



Animal Health

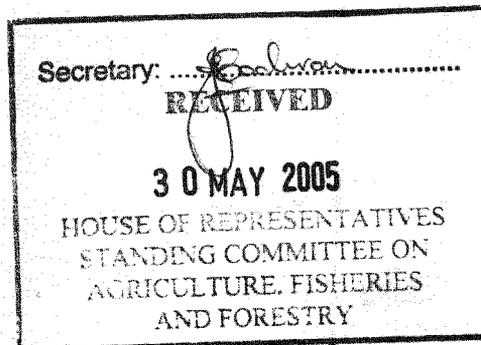
A U S T R A L I A

Australian Animal Health Council Ltd ACN 071 890 956
 Suite 15, 26-28 Napier Close Deakin ACT 2600
 Phone: (02) 6232 5522 Facsimile: (02) 6232 5511
 Email: aahc@aahc.com.au Website: www.aahc.com.au

Our ref: EADP/003/001/A

26 May 2005

The Secretary
 Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Committee
 House of Representatives
 Parliament House
 CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Sir

Inquiry into Rural Skills Training Research and Extension

Animal Health Australia is a not for profit public Company established by government and livestock industries. Our mission is to ensure that Australia's national animal health system delivers a competitive advantage for Australia's livestock industries.

Animal Health Australia's objective is to demonstrate national leadership in achieving:

- A shared vision of the national animal health system
- Auditable national animal health performance standards
- Risk based national animal health priorities
- Enhanced national information management capability

Beneficiaries of a national animal health system that delivers competitive advantage are:

- **Consumers** - improved product quality, security and supply
- **Livestock Producers** - improved market access, productivity and prosperity
- **Animal Health Service Providers** - improved efficiency and effectiveness
- **Other Livestock Industry Stakeholders** - improved opportunities, productivity and prosperity

Australia's livestock industries make a significant contribution to the national economy and are heavily dependant on exports with about 70% of the total value of livestock production being sold on international markets.

A significant aspect of the success of Australia's livestock industries on international markets is the favourable perception of Australia's products in those markets arising from this country's status and reputation as free of many of the major animal diseases that affect the productivity, quality and food safety of livestock and livestock products in countries where they occur.

Protection of this favourable animal health status is a key to maintaining market access for Australia's livestock industries.

Responsibility for animal health matters under the Australian constitution lies with the States and Territories. Increasingly international trade is determined on the basis of national rather than jurisdictional outcomes and arrangements and to respond to this trend the governments of Australia have over the last 50 years or so established cooperative arrangements to address animal health issues that impact upon international market access, on a national basis.

The establishment of Animal Health Australia in 1996 was a significant extension of this trend towards cooperation between jurisdictions to achieve national outcomes with its particular significance lying in the inclusion of the major, national livestock industry associations as equal partners in the initiative.

Animal Health Australia manages a number of national animal health programs. Some of these address generic animal health issues that are of interest to all livestock industries and others address national issues associated with specific diseases that are of interest to one or more but not all livestock industry Members of the Company.

The generic national animal health programs managed by Animal Health Australia address animal disease surveillance, emergency animal disease response preparedness, animal health services and awareness of animal diseases.

As part of its management of the national Emergency Animal Disease Preparedness Program (EADPP) Animal Health Australia has custodianship of the EAD Response Agreement a contract between Animal Health Australia and its Members, that constitutes a national framework for managing responses to emergency animal diseases (EADs) and for sharing the cost of such responses according to the risk that an EAD poses to each of the Parties to the Agreement.

Amongst the obligations of the Parties under the Agreement is a requirement to maintain adequate numbers of personnel trained in EAD response to implement an effective response to an EAD. How a response to an EAD will be conducted and the response roles for which personnel are required to be trained are defined in the National EAD Response plan, AUSVETPLAN.

To assist parties meet their obligations under the EADRA, Animal Health Australia again as part of the EADPP, manages the national EAD Training Program. For a number of years the training program was based on role competencies and courses that had been developed independently within the membership of Animal Health Australia and were not accredited under broader national training arrangements.

Recently Animal Health Australia has been working with the Agri Food Industry Skills Council (formerly the Rural Training Council of Australia) to develop competency standards that will form the basis of nationally recognised emergency disease management training.

As indicated above EAD response capacity is but one aspect of Australia's efforts to ensure that its animal health status continues to provide its livestock industries with a competitive advantage and preferred market access. Animal Health Australia anticipates that in recognition of, first, the multi-faceted nature of Australia's animal health programs and second, increasing expectations on the part of international trading partners for stronger assurances of Australia's favourable animal health status, there will be a requirement to develop and deliver accredited training in facets of animal health management other than and additional to EAD response. In particular such training is likely to be required in the areas of biosecurity planning, risk assessment and risk management and animal health surveillance techniques.

Since 2002 the task of delivering the required EAD training has, on its own, exceeded Animal Health Australia's capacity and we have been working to establish arrangements whereby RTO's could and would be involved in the delivery of training and/or the assessment of participants in the training.

Clearly, Animal Health Australia does not have the capacity to deliver training associated with the proposed additional animal health competencies especially given that these new facets are likely to be relevant to a wider group of stakeholders in the product supply chain than the Membership of the Company alone. The company proposes to work with Members and to develop training resources and arrangements. The broader stakeholder group includes:

- Livestock producers
- Private animal health service providers
- Teaching and research & development organisations
- Livestock value chain participants
- Animal Health Australia
- Consumers

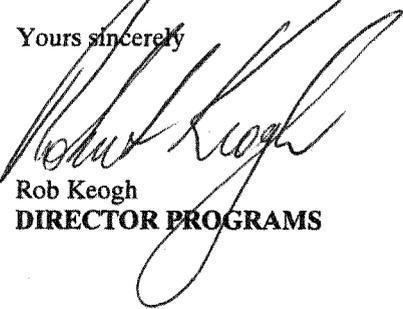
In preparing this submission, Animal Health Australia seeks to ensure that Australia's rural sector, specifically those involved in the animal production supply chain have access to services that can reasonably deliver accredited training in the fields of emergency disease management, animal disease surveillance, and the establishment of biosecurity plans initially at the state and regional level and ultimately at the individual property level.

Accredited training provides a framework for a nationally consistent approach to the development of the skill sets necessary to implement some of the priorities identified previously. Animal Health Australia is also mindful of the need to clearly demonstrate to global trading partners, not only our freedom from disease but the agricultural sector's capacity and capability to manage the risks associated with possible emergency disease incursions. It is our belief that a nationally recognised vocational training sector has the capacity to deliver the training that enables our stakeholders to demonstrate an ability to manage these risks provided our Members are able to access the services of sufficient adequately skilled and qualified trainers and facilitators.

During its association with the Agri Food Industry skills Council, Animal Health Australia has developed confidence in the methodology used to develop competency standards that can be used as the benchmark for performance within rural industries. Animal Health Australia also recognises the need for and importance of continuing to develop competency standards that reflect the skill sets required to manage risk and establish biosecurity protocols. As a member of the Australian Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre, Animal Health Australia provides a conduit for the application of biosecurity research within the agricultural sector. Appropriate training provides the basis for the practical of research findings.

Animal Health Australia recognises that the implementation of the National Animal Health Strategy is the shared responsibility of stakeholders and to that extent governments as well as industry should contribute to both the development of training resources and the effective delivery of training.

Yours sincerely



Rob Keogh
DIRECTOR PROGRAMS