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2018 Northern Territory brands audit

The Northern Territory (NT) Audit of registered brands commenced in July 2018. With approximately 1200 brands registered for use in the NT it is vital that all registration details are correct and that all associated information is current. An NT wide audit of brands is carried out every 5-10 years with the last audit completed in 2010.

All registered owners of NT brands will receive an instruction letter and audit form over the coming months. Please ensure the form is completed and returned as soon as possible after it is received.

Remember owners of brands must give notification to the Registrar in the following events:

- change of postal address/contact details
- transfer brand to a new owner
- change of run/property;
- change of branding position/s;
- cancellation of brand (no longer being used);
- change of name by marriage;
- notification of death;

For more information contact your regional livestock biosecurity office.

Cattle tick collection in the Parkhurst tick zone

The Department of Primary Industry and Resources (DPIR) is currently conducting resistant cattle tick surveillance within the Parkhurst zone in order to establish if there has been any further spread of resistant cattle tick.

DPIR is asking that properties within the Parkhurst zone present cattle for tick collection this season. Please contact Rob Wait, Regional Livestock Biosecurity Officer Darwin, on (08) 8999 2034 to arrange a suitable time for tick collection or for further information.

New Katherine Veterinary Officer

The Livestock Biosecurity Branch welcomes Dr Megan Pickering to the team.

Megan is a long-term Katherine resident, having previously worked in private mixed practices in Katherine, Darwin and the UK since 1994, as well as a previous position with the Department of Primary Industries in 1999. Outside of work, Megan lives with her husband and three busy teenagers on a rural property, from which she enjoys an active lifestyle. She says she seems to spend a lot of money repairing and replacing mountain bikes, canoes, running shoes, camping equipment and First Aid supplies, but they have a great collection of memories and photographs!



Dr Megan Pickering

Megan is looking forward to participating in disease investigations, herd health and surveillance work, and to visiting pastoral properties and establishing new relationships. She is based at the Katherine Research Station and is available for disease investigation call outs; Megan can be contacted on (08) 8973 9716 or 0437 52 7372.

Australian Standards for Export of Livestock (ASEL) review

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources has commenced a comprehensive review of the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL). These standards ensure livestock are fit for export and help manage the risks to health and welfare of livestock during the voyage.

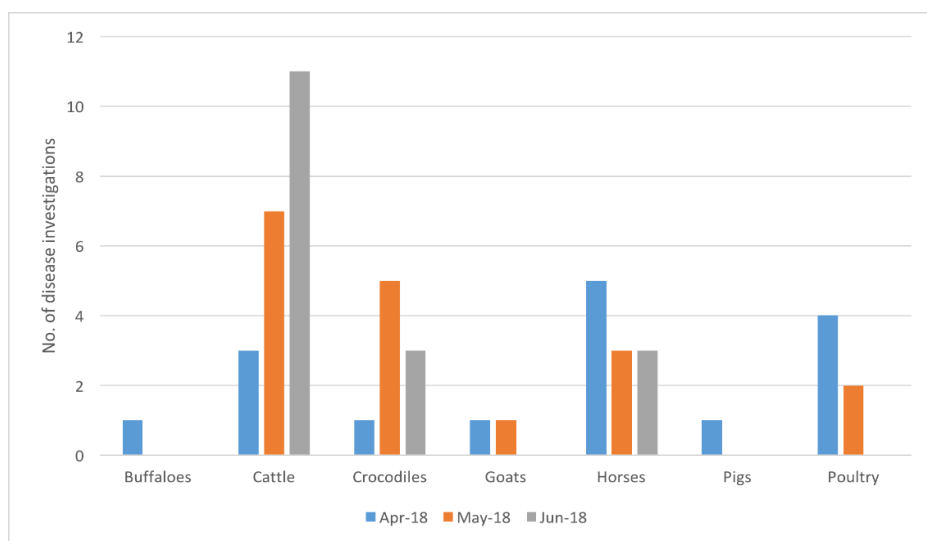
The review is being conducted by a technical advisory committee made up of an independent chair and experts in animal health and welfare, regulatory design and the livestock industry. The review will finish at the end of 2018. The standards for the pregnancy testing of feeder and slaughter cattle/buffalo and accreditation of non-veterinarians is outlined in ASEL.

For more information visit www.agriculture.gov.au/animal/welfare/export-trade/review-asel

Livestock disease investigations

DPIR provides a free disease investigation service to livestock owners for diagnosis of notifiable emergency, exotic and endemic disease, including zoonotic diseases. Berrimah Veterinary Laboratories provide free diagnostic testing for exclusion of notifiable diseases for all disease investigations, and subsidies are available for producers to contact private veterinarians for significant disease investigations in livestock.

During April to June 2018, 52 livestock disease investigations were conducted to rule out emergency diseases or investigate suspect notifiable diseases across the NT.



Livestock disease investigations in the NT, April to June 2018

Case report: monensin poisoning in weaners

Monensin poisoning caused the death of 15 weaner calves on a property near Tennant Creek in March. The group of 200 weaners had been processed and yarded 7 days before 15 were found dead with no reported signs of illness prior to sudden death.

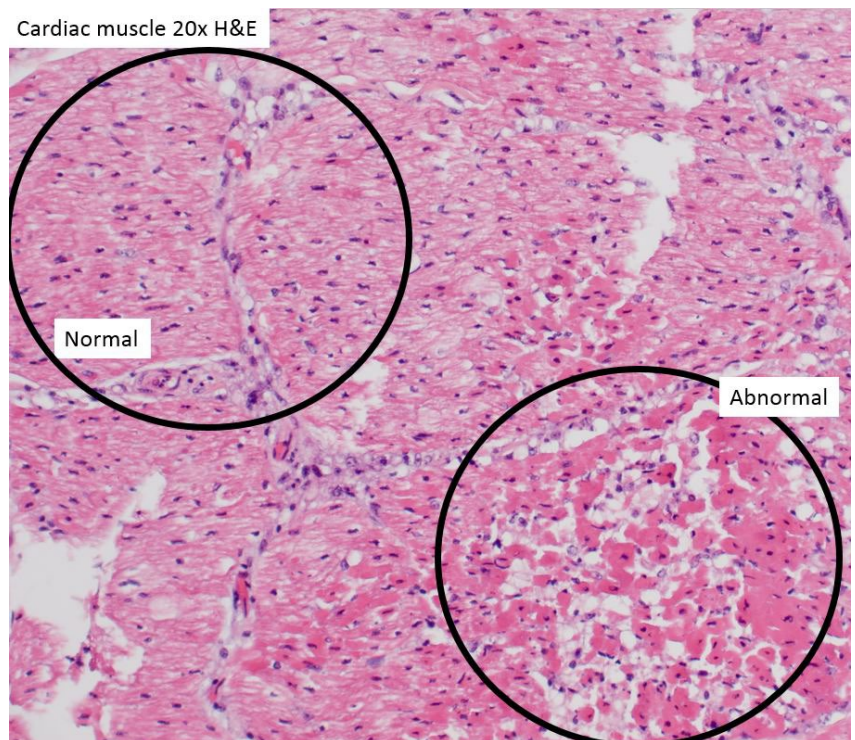
The producer and vet took samples from three of the dead weaners and sent them to the Berrimah Veterinary Laboratories. Lab testing found damage to cardiac tissue (heart) in one of the weaners, which was consistent with exposure to a cardiac poison.

Common sources of cardiac poisons in cattle in the NT include the ironwood tree and ionophore feed additives. Ionophores are a common feed additive used to control coccidiosis and increase growth in cattle and other livestock species. They are safe and effective when administered to the appropriate species at the correct dose, however administration above the recommended dose can be lethal.

There were no ironwood trees present on the property, but the manager reported that a supplement feed containing monensin had been fed to the weaners in the yards. While the feed label said the pelleted supplement contained 50mg/kg monensin sodium, lab testing of a sample of the feed showed it contained a much greater level of 220 mg/kg, which would have been lethal to the weaners taken in a large dose over the course of several days.

Cattle can recover from monensin poisoning, but might later die from sudden heart failure, especially if exercised or they become stressed. There were no clinical signs seen in this weaner group except for sudden death, but affected animals may sometimes have watery diarrhoea, dullness and reduced feed intake.

Deaths can occur for extended periods after exposure to toxic levels of monensin has ceased and there is no treatment. In this case, the feed additive was removed and no further losses were reported.



Microscope image of the damaged heart tissue

To prevent ionophore poisoning in livestock:

- Purchase pre-mixed feed in a pellet form from a reliable source and always read the label
- Use feeds containing ionophores only for the species they were made for, and ensure other species are not able to access these feeds
- Seek professional advice and ensure your dosage calculations are correct if you are adding ionophores to your own feed mix.

For further information see our factsheet on [ionophore poisoning](#).

Northern Australia Biosecurity Surveillance project update

The Northern Australia Biosecurity Surveillance (NABS) project is part of the Australian Government's Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper, the government's plan for stronger farmers and a stronger economy.



It is a coordinated surveillance program to enhance the early detection of exotic disease incursions and to provide sufficient surveillance information to underpin proof of freedom from trade-sensitive diseases in northern Australia. It is funded by the Commonwealth Government and supported by the Northern Territory, Western Australian and Queensland jurisdictions and Animal Health Australia.

Subsidised disease investigation reminder

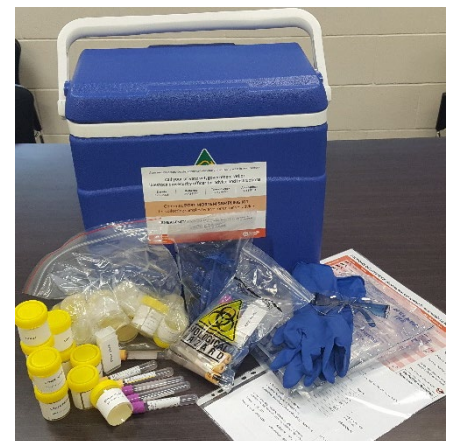
Subsidies of up to **\$2,000** are available for disease investigations in cattle conducted by private vets until June 2019. An additional **\$300** is also available for cattle showing nervous signs where a post-mortem is performed and the brain collected for 'mad cow' exclusion testing.

For investigations in horses and other species, subsidies of up to \$250 are available. Contact your regional vet or livestock biosecurity officer for more information.

Have you got your post-mortem kit yet?

NABS recognises that pastoralists may observe unusual signs of disease in their animals and not be able to have a vet collect samples from affected animals in a timely manner. In order to enable samples to be collected at the time of the disease event, pastoralists are encouraged to collect some samples while they discuss the case with their vets.

To obtain a post-mortem kit for your property, contact your regional livestock biosecurity office. Regional post-mortem workshops will also be throughout the season to learn how to approach a post-mortem and sample collection.



Post-mortem kit

Disease investigation workshops

A 3 hour disease investigation workshop was held in Kununurra in May. Eight properties from the NT and WA were represented at the workshop, which covered an introductory approach to post-mortems, laboratory sampling, humane destruction and the importance of having a biosecurity plan.

In August, over 30 NT producers attended a cattle post-mortem demonstration during the Kidman Springs Field Day. The demonstration showed participants how to open a carcass for post-mortem, the signs of some common cattle diseases, what samples to take and who to contact for advice.

Future workshops are being planned across the NT in the coming months. **To express interest in participating in future workshops**, contact your regional livestock biosecurity office.



Set up for post-mortem demonstration

Vet student placement subsidies

To introduce vet students to opportunities in northern Australia, NABS recently provided three \$2,000 subsidies to veterinary students. The subsidies are intended to assist students with the cost of travel and accommodation for undertaking placements on pastoral properties, with vet practices and placements with DPIR in northern Australia.

Applications for placement subsidies in 2019 will open later this year; contact your regional veterinary officer or livestock biosecurity officer for more information.

Vet student placement report

Written by Jessica Bammann, final year Doctor of Veterinary Medicine student, University of Adelaide

Having grown up on a farm in the Flinders Ranges, SA, I have always had a passion for working with large animals, especially cattle. Therefore, in July 2018 I organised to complete a two-week university placement at the Alice Veterinary Centre in Alice Springs. I had travelled to Alice Springs once before and fell in love with its stunning scenery, so I was keen to get back there.

Travelling to the Northern Territory (NT) would simply not have been possible without a generous subsidy provided to me from the Northern Australian Biosecurity Surveillance Project. It helped enormously to cover my travel and accommodation costs, for which I am extremely grateful.

During my stay at Alice Springs I was fortunate enough to be offered the opportunity to assist in taking blood samples from sentinel cattle and chooks with Peter Saville and Greg Crawford at the Arid Zone Research Institute (AZRI). I enjoyed learning more about how the regular testing of the blood from these animals is used to prove the absence of diseases in the region and to also detect the spread of local and exotic diseases. It highlighted to me how important sentinels are to maintaining and improving the biosecurity status of the NT.

I was also kindly invited by Jocelyn Coventry to receive a tour of the Old Man Plains (OMP) Research Station, owned by the Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry and Resources. OMP is a 522km² property near Alice Springs used to conduct research into various areas, such as fertility and reproductive loss in Droughtmaster cattle. Jocelyn explained how she performs regular 'calf checks' in the breeding season to record observations for her research, including matching calves with their mothers and the different behaviours they display.

The time I spent with Peter, Greg and Jocelyn definitely gave me a better understanding of what it is like to work as a veterinarian in the field of biosecurity. It also gave me a greater appreciation of how important biosecurity is to protecting the Northern Territories' environment, economy and community. I would definitely consider returning to the region to work as a qualified veterinarian in the near future, as I enjoyed the challenges of working in a remote location and would like to get involved in working with Indigenous communities. I would highly recommend any veterinary student to undertake placement in northern Australia, as the experience I gained was like none other.

I would like to again thank Peter, Greg and Jocelyn for giving up their time to teach me about the work performed at AZRI and OMP, the Northern Australian Biosecurity Surveillance Project for offering this subsidy and making this unique experience possible for me, and the Alice Veterinary Centre for hosting me for placement.



Don't feed swill to pigs

There are restrictions on what you can feed pigs to prevent diseases entering or spreading in the NT.

You must not feed pigs any swill that contains material from mammals or poultry, or has come into contact with such material. Swill is considered to be a prohibited pig feed.



Swill feeding

What is swill (prohibited pig feed)?

Swill, the traditional name for all prohibited pig feed, is food waste containing meat or any other mammalian products or by-products, excluding milk. This also includes imported dairy products and any foods that have been in contact with meat, such as leftover vegetables on a plate from a Sunday roast, or even the leftover ham and cheese roll.

It is illegal to feed swill to pigs and strong penalties apply. Strict regulations are in place in every state and territory in Australia. These restrictions apply to everyone, regardless of whether the pigs are bred commercially or as pets.

Australia is fortunate enough to be relatively disease free and imported meat products from other countries may contain viruses that are not found in Australia. It is believed that feeding swill to pigs was the cause of the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in the UK in 2001.

For more information see our [Agnote J61 Don't feed swill to pigs](#) or visit the [Farm Biosecurity website](#).

Contact the livestock biosecurity team

Darwin

Regional Livestock Biosecurity Officer 08 8999 2034
Livestock Biosecurity Officer 08 8999 2030

Katherine

Regional Livestock Biosecurity Officer 08 8973 9767
Livestock Biosecurity Officer 08 8973 9765

Tennant Creek

Principal Livestock Biosecurity Officer 08 8962 4458
Livestock Biosecurity Officer 08 8962 4492

Alice Springs

Senior Field Veterinary Officer 08 8951 8181
Regional Livestock Biosecurity Officer 08 8951 8125

Department website: nt.gov.au/industry/agriculture/livestock