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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aware and alert

New research shows Aussie farmers stepping up on biosecurity

Results of a major producer survey released today reveal that nearly 95% of Australia's crop and livestock farmers undertake biosecurity practices on their property.

More than 1500 plant, grain and livestock farmers participated in the survey commissioned by Animal Health Australia and Plant Health Australia under the Farm Biosecurity initiative, giving the most comprehensive picture yet of Australian producers' attitudes and practices regarding biosecurity.

Building on research undertaken with livestock producers in 2008, this latest Farm Biosecurity survey was the first time plant producers were asked about the measures they take to protect their crops and orchards from diseases, pests and weeds.

Dr Sharyn Taylor, Program Manager of Biosecurity Planning and Implementation at Plant Health Australia says, "It was heartening to discover that 92% of plant producers implement biosecurity practices on their farms.

"Good biosecurity is fundamental to successful farming and it doesn't need to be onerous or expensive – it can be as simple as washing your boots off before leaving a paddock."

Australian farmers see freedom from diseases, pests and weeds, protection of their livelihood and market access as the key benefits of implementing biosecurity practices.

Duncan Rowland, Manager of Biosecurity Planning and Implementation at Animal Health Australia, was encouraged by the steady rise in biosecurity awareness among livestock farmers, 95% of whom implemented protective measures on their properties.

"We've seen substantial increases in a number of biosecurity practices among livestock producers," Mr Rowland said.

"Simple measures such as controlling weeds, isolating new stock or managing the movement of visitors on the property prevent the spread of disease – and so contribute to the wellbeing of the animals, assure the safety of our food and help stop a major disease outbreak from occurring."

The survey also identified a number of gaps in the biosecurity knowledge and practice of farmers. Two-thirds of respondents for instance were not aware that there is a dedicated toll-free number they can call should they notice biosecurity threats on their property.

"If you spot anything that may be considered a risk, please call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline (1800 084 881) or the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline (1800 675 888) immediately," Mr Rowland said.

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For more information, or to arrange an interview, contact Cathy Frazer, PHA, on 0423 000 963, or Martin Blaszczyk, AHA, on 0413 626 373.

Further Information

The Farm Biosecurity Initiative

Farm Biosecurity, a joint program managed by Animal Health Australia (AHA) and Plant Health Australia (PHA), is a national education and engagement campaign which provides producers with information and tools to reduce the risk of diseases, pests and weeds. Producers are encouraged to check their properties regularly and if they see anything unusual to call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881 or the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888. For further information visit www.farmbiosecurity.com.au.

Animal Health Australia

Animal Health Australia is an innovative partnership involving the Australian Government, state and territory governments, major livestock industries and other stakeholders. We work with our members and stakeholders to strengthen Australia's national animal health system and maximise confidence in the safety and quality of Australia's livestock products in domestic and overseas markets. For further information, visit www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au or call (02) 6232 5522.

Plant Health Australia

Plant Health Australia is the national coordinator of the government-industry partnership for plant biosecurity in Australia. As a not-for-profit company, we service the needs of Members and independently advocate on behalf of the national plant biosecurity system. Our efforts enhance Australia's plant health status, assist trade, safeguard the livelihood of producers and support the sustainability and profitability of our plant industries and the communities that rely upon them. For further information, visit www.phau.com.au or call (02) 6215 7700.

Hotlines

The Exotic Plant Pest Hotline (1800 084 881) and the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline (1800 675 888) are free-call telephone services provided for people to report unusual plant and animal pests and diseases. The hotlines allow callers to directly report suspect detections to an area where action can be taken by knowledgeable staff.

