE – test, surveillance and audit;
- Swill feeding; and
- Feral animals.

31. In November 2001, a PISC senior official working group was established to review these policies and actions and to assign leadership responsibilities for each among the States/Territories/Commonwealth. As a result, the policies have been finalised and the State/Territory/Commonwealth have been assigned leadership for each.

32. In order to facilitate the information flow between stakeholders on the implementation of these policy issues, AHA is to develop a web-based reporting management system that will allow each jurisdiction, to report on progress.

Recommendation H

- **NOTES** the critical nature of the key policy issues in underpinning the whole approach to FMD and BSE preparedness and response.

Recommendation I

- **NOTES** that key policy issues relating to preparedness and response capabilities in dealing with FMD/BSE have been assigned to States/Territories/Commonwealth to progress.

Recommendation J

- **AGREES** to the development of a web-based reporting management system for reporting to stakeholders on the progress of these policies.

Ruminant Feed Ban Legislation and Auditing

33. At its meeting of March 2001, ARMCANZ endorsed the extension of the ruminant feed ban to include meat and bone meal from equine, porcine and macropods as well as blood meals, and fish and poultry meals. At this time, ARMCANZ also agreed to ongoing audits to ensure compliance with the feed ban legislation by all parties from manufacture to end-use. To implement this decision, States and Territories were required to update their existing legislation.
34. Victoria was the first State to underpin the ARMCANZ recommendation with legislation on 12 April 2001, the other States/Territories progressively implemented legislation with the final State coming on board on 26 December 2001.
35. All Australian States and Territories have developed audit programs to complement their feed ban legislation. A summary of State/Territory programs is outlined in Annex E.
36. The work of the States and Territories in implementing the ARMCANZ decision in a relatively short timeframe has been a great achievement. The audit systems developed by States and Territories have been developed based on their particular risk exposure. However, Australia will be measured by the lowest common denominator. Recognising this, a Veterinary Committee working group is developing a national standardised approach to monitoring and auditing feed bans. This work is expected to be completed in early 2002.
37. The NMG supports the national standardised approach proposed by Veterinary Committee and believes that this can be further enhanced through the development of performance standards for audits. Therefore, it is recommended that the Veterinary Committee working group include the development of performance standards, within a continuous improvement framework, in the national auditing program. Additionally, the NMG highlights the use of national reporting of audits as a tool for increased accountability to our trading partners and consumers as well as being an instrument to re-enforce border statistics.

Recommendation K

- **NOTES** that all jurisdictions have introduced necessary legislation/regulation to support the Ministers' decision to extend the ruminant feed ban and have developed an audit program to ensure compliance with such.

Recommendation L

- **AGREES** to Veterinary Committee's development of a national approach to feed ban audits together with performance standards within a continuous improvement framework and a national reporting framework to enhance compliance of the ruminant feed ban.

EU/Japanese Cattle Tracing Scheme

38. In 1996 an industry funded buyback scheme was introduced to reduce Australia's number of imported cattle from countries with indigenous cases of BSE. The scheme operated for three months and offered owners of cattle from the UK and Switzerland compensation to destroy their imported cattle. Five owners took up the offer, and nine imported animals were destroyed under the scheme. The remaining animals were placed under quarantine surveillance. Surveillance prohibited the animals from entering the human or animal food chains, but did not restrict the owners from breeding their cattle, selling genetic material or dairy products, or from selling or moving these animals to other properties, provided AQIS was notified.
39. Following confirmed BSE cases in cattle born in Austria, Germany and Denmark during 2000, in November of that year, an AFFA BSE/FMD task force recommended that all cattle imported from continental Europe be traced. BA undertook to trace the whereabouts of UK and European cattle imported into Australia since 1980, and completed the exercise in July 2001. Some animals could not be traced. As at 28 July 2001, the fate of 13 from 203 animals imported from the UK (6.4%), and 23 from 355 cattle and buffalo imported from other European countries (6.5%) could not be determined.
40. ARMCANZ met in March 2001 and agreed that a slaughter/compensation scheme for cattle imported from BSE affected countries should be undertaken by AHA and in consultation with Veterinary Committee. In June 2001, the cattle industry agreed to fund a compensation scheme for owners of imported cattle, based on the 1996 scheme, to be administered by AHA. With Japan recording its first case of BSE in a native born animal in September 2001, the scheme was extended to over Japanese-born imported cattle. Owners of cattle from countries that had recorded cases of BSE in indigenous animals have been offered compensation to destroy and bury imported cattle. If owners choose not to participate in the scheme, their animals will be permanently identified by microchip and ear tag and placed under quarantine surveillance. The details of the owner and the animal's microchip number will be recorded on the National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS) database operated by Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA). The terms of the quarantine surveillance prohibits the animal from entering the human or animal food chain and requires the owner to provide an update on the status of each imported animal each year to a state department of agriculture representative. As needed, AQIS will verify the data on these animals contained on the NLIS database.

Recommendation M

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• NOTES the development and implementation of the EU/Japanese cattle tracing scheme and URGES that it be rigorously managed by AQIS and State/Territory governments. |
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Live Ruminant Import Identification Scheme

41. In March 2001, ARMCANZ agreed to adopt a number of measures to further enhance Australia's protection against BSE. One of these measures was to implement permanent identification for all imported ruminants.

42. The domestic ruminant species that may be imported into Australia are cattle, buffalo, sheep, goats and alpacas. Cattle and buffalo may be imported from USA, Canada, New Zealand, Norfolk Island and New Caledonia. Sheep and goats may only be imported from New Zealand. Alpacas can be imported from USA, Canada, New Zealand, Peru and Chile. No form of transmissible encephalopathy (of which BSE and scrapie are two examples) has ever been recorded in alpacas.
43. From 2002, AQIS will insert a rumen bolus with an identifying microchip and an ear-tag into imported cattle whilst they serve their mandatory post-arrival quarantine in Spotswood or Eastern Creek quarantine station. The first group of cattle to be microchipped are due to arrive in Spotswood on 16 February 2002. Each animal's microchip number will be recorded on the NLIS database operated by MLA. NLIS was developed to provide the EU with a tamper-proof auditable trail linking cattle to their property of origin and to owner declarations.
44. If a country reports BSE, AQIS will access the NLIS database and obtain a list of cattle imported from that country, and request that entries for these animals be flagged to alert State/Territory departments of agriculture, and abattoirs and saleyards with readers, that these cattle are not for human or animal consumption. This mechanism can also be used in other instances where imported cattle need to be traced.
45. Sheep and goats are rarely imported into Australia, the only country with access being New Zealand. In the past five years, 14 sheep were imported. Sheep and goats can be permanently identified with ear-tags containing microchips. AQIS proposes to apply NLIS compatible ear-tags to imported animals and to track them using the NLIS database as explained above.
46. At this time, alpacas are not slaughtered in Australia for meat, therefore MLA have not agreed to include data on imported alpacas on the NLIS database. Under the import protocol for Peru, alpacas must be permanently identified with a microchip prior to leaving the country of export. AQIS maintains records of the microchip number and owner details for each animal and is currently amending import protocols for alpacas from other countries to require that all animals be microchipped prior to export. As TSE's have never been recorded in alpacas and the animals are not slaughtered for human consumption in Australia, AQIS proposes to use the microchip number that identifies the animal on import as the means of permanent identification.
47. The NMG notes that the NLIS is a growing scheme. The value of the NLIS database for keeping track of the whereabouts of imported animals is dependent on two factors:
 - owners reporting the transfer of animals to the database; and
 - the percentage of abattoirs and saleyards with readers capable of detecting the microchips.
48. However, it is recognised that as the uptake of the NLIS increases, the ability to more readily detect animals will also grow. Therefore, in order to enhance the integrity of the identification scheme, it is important that government and industry work together to ensure rapid uptake.

49. Without active requests for information, AQIS expects a low level of compliance from owners reporting disposal or sale of animals. During the 1990's AQIS experienced poor compliance with mandatory reporting of transfer of ownership in spite of owners being under a quarantine order to do so. To overcome this problem, State and Territory department of agriculture officers will maintain regular contact with owners of imported animals from countries that have reported cases of BSE. Additionally, State and Territory representatives also were committed to implementing effective trace-back and trace-forward systems for cattle, sheep and other species in conjunction with industry in each jurisdiction at the ARMCANZ meeting of August 2001 and will report progress at the next Primary Industries Ministerial Council in March 2002.

Recommendation N

- **NOTES** the critical importance of speedy livestock trace forward and trace back and that the introduction of NLIS will significantly enhance preventative, preparedness and response measures.

Recommendation O

- **NOTES** that a program to permanently identify all future live ruminant imports has been developed and is in the process of being implemented.

Recommendation P

- **NOTES** that as the uptake of NLIS increases, the risk of animals entering the human or animal food chain will be minimised.

UK FMD Experience

50. During the 2001, 135 government (State/Territory and Commonwealth) veterinary practitioners, regulatory officers, stock inspectors and other animal health workers from Australia volunteered to assist the UK in their Foot and Mouth Disease response. A number of private veterinarians also assisted.
51. This group of people brought back hands-on experience in FMD emergency response activities and planning that is now being utilised to enhance Australia's systems including the AUSVETPLAN. To draw on this experience, returning government officers have undergone debriefing at both the jurisdictional and national level. Additionally, a number of these personnel are currently assisting in the updating of the AUSVETPLAN FMD and other related manuals. However, a currently untapped resource is the returning private practitioners. A number of these veterinarians have expressed a desire to be actively involved and contribute to the national agenda. The NMG has sought the assistance of AFFA and AHA to examine how their experience can be better used.

Recommendation Q

- **AGREES** to AHA and Commonwealth/State agencies' examination of issues arising from the debrief process and the utilisation of this information to enhance Australia's response plans and systems.

Risk Communication

52. At its meeting of May 2001, ARMCANZ endorsed the development by AFFA of a risk communication strategy. Risk communication is a complex, multidisciplinary, multidimensional, and evolving process of increasing importance in protecting public and animal health. It is important to clearly distinguish between crisis communication (communication during an emergency response) and risk communication. The purpose of risk communication is to change behavior.
53. It is clear that communication networks within the agricultural sector (between governments, industry and the large farming industry for example) are well established. To ensure the effectiveness of these systems, communications will form a major part of the national FMD simulation process. However, often with issues such as FMD and BSE, the greater risk lies with those outside of these normal communication networks. Those on the outside include semi-urban peri-farmers, weekend farmers and even restaurateurs. Poor practices by these groups or individuals can undermine otherwise excellent work undertaken within the mainstream sectors.
54. Given this higher level of risk, clearly defined communication outcomes, models and supporting performance measures are required before a risk communication system can be developed. To progress this, addressing the issue of individuals and groups outside of the normal agricultural networks, the NMG has asked AHA and SAFEMEAT to work together to develop risk communication strategies for FMD and BSE. The NMG acknowledges however, that this work may be out of the current level of understanding and expertise of these groups and that it will need dedicated attention to be addressed in an effective manner. To manage this deficiency, NMG has recommended the use of an advisory group of relevant risk communication experts.

Recommendation R

- **NOTES** the importance of risk communication strategies in changing undesirable behaviour (swill feeding for example) and **SUPPORTS** that an advisory group on relevant risk communication experts be consulted with a view to improving performance in this area.

NH&MRC SECTSE

55. In 2001, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aging established a Special Expert Committee on TSEs (SECTSE) under the National Health and Medical Research Council (NH&MRC) to provide expert and timely advice to Australian governments, on all matters necessary to prevent and limit the spread of vCJD and other TSEs in Australia. SECTSE has previously considered a range of animal and human health matters including animal vaccines, animal feeding practices including intra-species recycling, tallow, pet food, ruminant-derived cosmetic ingredients, feed ban controls, BSE in sheep in Europe and Australian TSE surveillance programs.

56. The SECTSE meeting held in Melbourne on 30 January 2002 discussed, inter alia, ruminant feed bans, AUSVETPLAN manual development, the National TSE Surveillance Program and diagnostic tests. SECTSE has now accepted risk assessments provided by AFFA on the importation of live cattle from Europe, and ovine and bovine semen, ova and embryos. SECTSE is updating its "Register of Completed Items" which will be useful as a compendium of scientific opinion that can be drawn on when developing risk management policies.
57. Key areas of ongoing SECTSE consideration related to the agricultural sector, that will receive further consideration by during its April 2002 meeting, include:
- endorsement of BSE and scrapie components of AUSVETPLAN;
 - policies on intra-species recycling through animal feeds; and
 - developments relating to the possibility of BSE in sheep.

Recommendation S

- **NOTES** that SECTSE has accepted risk assessments on the importation of live cattle from Europe, ovine and bovine semen and ova and embryos.

Recommendation T

- **NOTES** that SECTSE is to consider agricultural sector issues relating to AUSVETPLAN, intra-species recycling and BSE in sheep in early 2002.

A Way Forward

58. Since its establishment, the NMG has been actively overseeing the development and implementation of strategies designed to enhance Australia's animal health emergency management systems within the pre-border, border and post-border quarantine continuum. It has strived for a national focus for response and prevention activities. A lot of work has been undertaken by all jurisdictions and industry to progress the work of the NMG however, much is still to be done. The NMG recognises that **work in the field of animal health management will never be finished; it is a continuous improvement process**. It is essential that Australia remains at the forefront of animal health emergency management at the border, pre-border and post-border to ensure continued market access and consumer confidence in our product.
59. The essential elements of the NMG work are now well in hand. Key FMD/BSE policy issues (described in paragraph 27) are being driven by a PISC working group. Risk communications are being managed through AHA and the SAFEMEAT partnership. Crisis communications are, as necessary, being developed with recourse to expert advice, and tested through the national FMD simulation process. The Veterinary Committee is committed to developing a national program for feed testing and auditing. The national response plans are being coordinated through the COAG process and in planning for a future event. AFFA is managing a lifetime identification scheme for imported ruminants. Given this, NMG recommends that it be disbanded.

Recommendation U

- **NOTES** that the work activities identified by the NMG to support FMD and BSE prevention and preparedness are in hand and are being driven by specific groups.

Recommendation V

- **AGREES** to PISC reporting on progress of the various approaches to the next PIMS meeting.

Recommendation W

- **AGREES** to the disbandment of NMG.

ANNEXES

- (A) NMG - Meetings
- (B) NMG - Terms of reference
- (C) NMG - Operational arrangements
- (D) NMG Report Recommendations
- (E) ARMCANZ Resolution Status Tables
- (F) State/Territory Ruminant Feed Ban Audit Programs

ANNEX A

NATIONAL MANAGEMENT GROUP – MEETINGS

1. In March 2001 the National Management Group on TSEs and FMD (NMG) was established by ARMCANZ. In May 2001, the NMG reported to ARMCANZ outlining strategic policy and operational advice on matters related to TSEs and FMD. In August 2001, the NMG reported to ARMCANZ on the progress of the development and implementation of the recommendations.
2. Since its last report in August, NMG has met formally on two occasions (14 September and 7 February). Additionally, monthly reports on progress of ARMCANZ resolutions have been produced.
3. The NMG developed a work program that covered the following issues:
 - ruminant feed ban legislation and audit programs;
 - EU/Japanese cattle tracing scheme;
 - imported ruminant identification scheme;
 - industry development and implementation of a HACCP-based quality assurance approaches for each industry sector to support compliance with the ruminant feed ban provisions contained in legislation;
 - communications (risk and crisis); and
 - specific FMD/BSE policy issues.

ANNEX B

NATIONAL MANAGEMENT GROUP – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Objective

To ensure that strategies are in place that minimise the risks to Australia posed by recent global BSE and FMD outbreaks through the rapid activation of high level coordination and management arrangements.

Terms of Reference

The NMG will be responsible for development, review and coordination of short and medium term strategies to minimise the risks posed by TSEs and FMD to Australian livestock industries. In particular, the NMG will:

- a) Consider the policy, systems and resourcing of Australia's response measures and capability including:
 - quarantine and barrier controls;
 - preparedness, surveillance and response strategies;
 - communication and awareness strategies; and
 - contribution to international control measures.
- b) Recommend any additional short and medium term response measures it considers appropriate.
- c) Ensure that the systems required to deliver Australia's response strategies are activated and appropriately maintained.
- d) Ensure effective communication with all stakeholders, including relevant Commonwealth and State/Territories Ministers.
- e) Address other related matters as appropriate.

Membership:

Mr Murray Rogers (Chairman);
Mr Michael Taylor, Secretary, Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry Australia;
Dr Warren Hoey, Director General, Queensland Department of Primary Industries;
Dr Graeme Robertson, Director General, Agriculture Western Australia;
Dr Heather Yeatman, Consumer Representative, University of Wollongong
Mr Peter Milne for Mr Ian Donges, President, National Farmers Federation;
Mr David Crombie, Chair, Meat and Livestock Australia;
Professor Richard Smallwood, Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer, DHAC
Dr Gardner Murray, Commonwealth Chief Veterinary Officer, AFFA
Dr Roly Nieper, Chairman, Animal Health Australia

ANNEX C

NATIONAL MANAGEMENT GROUP – OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

The NMG met as necessary to consider policy and financial issues associated with Australia's response strategy and to ensure its effective management.

It drew on the resources of AFFA, other Commonwealth agencies and State/Territory Departments of Agriculture, Animal Health Australia and other industry organisations as required.

It reported, as necessary, to ARMCANZ through the Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. It also liaised with peak industry bodies through SAFEMEAT and Animal Health Australia. Industry representatives also reported to their respective peak industry body.

Secretariat support was provided by AFFA.

ANNEX D

NMG Recommendations

Recommendation A

- **NOTES** progress on the implementation of ARMCANZ resolutions, including implications for agricultural production systems and **SUPPORTS** an ongoing commitment to enhancing Australia's emergency animal disease infrastructure.

Recommendation B

- **NOTES** that FMD and BSE remain significant threats to agricultural production systems and **AGREES** that it is essential that a whole of government approach to the management of FMD and BSE be implemented.

Recommendation C

- **SUPPORTS** Australia's engagement and leadership with other countries, multi-lateral organisations and the Quad countries on critical FMD and BSE issues.

Recommendation D

- **AGREES** to AFFA and industry analysing the US Harvard Risk Assessment on BSE with a view to ensuring equivalence for Australia's animal health systems.

Recommendation E

- **ENDORSES** the need for an international BSE country categorisation standard and that the agricultural sector to work with the health sector in a multi-disciplinary way to achieve this end.

Recommendation F

- **NOTES AND SUPPORTS** the continued work of the COAG FMD Task Force in the development of a national whole-of-government framework and the supporting MOU.

Recommendation G

- **AGREES** to the development of an ongoing program of national animal disease simulation exercises.

Recommendation H

- **NOTES** the critical nature of the key policy issues in underpinning the whole approach to FMD and BSE preparedness and response.

Recommendation I

- **NOTES** that key policy issues relating to preparedness and response capabilities in dealing with FMD/BSE have been assigned to States/Territories/Commonwealth to progress.

Recommendation J

- **AGREES** to the development of a web-based reporting management system for reporting to stakeholders on the progress of these policies.

Recommendation K

- **NOTES** that all jurisdictions have introduced necessary legislation/regulation to support the Ministers' decision to extend the ruminant feed ban and have developed an audit program to ensure compliance with such.

Recommendation L

- **AGREES** to Veterinary Committee's development of a national approach to feed ban audits together with performance standards within a continuous improvement framework and a national reporting framework to enhance compliance of the ruminant feed ban.

Recommendation M

- **NOTES** the development and implementation of the EU/Japanese cattle tracing scheme and **URGES** that it be rigorously managed by AQIS and State/Territory governments.

Recommendation N

- **NOTES** the critical importance of speedy livestock trace forward and trace back and that the introduction of NLIS will significantly enhance preventative, preparedness and response measures.

Recommendation O

- **NOTES** that a program to permanently identify all future live ruminant imports has been developed and is in the process of being implemented.

Recommendation P

- **NOTES** that as the uptake of NLIS increases, the risk of animals entering the human or animal food chain will be minimised.

Recommendation Q

- **AGREES** to AHA and Commonwealth/State agencies' examination of issues arising from the debrief process and the utilisation of this information to enhance Australia's response plans and systems.

Recommendation R

- **NOTES** the importance of risk communication strategies in changing undesirable behaviour (swill feeding for example) and **SUPPORTS** that an advisory group on relevant risk communication experts be consulted with a view to improving performance in this area.

Recommendation S

- **NOTES** that SECTSE has accepted risk assessments on the importation of live cattle from Europe, ovine and bovine semen and ova and embryos.

Recommendation T

- **NOTES** that SECTSE is to consider agricultural sector issues relating to AUSVETPLAN, intra-species recycling and BSE in sheep in early 2002.

Recommendation U

- **NOTES** that the work activities identified by the NMG to support FMD and BSE prevention and preparedness are in hand and are being driven by specific groups.

Recommendation V

- **AGREES** to PISC reporting on progress of the various approaches to the next PIMS meeting.

Recommendation W

- **AGREES** to the disbandment of NMG.

ANNEX E

ARMCANZ Resolution Status Tables

9 March 2001 Meeting

RESOLUTION	RESPONSIBILITY	STATUS
<p>AGREES that Ministers in their respective jurisdictions introduce legislation to remove the current exemptions from the mammalian material ruminant feeding ban on a national level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meat and bone meals containing only porcine, equine, or macropod materials; • blood and blood products; and • inspected meat products which have been cooked and offered for human food and further heat processed into animal food 	State/Territory	Completed – refer paragraph 32
AGREES that the NMG consider, with industry, the continued use of poultry (offal and feather) meals and fish meals in ruminant feeds and provide advice to ARMCANZ out-of-session by 1 May 2001.	NMG	Completed
AGREES that audits be undertaken by each jurisdiction to ensure compliance with the feedban legislation by all parties from manufacture to end-use.	State/Territory government	Programs prepared – refer Annex E
AGREES that the Chair of ARMCANZ write to the Chair of the new Australia New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council suggesting that BSE be placed on its agenda, and that COAG be kept informed of developments.	AFFA	Completed – refer paragraph 24
AGREES that cattle imported from at risk countries not be permitted to enter the human food chain; and endorses the development of a buy-back scheme by AHA in consultation with Veterinary Committee.	AHA	Program developed – implementation commenced February 2002.
ENDORSES the establishment of permanent identification system for all imports of live ruminants and the automatic application of life-time quarantine restrictions in the event the animals provide to have been imported from a country with a native-born BSE case.	AFFA (AQIS)	Program developed – first imports of ruminants (cattle) expected in February 2002 will be identified with a rumen bolus and are to be monitored by States/Territories.

9 May 2001 Meeting

RESOLUTION	RESPONSIBILITY	STATUS
ENDORSED AHA's finalisation, through stakeholder consultation, of a BSE and FMD Strategic Plan for consideration by ARMCANZ at its August 2001 meeting;	AHA	Completed – refer NMG August 2001 Report
ENDORSED the development and maintenance by AHA of risk management frameworks for pre-emptive analysis of all identified and emerging high priority animal health threats, with a view to developing integrated strategies encompassing Commonwealth/State/Territory and industry within and beyond AUSVETPLAN	AHA	AHA is using risk assessment methodologies to develop a national framework model. The model will then be applied to high-risk animal health threats other than FMD and BSE that will be regularly reviewed and fed into the AUSVETPLAN re-appraisal and development process.
ENDORSED the development by AFFA, in cooperation with stakeholders, of a risk communications strategy	AFFA	In progress – refer paragraph 52
ENDORSED a major Commonwealth/State/Territory FMD systems preparedness test, including the immediate initiation of detailed preparations, including proof of concept, leading to a full scale simulation of a FMD outbreak to be conducted in early 2002 and subjected to third party oversight by the US, NA, Canada, the UK and other appropriate international observes	COAG	In progress – refer paragraph 26
AGREED to recommend to COAG that new overarching national emergency management framework needs to be developed to cope with a large scale animal disease outbreak. (Note: This will include the refinement of coordination responsibilities at Commonwealth and State/Territory levels for consideration at the next ARMCANZ meeting in August, possibility leading to a Commonwealth/State MOU/IGA.)	COAG	In progress – refer paragraph 25

19 August 2001

RESOLUTION	RESPONSIBILITY	STATUS
<p>AGREED that States and Territories review regulatory and administrative powers to ensure that success factors identified as critical in responding to an outbreak of either BSE or FMD have the necessary legislative underpinning, and assess their adequacy as part of animal disease emergency exercises</p>	States/Territories	<p>Amendments to the Quarantine Act being finalised covering critical success factors – due to be tabled in February.</p>
<p>AGREED that all jurisdictions, as a matter of priority, take mitigating actions identified in the risk management frameworks (endorsed by ARMCANZ in May 2001) and AGREED that the draft AHA national performance standards, to be used as benchmarks, be assessed by each jurisdiction to test their relevance and applicability and to report back to AHA to assist in the further development of the benchmarks</p>	AHA	<p>AHA sponsored a workshop comprising representatives of Government Members' on 27, 28 November 2001. The desired outcome was to consider a framework and principles for revision of version 1 standards, July 2001, in line with comments from SCARM 18 and ARMCANZ 20 meetings in August 2001, focusing on standards for emergency preparedness and response as supported by SCARM.</p> <p>The workshop agreed that: An overarching document be developed from the version 1 template that states goals, outcomes and key indicators for the 9 core functional areas this document would be used as a public document and is a collection of policy statements relating to goals, outcomes and indicators for each core functional area of the national system, derived from the existing version 1 template. 2.</p> <p>A revised consolidated template of measures has been developed as a new annex to the overarching document, by combining the 3 separate annexes from version 1 into a single template, with defined National Measurement Procedures, Jurisdiction Measurement Procedures and Industry Measurement Procedures reflecting the varying roles and responsibilities. This new template omits the previous quantitative scoring system and replaces with a present/absent, partially complies, etc, approach.</p> <p>Substantial revision was achieved on emergency preparedness and response and "national services' and VetComm has divided up the workload to continue the revision process out of session. Industry Members will be consulted on the revised approach and participate at the next workshop on 12 February 2002 to endorse a final revised draft that will be considered by PISC at their March 2002 Meeting and PIMC in April 2002.</p>

<p>AGREED that SAFEMEAT be strongly encouraged to progress, as a matter of urgency, industry based quality assurance schemes to underpin feed ban policies</p>	<p>SAFEMEAT</p>	<p>At its meeting on 9 November, SAFEMEAT endorsed the development of QA modules for feedstuffs. SAFEMEAT, Veterinary Committee and AUSMEAT are working together to progress. A proposal to SAFEMEAT and Veterinary Committee is expected in February.</p>
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ANNEX F

State/Territory Ruminant Feed Ban Audit Programs

Victoria

- Renderers are required to undergo bi-annual third party auditing.
- Specific mail out to all stock food businesses was undertaken in April 2001 to advise of new ruminant feed requirements.
- Ongoing audit program of stockfood manufacturers commenced in 2001. A small number of labelling and manufacturer awareness issues have been identified in the audits – a communications strategy is under development to address this issue.
- Four feedlots have been audited (representing over 90% of feedlot cattle in Victoria), all were found to be compliant. Discussions have been held with major dairy processing companies with a view to incorporating ruminant feed ban requirements into on-farm dairy quality assurance (QA) programs that are subject to audit – one company has done this, others are expected to follow. A communication strategy aimed at end users is under development.

Western Australia

- Extension material, detailing the ruminant feed ban, was sent to all identified operational renderers, stockfeed manufacturers and stockfeed retailers in July 2001.
- Audit forms have been developed in consultation with industry and auditors addressing three major areas:
 - awareness and understanding of the legislation;
 - appropriate labeling of all manufactured feedstuffs; and
 - appropriate QA methods to ensure separation of product during and post-production.
- All renderers and stockfeed manufacturers were to be audited by the end of November 2001.
- A sample of retailers and livestock producers will be audited in early 2002.

Northern Territory

- Producers and manufacturers are to be visited quarterly as part of an education process.
- All feed merchants will be visited to check labels (product derived from interstate).

South Australia

- % audit of manufacturers was conducted in September 2001 with no non-compliance observed in respect to existing legislation. There was some non-compliance with proposed legislation but this was to be rectified by December 2001.
- Of the resellers that have been audited, no non-compliance with current or proposed law was observed.
- It is proposed to audit renderers, manufacturers and resellers annually.
- An audit of 10 randomly selected properties (mainly feedlots and dairy farms) was conducted in September 2001; no non-compliance for existing or proposed law was detected. It is proposed to randomly audit a minimum of 20 properties per year.

Queensland

- The last large-scale audit was conducted in 1999. Another was planned to commence in November 2001.
- There are no plans to monitor stock food at reseller level as product is labelled prior to supply, monitoring at manufacturer and rendering plant level is seen as being more appropriate.
- Extensive targeted audit program of on-farm compliance has commenced.

ACT

- As there are no ruminant feed manufacturers in the ACT, only stockfeed resellers and end users are to be audited.
- The ACT is closely monitoring changes to the NSW legislation to ensure that ACT resellers comply with requirements.
- Audits of resellers will be conducted on a semi-annual basis until a degree of confidence suggests that an annual audit is adequate. Special audits will be imposed at times of drought.

New South Wales

- Audits of manufacturers, retailers and renderers commenced following the gazettal of the NSW legislation in November 2001. The audit program includes:
 - 100% of renderers on an annual basis;
 - 1/3 of manufacturers on a triennial basis (will provide 100% confidence over 3 years); and
 - 20% of retailers on a quinquennial basis (will provide 100% confidence over 5 years).
- During the period August – October 2001 targeted auditing of feedlots and dairy farms was undertaken. No breaches were detected. However, some properties have been identified for re-audits and feed sampling where meat meal was being used on the property for other enterprises such as pigs.
- An on-farm audit program has been developed to give 95% confidence of finding 1% non-compliance.

Tasmania

- Extension activities are either completed or under way.
- Audits of retail outlets (25%) to be conducted at 6-monthly intervals are to commence in February 2002.