

29 March 2010

Australia's dairy herd close to EBL eradication

Fifteen years of hard work is shaping up to deliver a pay-off for the Australian dairy industry, and a sigh of relief.

The entire Australian dairy herd has been tested to meet the Australian criteria for *provisional freedom* from enzootic bovine leucosis (EBL), after one-and-a-half decades of an eradication program.

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Tony Burke said "Every time Australia receives disease-free status, new markets open up around the world.

"This is another success story for the Australian dairy industry which is already exporting to South East Asia, Japan and the Middle East."

Australia's dairy export sector is valued at \$2.9 billion a year. EBL is a viral disease, specific to cattle, that has no effective treatment or vaccine; it causes productivity loss and results in restricted trade of cattle and milk products from affected herds and regions.

South Australian dairy farmer and Chair of the Australian Dairy Farmers Animal Health and Welfare Committee, David Basham, said this is a milestone achievement for industry and animal health.

"To achieve *provisional free* status is a testament to the hard work and close collaboration between dairy farmers, processors, veterinary practitioners and animal health authorities.

"It's also really important to recognise the returns to investment for industry. The payoff will be in market access and dramatically reducing costs of EBL monitoring."

The role of biosecurity

However, Mr Basham says farmers shouldn't become complacent – there are risks of EBL re-occurrence particularly from contact with beef cattle.

"We farmers need to use biosecurity principles to ensure we get to actual eradication.

"There are risk factors for re-introduction of EBL to a dairy herd, and by putting in place several logical, simple measures we should be able to confirm EBL *disease free* status in 2012."

For more information on Farm Biosecurity visit www.farmbiosecurity.com.au



A concerted nationwide push during the past 18 months involving regular testing of milk from dairy herds and culling of infected animals has achieved the *provisionally free* status. Further testing over the next three years is required to demonstrate disease freedom.

Mr Basham says farmers need to continue doing the right thing to achieve *freedom* status and then maintain that status.

Mr Basham has a checklist of preventative biosecurity measures:

1. Introducing new beef cattle to the farm – ensure any purchased or acquired stock are from an EBL free property or area; if introducing cattle from herds without an EBL status, testing (via a blood test) is recommended prior to moving
2. Equipment disinfection – any and all husbandry tools that are used, e.g. dehorner, need to be properly disinfected between every use to minimise any risk of cross-infection
3. Needles – a new needle should be used for every vaccine or injection for every animal

“These practices are also relevant to a range of other diseases of dairy herds – we need to have biosecurity in our daily thinking and make it a daily farm management practice.”

If you see anything unusual on your property call the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888 or the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.

For more information, see:

<http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au>

For information about farm biosecurity measures you can take, see

<http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au>