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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Leading Farmers Brighten Biosecurity Landscape

Michael Blake of Bally Glunin Park, Victoria, and Lachlan Dobson of Kimberly Produce, Western Australia, are leading Australia's farmers towards better biosecurity.

Both Michael and Lachlan won first prize in Australia's inaugural Biosecurity Farmer of the Year Awards held in Sydney September 21 – Lachlan for Plant Biosecurity and Michael for Animal Biosecurity.

Biosecurity is vital to Australia's food security and food safety. It involves the exclusion, management and eradication of unwanted biological pests and diseases. Despite its importance for productivity, product quality and trade, however, a study soon to be released by Plant Health Australia (PHA) and Animal Health Australia (AHA) under the Farm Biosecurity initiative has found that one in five Australian producers still don't know what the term 'biosecurity' means.

"This is one reason why PHA is happy to be supporting Australia's inaugural Biosecurity Farmer of the Year Awards. Lachlan's holistic, community-based approach to biosecurity not only contributes to the success of his farm Kimberly Produce, it also educates and inspires other growers who are yet to realise the value of good biosecurity," says Kyle Thoms, PHA's General Manager - Corporate Strategy & Communication.

Dr Mike Bond, CEO of AHA, agrees, "The awards provided the opportunity to recognise some of Australia's most determined producers. The finalists set a very high standard and Michael Blake and Lachlan Dobson are deserving winners and exemplary biosecurity 'champions'."

Each of the six finalists demonstrated outstanding passion, innovation and commitment to better biosecurity practices.

Queensland's Kerwee Lot Feeders were selected as finalists for designing and implementing a specialised comprehensive biosecurity plan for their farm, Berewick.

Peter and Sandra Young, also from Queensland, made it to the finals for introducing biocontrol agents to augment their integrated pest management system and for controlling the access of people, vehicles and equipment to their property, Birdwood Nursery.

Finalist Terry Hayes of New South Wales was selected for his controlled grazing and biopsy trials, where sheep were followed over a four year period to better understand the affects ovine Johne's disease on his farm, Hillwood.

Queensland's Angus Woods made it to the final round for creating a full traceability quality assurance biosecurity system, significantly contributing to the success of his enterprise, Woods Pastoral.

"The calibre and passion of the finalists was highlighted by the judges. The finalists are enthusiastic ambassadors for biosecurity and the agriculture industry and all of them should be congratulated," says Dr Bond.

"Producers can't be expected to improve biosecurity standards on their farms without understanding why it is a business imperative," says Mr Thoms. "Each of this year's finalists, by their commitment to improving biosecurity on their farms, has shown that there is a return for effort and that biosecurity makes good business sense. Following their lead, we hope that others too will see the benefits and find out more about what can be done to better manage pest, disease and weed threats."

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For more information, or to arrange an interview, contact Sophie Winton, PHA, (02) 6215 7711 or Thea McNaught-Reynolds, AHA, (02) 6203 3942.

Further Information

Kimberly Produce

Kimberly Produce is a successful farming enterprise located in the Ord River Irrigation Area, Kununurra, Western Australia. Kimberly Produce is home to Lachlan Dobson, winner of the 2010 Biosecurity Farmer of the Year Award, where he manages 120,000 mango trees and 80,000 red flesh grapefruit trees. Lachlan has had a long and successful career as a champion for biosecurity in Western Australia. He was involved in development of the Western Australian Banana Industry Biosecurity Plan and the OrdGuard Regional Biosecurity Plan, which takes a whole of community approach to managing pest, disease and weed threats. Lachlan is current chairman of OrdGuard.

Bally Glunin Park

Bally Glunin Park is a family owned grazing and farming property situated on 1800 hectares in Hamilton, Victoria. Bally Glunin Park produces ultrafine and superfine Merino wool, prime lambs, yearling and mature beef as well as grain and fodder for supplementary feeding. Owner Michal Blake, winner of the 2010 Biosecurity Farmer of the Year Award, harbours a strong commitment to farm safety and sustainable production systems at Bally Glunin Park, while demonstrating continual support of rural research and development.

The Farm Biosecurity Initiative

The Farm Biosecurity campaign, a joint program managed by Animal Health Australia (AHA) and Plant Health Australia (PHA), is a national education and engagement campaign which helps producers 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

AHA 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 biosecurity in Australia operates as a partnership between government and industries. PHA facilitates this partnership and drives action to improve policy, practice and performance of Australia's plant biosecurity system and to build capability to respond to plant pest emergencies. The company's efforts bring benefits to Members by enhancing Australia's plant health status, assisting trade, safeguarding the livelihood of producers and supporting the future of Australia's plant industries and the communities that rely upon them. For further information, visit www.phau.com.au or call (02) 6215 7700.

