



African swine fever summit communique

On 3 May 2019 industry and government met in Adelaide to discuss the current situation concerning the threat of African swine fever (ASF). The summit discussed gaps and opportunities to improve preparedness across Australia.

The Australian Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Mark Schipp, opened and chaired the summit.

Federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) update

The Federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) provided an overview of border protection activities. Dr Martin and Ms Leanne Herrick of DAWR noted that Australia's border security arrangements continue to protect our vital industries and environment, despite increasing risk. DAWR has increased inspection of travellers and international mail. ASF continues to spread around the world. Visitors and returning Australians continue to bring increasing quantities of pork products into the country.

DAWR has tested samples of pork products seized or surrendered at the border. A total of 435 products were tested in two rounds. The test results included 46 products positive for ASF virus genome, and two positive products for foot and mouth disease virus genome.

DAWR is constantly monitoring pathways for ASF (as well as other pests and diseases). Communication continues to increase awareness among vets, importers, travellers, airlines, postal services, tourist group operators, and online sellers such as eBay. The increase in declarations by the public suggests that the communications are working.

DAWR is also trialling a 3D x-ray unit at Melbourne airport to screen goods faster and better. At the same time, it is building a library of captured images which have been used to develop the world's first border detection biosecurity algorithm. A similar machine will soon be trialled at the Melbourne International Mail Gateway Facility.

The Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) update

The Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) provided an outline of experiences with ASF internationally and some valuable insights into the virus. ASF is not a highly contagious disease. The disease requires direct contact between pigs held in close proximity, or spreads via contaminated feed/ supplements (e.g. spray dried pig plasma). In large farms, depending on biosecurity practices, the disease spreads slowly between pens, and it may take 3-4 weeks before an incursion is identified. By this time pigs have moved and spread the disease to other properties. In contrast, in small holdings, the disease will be readily identified as these animals are usually held in close proximity to each other.

Feed is a very effective means of transmission and requires far less virus to initiate infection than that required through parenteral routes. Human movement of infected products is also very important. Ticks are less of a concern epidemiologically outside of Africa and the Iberian Peninsula.

One of the main priorities for AAHL is to gain further knowledge of the behaviour and movement of feral pigs in Australia, and a project investigating this movement ecology of feral pigs has been proposed.

State jurisdiction updates

States and territories have implemented communication and engagement campaigns to raise awareness of ASF and swill feeding. These include website information, social media, letters, fact sheets, posters, email bulletins, newsletter articles, advertisements and more. The jurisdictions are also reviewing their preparedness measures should an ASF incursion occur.

Animal Health Australia Update

The AHA communications team have provided social media items, web articles and Issues updates to AHA members to help raise community awareness of ASF and swill feeding risks. The ASF AusVetPlan disease strategy manual has been prioritised for review in 2019 with industry invited to participate in the latest review writing group face to face meeting and teleconferences. The Prohibited Pig feed working group met in March and



discussed risk factors such as porcine plasma and updated their comms plan. Finally, AHA conducted an internal EAD response exercise to test our readiness to respond to an ASF incident as EADRA custodian.

Industry updates

Australian Pork Limited (APL) spoke about engagement with Rural Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) to develop and understand feral pig management plans. They will map out feral pig populations and advise how they should be managed. APL has been working with the Australian Pig Veterinarians (APV), who will be implementing Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) training for pork abattoirs. APL also noted that surveillance research is underway, and a range of communications channels are being used to raise awareness.

The Australian Pig Veterinarians (APV) group wants to ensure that key stakeholders are informed. APV is concerned that farmers have little experience in exotic disease detection and response and that few private vets in the pig industry have been involved in a state government response. APV has concerns regarding truck movement and hygiene and would like to see state governments run projects on “getting to know your state vet” to enhance engagement between private practitioners and state governments.

Pork SA provided an overview of state pork organisations and their responsibilities. Each state organisation is a communications hub for its local industry. Medium and large producers have a high level of awareness, but they are not sure about small producers and the broader community. Commercial issues include business continuity, emergency movement pre-assessments and movement permits in an emergency response. Pork SA noted the need for these processes to be approved in advance.

An overview of the Pork SA project investigating truck biosecurity in an outbreak and how well interventions work was provided. Pork SA noted that the AUSVETPLAN manual is useful epidemiologically but provides little advice of a commercial nature.

The Stock Feed Manufacturers Council of Australia (SFMCA), advised that the SFMCA members cover about 90 percent of feed companies. The SFMCA has been educate its members and will continue to provide education on important and appropriate biosecurity practices. SFMCA has stringent quality requirements for all its members, requiring compliance with FeedSafe® and the Feed Ingredients and Additives Association of Australia (FIAAA) standard as quality assurance accreditation programs in order to remain a member with the SMFCA.

Gaps and opportunities identified

The last session of the day was a facilitated workshop to identify the gaps and opportunities. These can be broadly summarised as:

- Research – into feral pig populations
- Skills – checking staff are up to speed with clinical symptoms and taking pig samples
- Limited resources/staff for a response
- Leadership – need central leadership for our response to ASF
- Collaboration – working together
- Communications – evaluation for effectiveness
- Sharing resources between jurisdictions
- Identifying small holders – e.g. knowing where pigs are
- Identifying demographics – e.g. non-English demographics
- Simulation exercises to help inform gaps

Next Steps

The ideas emerging from the summit will be reviewed by APL to inform the future focus in ASF preparedness in Australia. For those who wish to review the summit, the full recording can be viewed on this [YouTube](#) link.

For more information:

| Deb Kerr, General Manager Policy
| E: deb.kerr@australianpork.com.au
| M: 0408 169628