What to expect in an emergency animal disease outbreak

An outbreak of a serious emergency animal disease (EAD) can be disastrous for producers, causing significant personal stress and financial hardship. The livestock industries can lose sales opportunities both domestically and internationally in the wake of a damaged reputation for our produce, and the broader Australian economy could lose billions in trade and employment.

Generally, Australian policy is to eradicate any introduced exotic animal disease as quickly as possible. This could involve:

- establishment of disease control zones, quarantine and movement controls
- possible destruction and disposal of infected and exposed animals
- decontamination of infected premises, vehicles, equipment and animal products
- surveillance of susceptible animals
- restriction of the activities of certain enterprises.

The disease may also be controlled through vaccination, campaigns to control disease carriers, animal treatment and wild animal control. Infected and disease-free zones are established to contain the disease and retain business continuity in disease-free areas.

Controlling and eradicating EADs is done using the guidelines in AUSVETPLAN, a coordinated national response plan. As each state and territory is responsible for controlling and eradicating animal disease locally, each has its own EAD control legislation which supports the national guidelines.

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE.

Good farm biosecurity practices will lower the risks of disease entering, establishing and spreading on your property.

FAQs

What happens to me in an emergency animal disease outbreak?

The more serious the outbreak, the more impact it could have on you and your family. An outbreak of a disease such as foot and mouth disease (FMD), where heavy restrictions are placed on moving stock, can have a serious effect on families. On some properties, all movement – people as well as animals – may be temporarily restricted, creating problems for school and work. Longer term restrictions can significantly affect businesses due to reduced trading opportunities.

If my property is affected, will my livestock be destroyed?

Whether livestock need to be destroyed – or for that matter, livestock products or other materials – depends on the disease and its nature.

The worst-case scenario – destroying animals and anything they have been in contact with which can't be

Foot baths set up for a farm visit.

SCAN TO SEE THE FULL LIST OF NOTIFIABLE DISEASES

decontaminated or disinfected – occurs with FMD, because the virus is highly contagious and survives away from the animal. However, many other diseases, such as equine influenza, can be controlled without destroying infected animals.

Your local authority working under the state or territory emergency response plan would make the decision about your stock in the event of an infection on your property. Compensation is available for stock lost due to an EAD or destroyed by the authority to prevent disease spread.

For details of reportable diseases, visit the Australian Government Department of Agriculture's National List of Notifiable Animal Diseases.

Can I leave my property during a disease outbreak?

Without realising, people can spread disease on their clothing, footwear and vehicles or even on their skin or nasal passages! Many diseases can survive long periods outside their obvious host and can hitch a ride to another location.

For this reason, if you suspect a serious disease in your stock, don't leave your property or allow anyone else to do so until an inspector has discussed with you what you must do to prevent disease spread. Once a process is in place, which may include managing movement and disinfecting clothing and equipment, you will generally be allowed to leave.

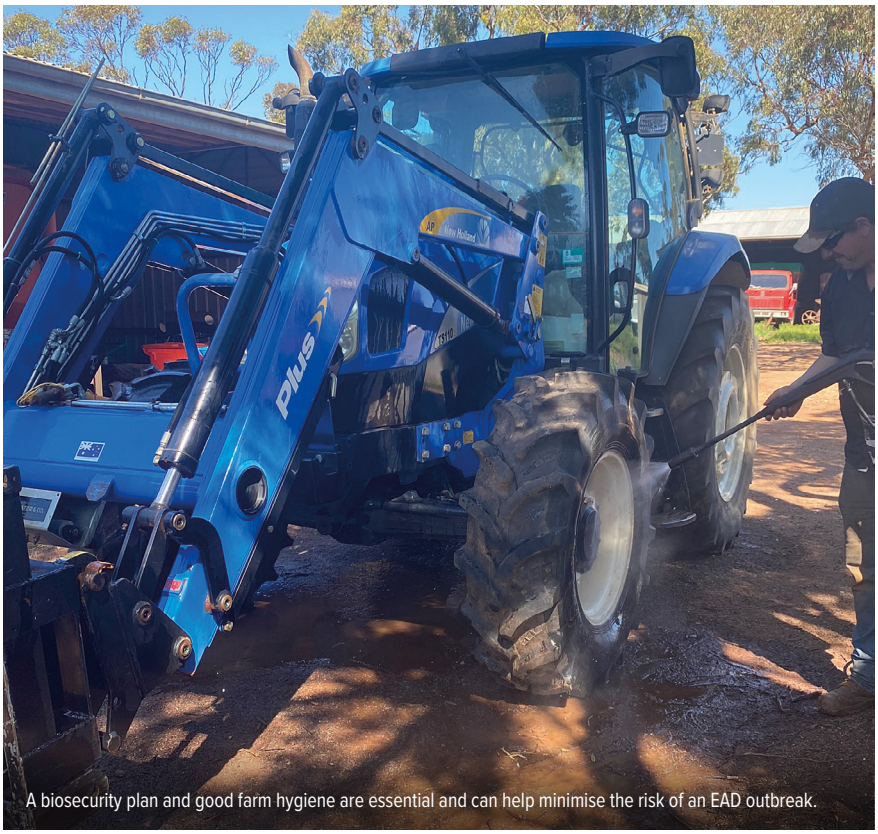
Can I move stock during a disease outbreak?

If you are aware of an outbreak of an EAD you must not move any stock around your property or to other places until you get the all clear from authorities. This is because you may cause the disease to spread, as many diseases are readily spread from animal to animal. This includes if you have multiple properties under one Property Identification Code (PIC).

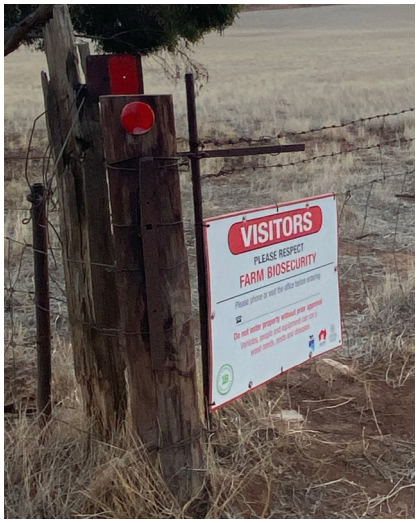
In the case of FMD, a national livestock standstill which bans all movement of susceptible animals may be immediately declared for a few days to allow the authorities to assess where the disease already is, without the situation getting worse through continuing movements. It is a criminal offence to move stock during a stock standstill.

Can I sell products such as milk, eggs, meat or wool?

This depends on the disease, but you won't be able to sell your products until there's no doubt they have not been in contact or contaminated with the disease organism. As this may be very difficult to establish, it might be necessary to suspend all sales.



A biosecurity plan and good farm hygiene are essential and can help minimise the risk of an EAD outbreak.



What can I do to help during an outbreak?

In the event of an outbreak:

- stay informed
- visit www.outbreak.gov.au for information about outbreaks in Australia
- your state or territory department of agriculture or primary industries website will have specific information for your local area
- remember to cooperate with local authorities – they are there to eradicate the disease as quickly as possible, as well as help you.

How long will it be before I can resume my normal farming activities, and what do I need to do?

The period between eradicating a disease and resuming normal farming is one of the most difficult things to predict, as it depends on the spread of the individual outbreak and the nature of the organism responsible.

Once a disease has been officially eradicated, there will be a period of time before normal activity can recommence. Given the impact on producers' income, every effort will be made to limit this period. Livestock producers are part of the decision-making process and will be pressing for an early return to normal activities!

It is very important to have good farm biosecurity practices in place all the time, but particularly during and after an EAD outbreak.

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How does an emergency animal disease response work?

EAD control requires a coordinated response drawing on significant resources and input from all tiers of government and a range of industry groups.

STATES AND TERRITORIES

When an outbreak of an EAD is confirmed, the state or territory authority will quarantine the infected property immediately. They may also quarantine other properties, such as those close to the infected property or because of recent animal, people or vehicle movement.

They also advise the Australian Government, the other states and territories and the national organisations of the affected industries so that management groups can convene and that agreed consultative disease management and funding arrangements can be put into place.

The state Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO)

- initiates quarantine, movement controls and assessments around the initial site
- alerts state emergency management agencies to activate the animal diseases emergency plan
- consults with national counterparts and advisors to seek agreement on the preferred national control strategy.

Field activities are controlled from a local control centre usually established in the vicinity of the outbreak. State-wide measures are directed from the state control centre.

NATIONAL

During an outbreak, a high-level committee of chief executives of government parties and senior livestock industry personnel is formed to manage response plans and budgets.

This committee, called the National Management Group (NMG), is also responsible for decision making on policy and resource allocation issues.

This committee is advised by the Consultative Committee for Emergency Animal Diseases (CCEAD), which includes state Chief Veterinary Officers and other personnel with relevant technical expertise, including industry representatives.

In an animal health emergency, a national disease coordination centre is established in Canberra by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. This centre is responsible for coordinating eradication nationally and for trade negotiations. It also coordinates resources overseas through the International Animal Health Emergency Reserve if international assistance is required.

How big are the quarantine areas?

Factors such as the disease involved, the terrain of the area, and the local livestock affected will influence the size of the quarantine area.

Why is tracing necessary?

Successful disease control depends on fast, accurate tracing. Considerable expert resources will be dedicated to investigating movement on and off infected properties to determine where the disease might have come from, and where it might have been spread to. A specific 'disease tracing' section is set up in each local control centre, and usually involves local expertise to make follow up more efficient.

You can speed up tracing by maintaining detailed records of stock and people movement on your property.

How long will eradication take?

How long it takes to eradicate a disease depends on the disease and how soon it's detected. All Australian response arrangements aim to eradicate serious livestock diseases rapidly, so early recognition of anything unusual in your livestock, and notifying a vet, stock inspector or the free call **Emergency Disease Watch Hotline 1800 675 888** is critical.

When will freedom from a disease be achieved?

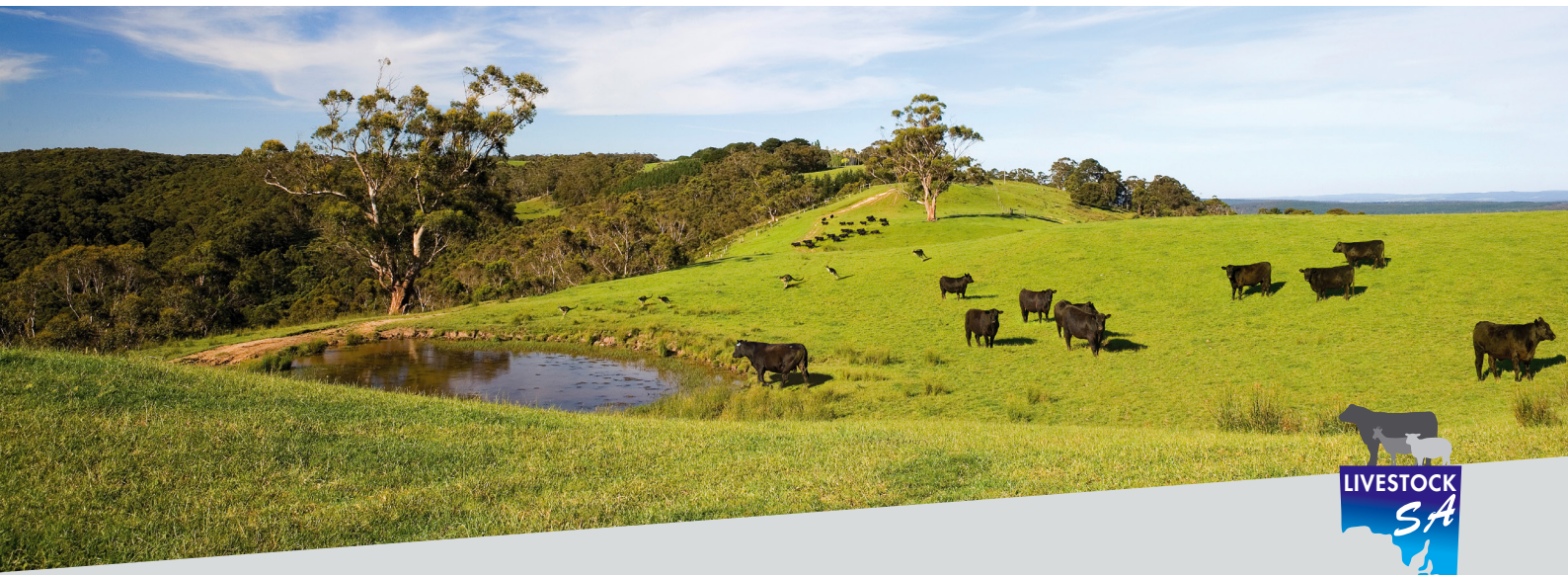
Freedom from an EAD is declared only when all known infected animals have recovered, or in some cases been destroyed, and surveillance shows livestock are clear of residual infection. As surveillance has to include a proper survey of all exposed livestock, it may take weeks or even months. Other countries may also demand that a certain amount of time passes before they will recognise freedom from the disease and reopen export markets.

Preventing a disease outbreak

Farm biosecurity is all about preventing a disease outbreak. Simple biosecurity measures that will go a long way towards preventing a disease or detecting it quickly. In the event of an outbreak, good farm biosecurity is critical to assist the eradication process. Everyone must play their part.

More information

Contact Livestock SA,
08 8297 2299
livestocksa.org.au



The default FMD policy in Australia is "contain, control and eradicate"

EXAMPLE FOR FMD RESPONSE

– important to note that response will vary depending on the EAD

FMD signs reported (e.g. by a producer)
Via EAD Watch Hotline 1800 675 888 or local vet.

Disease investigation occurs by government vet and state Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO). National CVO notified.

NOT FMD
Normal business activities

FMD Confirmed
State CVO prepares and submits EAD response plan

If FMD is confirmed, the following occurs...

Livestock standstill: initially 72 hours then as advised based on risk assessment

All livestock to remain in place. For animals in transit, where they are to go is dependent on a number of factors. Transporters and producers will be informed by officials of actions to take based on risk assessment, origin, and destination.

During the livestock standstill, jurisdictions may impose movement controls over other products (including meat, wool, carcases and/or offal) and equipment.

The decision to ease, lift or extend is based on a risk assessment considering surveillance findings and epidemiology.

Three areas identified and introduced: restricted, control and outside areas.

Restricted area
Three kilometres around the infected property but this is dependent on the terrain, topography, weather and to be determined by the EAD response team. Subject to intense surveillance and movement controls.

Infected property will be quarantined to contain infection. Susceptible animals will be destroyed to limit the spread.

High risk properties will be subject to a risk assessment for classification. These properties include suspect premises and trace premises.

Control area
Initially the state border is likely to become the control area, but this can reduce to no less than a 10km radius encompassing the restricted area.

The purpose is to control movement of susceptible livestock and livestock products for as long as necessary for tracing and epidemiological studies.

Outside area
This is not a declared area, but is used to describe the rest of Australia outside the declared region. The outside area will still be subject to surveillance, as it is desirable to maintain this area as disease free.

Rapid traceback and forward of all movements for 14 days before the first case was reported up to the point of quarantine.

Tracing includes:

- Susceptible species
- Animal products
- Vehicles - visitors and contractors
- Materials - hay and grain
- People - anyone who accessed the property

Windborne and wild animal spread also considered.

Tracing and surveillance are undertaken to determine the location of all infected properties or those that have been potentially exposed to infection to prevent further spread of virus or cases occurring.

Tracing and surveillance will play a critical role in identifying infected and in-contact animals to determine the extent of the restricted areas, control areas, and outside areas.

Length of a response is dependent on the number of livestock infected and number of properties impacted. While restricted trade may occur for producers in "outside areas", proof of freedom and Australia's ability to trade internationally will take years to achieve.

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