



New South Wales



# ANIMAL HEALTH SURVEILLANCE

## October-December 1997

### Number 97/4

#### STAFF

New District Veterinarians have now been appointed to Gundagai (Luzia Rast) and Braidwood (John Sullivan) Rural Lands Protection Boards. We welcome them to the organisation, and hope that they have a long and enjoyable career with the Boards. Peter Frecklington, formerly DV at Nyngan is acting DV at Young and Jane Littlejohn is acting DV at Wagga while John Evers and Tony Morton take some well deserved long service leave.

During the quarter, David Risson resigned from his position as DV for the Nyngan RLP Board to return to university to study medicine. We wish David a successful future, hopefully as a rural doctor in a few years time, and thank him for his contribution over the time he has been at Nyngan.

#### LIVESTOCK AND PASTORAL CONDITIONS

Hot dry windy conditions across the State in November, with record and near record temperatures in many areas have severely affected the crop and pastoral situation at the end of the quarter.

Pasture response to earlier rains has been limited, with many areas reporting late germination and pastures running to seed with little bulk. The hot conditions have burnt off pastures and severe damage to ground cover is occurring from wind and stock.

The area of the State drought declared dropped from 73% in September to 20% for November, but increased back to 28% for December as a result of the hot dry weather experienced. The El Nino indicator remains negative with below average rainfall predicted for much of New South Wales for the summer.

**Drought Transport Subsidies** - The NSW Minister for Agriculture has confirmed that drought transport subsidies in NSW will end on 31 December 1997. This confirms agreements made in 1992 between the Commonwealth and the States under the National Drought Policy. Official drought declaration in NSW has also ceased from 31 December 1997.

Contact: John Bowler, Orange on (02) 6391 3680.

#### QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHTS

##### **Avian Influenza Outbreak, Tamworth, 1997.**

###### *Outbreak description*

Virulent avian influenza (AI) was suspected as the cause of increased mortalities in a broiler-breeder operation at Tamworth during November 1997, and was subsequently confirmed by virus isolation at the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL). An increase in daily mortality was first noticed on this property on 16 November, in one shed. A bacterial infection was suspected initially, with AI suspected following increased mortalities in other sheds from 21 to 24 November. AI was confirmed following further investigations carried out on 25 November. Estimated

mortality rate in affected sheds ranged from about 40 to 100% over about 7 days. Two further infected properties were identified early in December, as a result of intensive surveillance in the area.

The second infected property was also a broiler breeder enterprise, situated about 3 km south of the first infected flock. Following confirmation of AI on the first property, and identification of a potential link to this property through a dead bird pick-up contractor, the property was placed under a high level of surveillance. On 3 December 1997, daily mortality in one shed increased from 2/day to 22/day. Gross pathology observed at post mortem on these birds was suggestive of AI, with the diagnosis subsequently confirmed by testing at AAHL.

Infection was also confirmed in emu chicks, located on a property about 1 km to the south east of the first case. At the time of the outbreak there were 261 emu chicks present, ranging in age from 1 to 3 months. This property also had a broiler growing enterprise, though the broiler sheds were empty at the time of the outbreak. AI virus was isolated from cloacal swabs collected from the emu chicks as part of routine surveillance activities on 5 December. At no time was there any evidence of clinical disease in any of these emus. The adult emus on another property about 20 km away were serologically negative for AI virus.

AI virus serotype H7N4 was isolated from all three cases. Extensive investigation and surveillance was undertaken on both commercial and residential poultry flocks in the area, without detecting any additional infected flocks.

### ***Response***

Following the confirmation of virulent AI, Commonwealth and State Chief Veterinary Officers agreed that an eradication program would be implemented in accordance with the Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan (AUSVETPLAN). NSW Agriculture was the lead agency, coordinating operations with the assistance of Rural Lands Protection Boards and local emergency operations organisations.

A local disease control centre was established at Tamworth, to coordinate operations in the Tamworth area, and a State disease control centre was established in Orange to coordinate policy, resources and financial matters. More than 100 people operated from the local centre at the peak of the campaign, with a further 10-12 in the State control centre. Action commenced immediately, according to

AUSVETPLAN guidelines, to prevent spread of the disease, eliminate infection on infected properties and undertake surveillance to detect any additional cases.

At the start of the outbreak, a 3 km restricted zone and a 10 km control zone were declared around the outbreak area, to allow strict controls on the movement of poultry and poultry products. All commercial poultry flocks within these areas were closely monitored for evidence of disease, including regular post mortem of dead birds, and serology for evidence of AI antibodies. Domestic backyard poultry in the restricted zone were also checked for evidence of AI virus.

All birds on infected premises were destroyed and buried, litter was removed and buried, and sheds were thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. The last of the infected birds were slaughtered on 13 December, however decontamination operations continued until early January 1998. After completion of cleaning and disinfection, sheds were left empty for a further three weeks before restocking. Surveillance will continue on the restocked farms for a further 6 months to ensure that the virus has been successfully eliminated. Area movement restrictions were revoked on all but the previously infected properties in late January.

During the outbreak, a total of about 310,000 broiler breeders and progeny, 1.2 million fertile chicken eggs, 261 emus and 147 emu eggs were destroyed. All direct costs of eradication will be met under a Commonwealth/States cost sharing agreement for eradication of certain exotic diseases. Under this agreement, the Commonwealth and State/Territory governments meet the cost of eradication for any of 12 specified exotic diseases, including virulent avian influenza. This agreement covers the cost of compensation to the owner for stock and equipment destroyed as part of the eradication program, as well as operational costs for the program.

### ***Suspected Source and Epidemiology***

Extensive tracing and investigation identified contaminated river-water as the most likely source for infection on the first property. All water for the enterprise is pumped from the Peel River, and filtered and chlorinated prior to use. Investigations suggest that filtration and chlorination of the water was inadequate, potentially permitting the survival of AI virus in the water. A wild bird survey of the area upstream of the water intake identified a number of water bird species that could present a high risk source for AI.

Spread of the virus to the second property appears to have been due to either mechanical transfer by the dead bird pick-up truck, or possibly by aerosol transmission. Spread to the third property was probably via aerosol or flies.

Extensive investigations on all infected properties, and surveillance of both commercial and back yard poultry have failed to identify any other infected flocks, or any likely alternative sources of infection for the three infected flocks.

Contact: Evan Sergeant, Orange on (02) 6391 3687.

**Paramyxovirus infection of pigs**

This report updates a detailed report on a new virus affecting pigs reported in the last issue of AHS. Continuing investigations have confirmed that the virus is still present in grower pigs on the piggery, although there have been no clinically affected litters for some months. The owner is currently planning a voluntary program to attempt to eradicate the virus from one unit, using segregation and management to break the transmission cycle. If this is successful, he will attempt progressive eradication from all units on the piggery. Testing on contract grower piggeries has confirmed that the virus has died out in one, but

Contact: Evan Sergeant, Orange on (02) 6391 3687.

**Premier’s Public Sector Award – Bluetongue free zone extended**

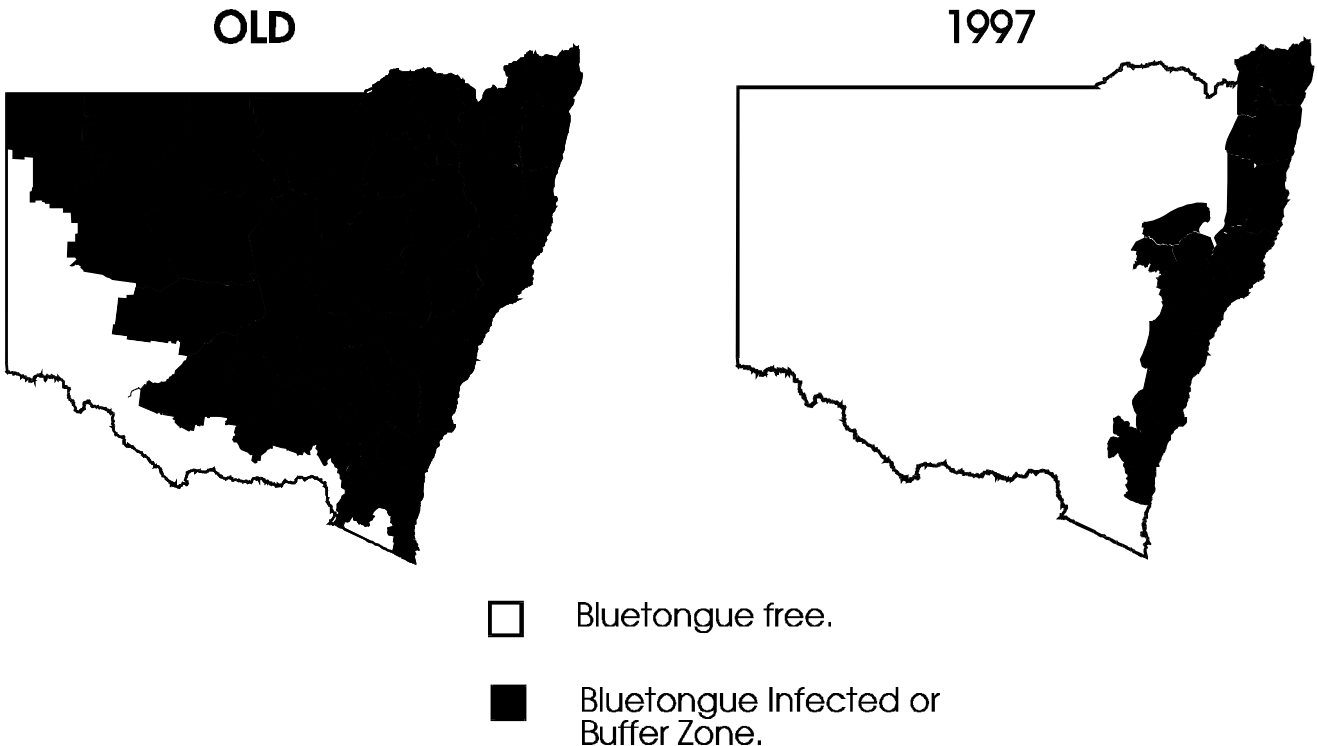
NSW Agriculture’s Livestock Virology Team, headed by Dr Peter Kirkland has won the NSW Premier’s Public Sector Service Award.

The program – nominated under ‘achievements that make a significant contribution to the economy and/or environment of NSW’ – incorporated several research projects and involved scientists and technicians from virology and entomology disciplines. It also involved two research institutions in NSW and an important, collaborative, overseas research program.

In essence, the program determined the distribution of insect vectors for livestock diseases such as bluetongue and Akabane disease. By determining areas of NSW to be free of these insects (and subsequently free of the diseases) the researchers were able to demonstrate to major international customers the disease-free status of our livestock.

Overseas collaboration with Chinese authorities has seen a live cattle export market open up which could be worth around \$100 million a year to NSW cattle producers. Significant markets could also open up for

**Bluetongue Virus Zones in New South Wales.**



appears to be still circulating in the other. Further testing on fruit bats has provided increasing evidence that these are probably the natural host for this virus.

NSW breeding livestock as a direct result of this research work. The maps below show the change to

the bluetongue status of NSW, now recognised by the Chinese authorities.

## DISEASE TRENDS AND PREDICTIONS

### Anthrax

Four cases of anthrax were diagnosed during the current quarter, at Hillston, Cobar, Rankins Springs and Deniliquin, all in sheep. This brings the total number of cases for 1997 to 9.

Anthrax was excluded as the cause of death in 3 other laboratory investigations during the quarter, making a total of 49 anthrax exclusions for the year.

### Ovine Brucellosis

An ovine brucellosis eradication program has been conducted over the last two years in the Hillston, Balranald and Wentworth Rural Lands Protection Boards. Providing pastoral conditions are suitable, all flocks will be assessed by the end of 1997.

To date, 238 flocks have been checked across the 3 Boards, with 17,509 rams being examined. Some 73 flocks are still to be assessed. Progress is summarised in Table 1.

As can be seen from Table 1, all flocks have been inspected in both Balranald and Wentworth Boards. In these Boards, work on 21 infected flocks is continuing. Although Hillston Board has 73 flocks to be inspected, the number of rams involved is not large.

About a quarter of flocks were initially found to be infected in Wentworth and Balranald Boards (See Table 2). At present the infection rate is much higher in the Hillston Board but it is possible that as more

properties are assessed, the infection rate for all flocks will be about the same as Balranald and Wentworth.

Good progress is being made with the eradication program. Eradication of ovine brucellosis in all flocks is expected in the near future, given progress to date and anticipated work in Hillston Board.

The next big step will be to continue monitoring ram flocks to make sure nothing has been missed, and to prevent the reintroduction of the disease back into flocks.

Contact: Ken Jubb, Hay on (02) 6993 1608.

### Egg Drop Syndrome '76 in NSW

One isolated case of Egg Drop Syndrome (EDS) was diagnosed in New South Wales in October on a large farm using dam water. This brings the total number of farms suffering from EDS in New South Wales from November 1995 to October 1997 to 22.

Contact: George Arzey, Menangle on (02) 4640 6402.

## DISEASE CONTROL AND ADVISORY PROGRAMS

### Bovine Johne's Disease Market Assurance Program

There are now 410 herds enrolled in the cattle JD MAP in NSW, with 311 at TN1 status, 16 MN1 and 39 TN2. The remaining 44 herds are still awaiting confirmation of their status. To date, 48,995 cattle have been tested, with 105 reactors (0.2%) requiring follow-up in 73 herds. Sixty five reactor herds have been resolved, with only one infected herd identified by MAP testing so far. The ratio of beef to dairy herds in the MAP remains steady at about 70:30, and about 66% of herds are studs.

A list of assessed herds is available by Infofax on 1902 940 579, and should be available from the NAHIS web site by early 1998.

Contact Tim Jessep, Goulburn on (02) 4823 0744.

**Table 1: Summary of Ovine Brucellosis Eradication Program in Southern Western Division.**

Rural Lands Protection Board	Flocks Assessed To Date	Total Flocks To Be Assessed	Number Of Rams Inspected To Date
Hillston	75	148	6177
Balranald	91	91	6590
Wentworth	73	73	4742
<b>Total</b>	239	312	17509

**Table 2: Initial Infection Rates in Southern Western Division.**

Rural Lands Protection Board	Number Of Flocks Infected Initially	Number Of Flocks Assessed	% Flocks Infected Initially
Hillston	27	75	36.0
Balranald	22	91	24.2
Wentworth	20	73	27.4

## New South Wales Footrot Strategic Plan

Activity for the quarter was highlighted once again by a total of 88 submissions for footrot culture made to RVL Orange of which 41 (48%) originated from Armidale, Glen Innes, Inverell and Tamworth. Results to hand for these showed Benign (12), Virulent (39), mixed Virulent and Benign (5), No growth (26) and Other (3). This was a marked increase on the previous quarter with a greater proportion being identified as virulent.

The hot weather of October, November and December resulted in either non-existent or very short spread periods which was unfortunate for many southern flocks waiting on the prospect of a successful summer eradication to be confirmed. Northern areas fared much better in the quarter with conditions very similar to the 1996/97 summer.

The number of footrot quarantines fell slightly for the quarter. At the end of December 181 flocks (491402 sheep) and 6 goat flocks (837 goats) were listed in quarantine.

Planning for survey work, intended to be carried out in the New England over the spread period, was hampered by the involvement of staff with the Avian Influenza outbreak at Tamworth.

Contact Rob Walker, Wagga Wagga (02) 6923 0463.

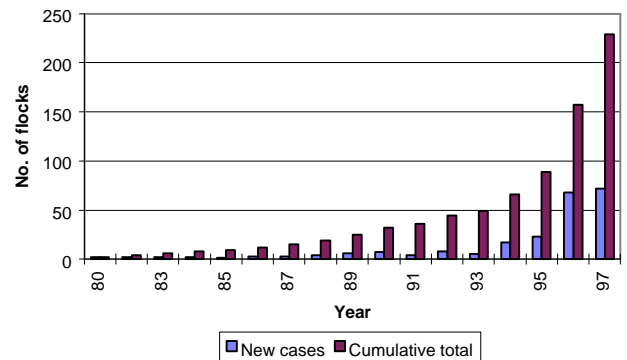
## Ovine Johne's Disease Surveillance

During the quarter, 14 new infected properties were identified, bringing the total number of detections for 1997 to 72, compared to 68 for 1996 (see Figure 1). Ovine Johne's disease has now been diagnosed on a total of 229 properties in NSW since 1980. Of these 229 flocks, 200 are still classified as infected. A further 11 properties have been destocked, and 18 have not reported a case for more than 5 years.

There are now 189 suspect properties in NSW, which includes the 18 properties on which OJD was diagnosed before 1992. A further 11 properties are 'under surveillance'. The decrease in suspect properties since last quarter (213) is due to investigation of a number of properties and their resolution to 'non-assessed status', or confirmation of OJD and their reclassification to 'infected'.

Contact: Laurie Denholm, Orange (02) 6391 3863.

Figure 1: Annual detections of OJD in NSW since 1980



## Australian Sheep Johne's Disease Market Assurance Program

Uptake of the Sheep MAP has been encouraging, with 21 flocks having achieved MN1 status at the end of December, including a number of prominent studs.

## Zoning for ovine Johne's disease

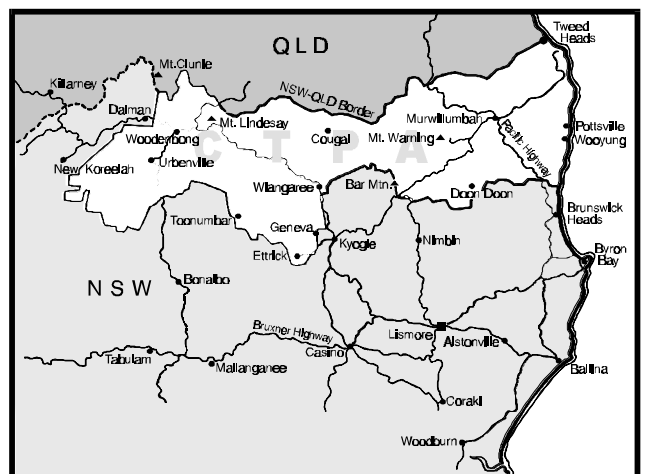
The national Standard Definitions and Rules have now been finalised by Veterinary Committee, and provide guidelines for the declaration of zones of different status within Australia. NSW Agriculture is consulting with Rural Lands Protection Boards to prepare a case for zoning within NSW later in 1998.

It is expected that the State will be divided into Residual, Control and Protected zones, with appropriate movement controls between zones.

Contact Stephen Ottaway, Orange (02) 6391 3854.

## Cattle tick control program

**Gazettal of new CTPA boundary** – The gazettal of the new Cattle Tick Protected Area boundary was finalised in late December (see map). The new boundary is north of the Casino and Lismore saleyards and abattoirs and the Kyogle Saleyards. Information sheets were prepared and changes were made to permitting systems to facilitate livestock movements to selling centres.



**Eradication Program** – The eradication program on infected properties is proceeding well with the fourth round of treatments completed east of the Richmond Range and the third round in progress west of the Richmond Range.

A low number of cattle tick were detected on cattle on a previously infested property at Yorklea near Casino. Mustering all cattle on this property is proving difficult as there are numerous areas (swamps and scrub) for the cattle to hide in. The cattle found infested had not been presented for treatment at the previous round.

**Cattle tick detections** – By January 1998, cattle tick had been detected on 15 properties. Six of these were carryover from infestations last year. Cattle tick have been detected on two properties infested in 1997 where musters have been a problem. Three were in quarantine as adjoining holdings and maintained under surveillance till two clean inspections are completed this autumn.

Of the nine new infestations detected this year, four (45%) have been detected at saleyards. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the current saleyard monitoring but highlights the need to increase producer examination of stock prior to consignment to saleyards.

**Tick Fever** – A single animal mortality was investigated by a private practitioner based in Queensland. Tick fever organisms were detected by the investigating pathologist, although a whole herd inspection failed to detect cattle tick.

The paddock at Kyogle where the index cases of tick fever were detected in January 1997, has been kept stock free for over eight months, which is sufficient time for the larvae to die. Inspection of the paddock indicated that the area has been kept stock-free. Sampling with flannelette tails failed to reveal any cattle tick larvae. A few bush tick larvae (*Haemaphysalis* Sp.) were detected. The paddock is to be restocked with cattle and monitored on a regular basis.

Contact: Peter McGregor, Wollongbar (02) 6626 1334.

### **National Antibacterial Residue Minimization Program (NARM)**

Adult cattle were sampled as part of the NARM program for the first time in 1997. Sampling of calves from export and domestic abattoirs continued under NARM during 1997 as occurred in 1996.

The percentage of calves killed at export abattoirs in NSW which had residues detected on the screening test during 1997 was 0.5%. Dissapointingly this is a slight rise on the rate of 0.3% detected in 1996. The rate of residues which were above the Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) also rose from 0.09% in 1996 to 0.15% in 1997.

At domestic abattoirs, the percentage of calves positive to the screening test also showed a slight rise, from 1.2% in 1996 to 1.3% in 1997. However there was a marked improvement in the incidence of above MRL residues. No residues above the MRL were detected in calves tested at domestic abattoirs in NSW during 1997. During 1996 0.6% of calves tested were found to have residues above the MRL.

Twelve export abattoirs collected 1,293 samples from adult cattle during 1997. Most samples (860) were from cull dairy cows while 364 samples were from bulls. Only one sample (from a steer) had a residue above the MRL. Three percent of all adult samples but 10% of bull samples gave a positive result to the urine screening test with no residues detected on confirmatory testing. Twenty of these bulls' owners replied to a survey form which all owners were sent. All insisted that they had not treated their bulls prior to their being sent to slaughter. Half the cow owners surveyed also said that they had not treated their animals. It appears that adult cattle give a high rate of false positive reactions to the screening test.

The main reason for residues above the MRL continues to be failure to obey the withholding period. This is often associated with a lack of identification and record keeping systems for treated animals.

**Table 3: Summary NARM results for 1997**

<b>Class</b>	<b>No.tested</b>	<b>%MIT +ve</b>	<b>%&gt;MRL</b>
Export calves	18,158	0.5	0.15
Domestic calves	466	1.3	0
Export adults	1,293	4.2	0.08

Contact: Sally Spence, Wollongbar (02) 6626 1214.

### **Endosulfan Survey**

During the last 2-3 years it has become apparent that residues of Endosulfan Sulphate will occur in cattle which have recently been exposed to pasture contaminated with Endosulfan spray. Management guidelines were developed to minimise the impact of these residues and have been shown to be effective

when adopted. Ensuring that cattle suspected of having been exposed to Endosulfan are kept on an Endosulfan free diet for 42 days prior to slaughter is the key element of these practices.

During the current summer a targeted survey is under way, in which tailtags from properties which grow cotton, or adjoin cotton growing properties, are listed and have 1 animal sampled from each group arriving for slaughter. This program has been endorsed by the Residue Management Group, funded jointly by the Cattle Council of Australia, and Cotton Australia, and covers cotton growing areas of NSW and Queensland. It is intended that 500 samples be collected from NSW & Queensland cattle.

A letter informing listed cattle producers of the program was sent out during the latter part of 1997, and producers are informed of all results. A questionnaire has been devised and all producers who have had cattle tested in this survey will be asked to complete one of these. Low level detections will be investigated by Cotton Australia, subject to approval from the cattle owner. Detections at or above 50% of the MRL (0.20 mg/kg) will be investigated by District Veterinarians at Rural Lands Protection Boards in NSW.

Results for NSW to date are:

>MRL	4
½MRL - MRL	3
LOD to < ½MRL	51
Trace	36
Nil	107
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>210</b>

MRL = Maximum Residue Limit

LOD = Level of Detection

Contact: Graeme Williamson, Wollongbar (02) 6626 1370.

### **National Organochlorine Residue Management (NORM) Program**

During 1997, ten properties in NSW were found to have OC residues above MRL. Six of these were discovered through Quality Assurance testing at abattoirs, one was found through the T5 testing program (Tailtags from nominated RLPBs without any residue test results on file), and 3 already had a T status (T2 or T3).

In addition, a further 17 properties had test results which were in the range ½MRL to MRL and required follow up by District Veterinarians.

The cessation of the random Chlorfluazuron testing at the beginning of 1997 has reduced the amount of testing done outside of the NORM program, and therefore has reduced the likelihood of finding new problem properties.

At the end of 1997, there were 271 tailtags on the NSW T List for targeted testing compared with 330 at the beginning of the year.

The discounting of prices paid for cattle bearing tailtags on the T List is up to 30% in some areas of NSW, and in some situations these cattle do not get a bid. This issue has been addressed by various industry organisations, and strategies have been suggested for minimising this discounting, but in a severely depressed cattle market major improvements are unlikely in the short term.

District veterinarians are in some cases being subjected to considerable pressure to have tailtags removed from the T List, often without adequate justification.

During October & November 1997 six workshops involving staff from NSW Agriculture and Rural Lands Protection Boards were held around NSW. Various issues relating to the NORM Program were addressed. It was a beneficial process for all those involved, with specific case studies being used to address local issues in each area. The objective of the workshops was to encourage a consistent approach to OC residue management throughout the state.

Contact: Graeme Williamson, Wollongbar (02) 6626 1370.

### **Enzootic Bovine Leucosis**

Another round of bulk milk testing was carried out during November, with 1684 (94%) of 1800 herds sampled BMT negative and only 116 (6%) positive. A further 7 herds were off supply and therefore not tested. Of the 116 positive herds, 49 had an estimated prevalence of less than 5%, 49 were between 5 and 15 % and 18 greater than 15%.

These results compare very favourably with the beginning of the program in November 1992, when 23 % of herds were BMT positive.

Table 4 shows the current EBL status of herds at the end of December 1997.

**Table 4: EBL status, 31 December 1997**

Status	Herds	Percentage
Accredited Free	3	(0.2%)

Certified Free	1	(0.1%)
Tested Negative	266	(14.7%)
Monitored Negative	1062	(58.7%)
BMT Negative	110	(6.1%)
Provisionally Clear	88	(4.9%)
Infected	254	(14.0%)
Not Assessed	23	(1.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1807</b>	<b>(100%)</b>

Contact Richard Zelski, Maitland (02) 4930 2419.

### **Salmonella Enteritidis Accreditation of Layer Hen Flocks in NSW**

The NSW Salmonella Accreditation Scheme for commercial layers is gaining momentum. More than 75 flocks are in the process of applying for accreditation. This scheme shows that egg producing flocks are free of *Salmonella enteritidis*, a food safety pathogen which has caused major problems overseas. Other states have also expressed interest in the Scheme.

Contact: George Arzey, Menangle on (02) 4640 6402.

## **DISEASE SURVEILLANCE**

### **Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathy (TSE) surveillance**

Brain tissue from three sheep was examined histologically for exclusion of Scrapie during the quarter, with negative results.

### **Avian tuberculosis**

Tuberculosis was diagnosed in a male kakariki parrot from the Moss Vale area, during October.

Granulomatous inflammation was detected at the tracheal bifurcation and throughout the liver. A *Mycobacterium avium* complex organism was isolated from the liver.

### **Bat viruses**

During the quarter, 12 fruit bats were examined for evidence of lyssavirus infection, with negative results. A total of 124 fruit bats have now been examined for lyssavirus, with 9 found to be infected, and 29 micro-bats examined have all been negative.

Three fruit bats and three horses were examined for evidence of bat paramyxovirus infection during the quarter, all with negative results. A total of 90 fruit bats, 12 micro-bats and five horses have now been examined for evidence of paramyxovirus infection, with 1 fruit bat serologically positive, and one virologically positive.

Contact: Evan Sergeant, Orange on (02) 6391 3687.

### **Bee Diseases**

Table 5 shows the results of American foul brood (AFB) testing for the current quarter, and the financial year since July 1997.

**Table 5: AFB testing summary for New South Wales**

	October-December, 1997	Since July, 1997
Positive	126	278
Negative	111	278
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>556</b>

Of the 278 positive reports since July, 202 were new cases, while the remaining 76 were repeat tests on previously confirmed cases.

On average, about one third of positive reports each quarter are from apiaries with a history of AFB within the last 12-18 months. In some cases there have been regular positive reports over this period, despite ongoing eradication attempts. It is becoming increasingly obvious that the current inspection and eradication methods are inadequate to ensure the eradication of AFB from infected apiaries.

Despite this, the actual incidence of infected hives on an annual basis has changed remarkably little over the last 8 years, varying from about 0.5 to 0.9 % of registered hives in NSW.

Fifteen reports of chalkbrood were received during the quarter.

Contact Keith Oliver, Orange on (02) 6391 3689.

### **Exotic Disease Investigations**

Table 6 lists all reported exotic disease investigations during the quarter. This list only contains reported events. Numerous field and laboratory investigations are performed each year for possible exotic diseases. In most cases, exotic diseases are excluded early in the investigation and the case is not reported as such.

A more detailed summary of the Avian Influenza outbreak at Tamworth is provided elsewhere in this report.



**Table 6: Suspect exotic disease investigations**

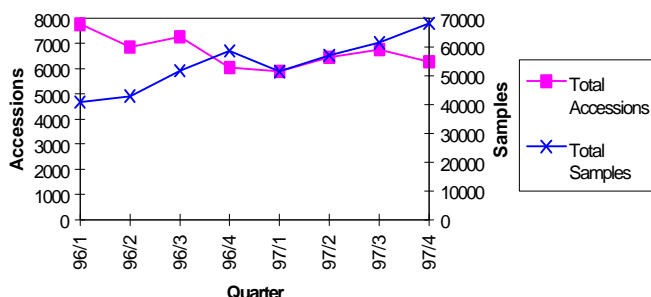
Animal	Disease Suspected	Diagnosis
Horse	Bat Paramyxovirus	Bacterial Septicaemia
Horse	Bat Paramyxovirus	Pleurisy
Horse	Bat Paramyxovirus	Crofton Weed toxicity
Chicken	Avian Influenza	Confirmed
Cat	Rabies	negative
Cat	Rabies	negative
Dog	Rabies	negative

**Laboratory submissions**

Figure 1 shows the throughput of samples through the laboratory system since 1 January 1996. Over the period, accession numbers have declined, while total sample numbers have increased. This increase in sample numbers is at least partially associated with the increase in testing for Johne's disease carried out under the cattle MAP, and for investigation of suspect sheep flocks.

Contact: Evan Sergeant, Orange on (02) 6391 3687.

**Figure 2: Laboratory throughput by quarter, 1996-97**



**FROM THE AUSTRALIAN ANIMAL HEALTH COUNCIL**

**Key forward planning document nears final stage**

The Animal Health Services Implementation Working Group (AHSIWG) has prepared and refined its draft National Strategic Plan for presentation to the AAHC Board. The Board will consider the report at its December meeting and present its recommendations to industry and the Australian Agricultural Ministers (ARMCANZ) early in 1998. The outcome of the plan, once agreed, will be a blueprint for managing

animal health in Australia for the next five years and beyond.

The initial draft was prepared for a workshop held in conjunction with AAHC's Annual General Meeting in November. Entitled *Strategic Priorities for Animal Health 1998-2003*, the scope and import of the AHS process is summed up in the draft document's aims:

*To achieve a responsive, flexible, cost-effective, collaborative Australian animal health system which ensures community, consumer and international market confidence and facilitates trade in Australia's livestock and related products.*

The Board has also considered the National Animal Health Surveillance Task Group report. A synopsis of this report incorporating the Board's response to the Task Group's recommendations is being prepared by CEO Paul Crew and National Animal Health Information System (NAHIS) Coordinator, Chris Baldock, for distribution (along with a copy of the full Task Group report) to members for their consideration.

**Ovine Johne's Disease dominates animal health agenda**

The Ovine Johne's Disease dilemma - whether or not to start a national progressive eradication program - has demanded a huge slice of the Board's, Executive's and Coordinators' attention over the past three months, with intensive input from a wide range of people from the sheep industries and governments. As consensus on cost sharing between governments and industry could not be achieved, AAHC has decided it needs much more robust information on the disease's prevalence and potential spread.

AAHC has established a Technical Working Group to advise on how to enhance surveillance and commissioned a study on who would benefit and by how much from a formal program so it can determine the possible total cost and how costs should be equitably shared. AAHC has no funds for a new OJD program so that, without costs allocated and funding agreed between industry and governments, no new program is possible. Meanwhile, the Johne's Disease Market Assurance Programs for sheep and cattle will continue. MAPs for goats and alpaca are due to start early in 1998.

Contact: Australian Animal Health Council, Canberra, on 02 6239 5727

## ***Getting Information on the Occurrence of Animal Diseases***

*This surveillance report can only convey a very limited amount of information about the occurrence and distribution of livestock diseases in New South Wales. If you would like more specific information about diseases occurring in your part of the State, contact your local Rural Lands Protection Board district veterinarian; Departmental senior field veterinary officer; or Regional Veterinary Laboratory.*

*For statewide information, contact NSW Agriculture's Quality Assurance Program in Orange on (02) 6391 3237 or fax (02) 6361 9976.*

*For more information on national disease status check out the National Animal Health Information System (NAHIS)*

*via the the Internet at:*

**<http://www.brs.gov.au/aphb/aha>**

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**NSW Agriculture**