

# Preparing your business to survive an emergency animal disease outbreak

## A 30-Minute Plan for Grazing Enterprises

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## About this document

The likelihood of emergency animal diseases (EADs) such as foot-and-mouth disease, anthrax and bluetongue is low but when outbreaks do occur, they have a serious impact on livestock grazing businesses. An EAD could result in an immediate reduction in export markets and restrictions on livestock movements, and (in the case of a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak) an initial national livestock ‘standstill’. Infected or at-risk properties may also require livestock to be culled to help stop the disease from spreading. Would your business survive?

This planning tool will assist you to develop an EAD survival plan. Thirty minutes spent completing this plan could improve the resilience of your business if an EAD occurs. You may even discover some useful ideas for improving the every-day operation of your business. Just follow the four steps provided (note that a more detailed guide on risk management planning for an EAD is also available, see the reference section). Further resources to help your planning include industry biosecurity plans and AUSVETPLAN manuals (also listed in the reference section) and Livestock Biosecurity Network contacts.

## Step 1: Think about your business

An EAD could disrupt sales and purchases, as well as the people, organisations and businesses you depend on. Completing the table below will help you identify the areas in your business (e.g. products and inputs) that may be vulnerable.

*What areas of your business may be vulnerable?*

1. Key products and customers	<i>For example: livestock, wool, hay, feedlots</i>
2. Key inputs and suppliers	<i>For example: feed, veterinary supplies, fuel, staff, contractors, power and water</i>
3. Key support services and service providers	<i>For example: consultants, agents, saleyards, transporters, mechanics, vets, accountants, IT support, abattoirs, financial institution, insurance broker and industry organisations</i>
4. Key regulators	<i>For example: local council, Department of Primary Industries (DPI or equivalent), Environment Protection Authority (EPA).</i>

## **Step 2: Understand the risks**

Following the detection and confirmation of an EAD, a range of movement restrictions will be implemented. These restrictions may be widespread (e.g. a national livestock standstill) or more localised in the form of declared areas (restricted areas) around infected and at-risk premises. A national livestock standstill is a publicly announced ban on all movement of susceptible animals. This type of standstill is declared by authorities to allow them to assess where the disease already is without the situation getting worse through continuing movements.

### ***It is a criminal offence to move stock during a livestock standstill.***

Individual premises may also be placed in quarantine by government authorities. The restrictions may affect a producer's ability to sell or move livestock, products, feed and supplies. Property visits by people and vehicles may be restricted or may require strict biosecurity<sup>1</sup> protocols to be observed (e.g. use of personal protective equipment or vehicle wash downs). Depending on the type of disease and the response policy, livestock from affected or at-risk properties may also be subjected to humane culling operations for which compensation would be paid according to the provisions in the AUSVETPLAN Valuation and Compensation Manual. Alternatively, livestock may require emergency vaccination. Depending on your location, ongoing disease control and eradication arrangements may constrain or restrict your business activities for days, weeks, months or even years.

*Could your business survive the following?*

1. an outbreak of an EAD on your property requiring all of your livestock to be culled
2. a reduction in export markets and the loss of income, staff and suppliers
3. movement restrictions on your livestock, products, fodder, vehicles and equipment
4. emergency disease control activities (such as vaccination or culling) requiring your time, equipment and other resources
5. increased workload (e.g. for livestock that cannot be moved, and meeting requirements to demonstrate ethically responsible behaviour towards staff, the environment and the local community).

## **Step 3: Identify actions to take**

The tables in this document list actions you can take to address each of the risks described in Step 2. Many of the actions are simply good business-improvement practices, regardless of the risk of an EAD outbreak.

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<sup>1</sup> Biosecurity is defined here as “a set of measures for protecting a population from infectious diseases at the national, regional and farm level.” (Source: [farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://farmbiosecurity.com.au))

Look through the list to identify actions that could potentially minimise the impact of an EAD on your business. The list may prompt you to think of other steps you could take and you should write these in the space provided.

### Risk 1: Infection of livestock

The best way to minimise the impact of any disease is to avoid infection in the first place by practising good biosecurity (see the links to online industry biosecurity manuals at the end of this document). However, if the disease is present in your herd, the immediate goal will be to prevent further spread with the assistance of animal health authorities. Remember that you have a legal obligation to report suspicions of notifiable diseases<sup>2</sup>. This can be done by calling the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888, or contacting your local veterinarian or the nearest department of primary industries or agriculture. Early detection and reporting of disease is essential to minimise the impact of an EAD. Staff must also be made aware of the penalties imposed for not reporting suspicions of an EAD.

Actions for addressing Risk 1: Infection of livestock	Priority? Tick if yes.
<b>Before an outbreak</b>	
1. Train staff in disease recognition, biosecurity and hygiene, including procedures for reporting suspicions of notifiable disease. If there is ever any doubt, immediately contact your local veterinarian. The Farm Biosecurity website has a section (at <a href="http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/livestock/">www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/livestock/</a> ) on livestock that may assist with training. Develop systems that reward good biosecurity practice and make it part of the workplace culture.	
2. Adopt your industry standards for biosecurity to protect both your herd/flock and your business. Review farm biosecurity (around animal, people, fodder and vehicle movements, and boundary fences) and consider getting the assistance of a veterinarian or biosecurity expert to develop, implement or upgrade biosecurity plans. Assess whether visitors present a risk and manage their contact with your animals.	
3. Train staff so they understand the farm biosecurity plan and follow best practice for hygiene measures.	
4. Ensure your biosecurity plan makes someone responsible for regular review of disease information and keeping up-to-date with industry biosecurity plans.	
5. Record and keep displayed or saved in your phone (for fast access) the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline number (1800 675 888) and the number of your local district or private veterinarian (or equivalent).	
6. Display wall maps of the property and surrounding areas.	
7. Assess whether facilities for handling and restraining animals—for close inspection and sampling (to detect disease)—are adequate to permit efficient processing of stock and make any necessary improvements. Animals must be able to be adequately restrained to avoid injury to the animal and handlers.	
8. Assess whether infrastructure and equipment for cleaning and disinfection of equipment, materials, vehicles and buildings are adequate or need improvement,	

<sup>2</sup> A list of notifiable animal diseases is available at:  
[http://www.daff.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/1015075/notifiable.pdf](http://www.daff.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/1015075/notifiable.pdf)

and take action. Consult the AUSVETPLAN manual on decontamination for information on requirements for different diseases. This manual can be accessed via the Operational Manuals link in the References section of this document.	
9. Think about how you source and access disease information and review your IT hardware and internet access, or subscribe to health news alerts on smart phones for early warning of disease outbreaks. One website that provides alerts of animal disease outbreaks near you is <a href="http://www.outbreak.gov.au">www.outbreak.gov.au</a>	
10. Bookmark the AUSVETPLAN website where you can quickly access a whole suite of disease management materials providing advice on individual animal diseases and on procedures for valuation and compensation, humane destruction and disposal, wild animal control, and decontamination. Consider, in addition, keeping hard copies or saved files of these documents.	
11. Establish and use effective quarantine (isolation) facilities on the farm for newly-arrived or sick livestock.	
<b><u>During an outbreak</u></b>	
12. Check the website <a href="http://www.outbreak.gov.au">www.outbreak.gov.au</a> for the latest official information and monitor the location of the outbreak through reports.	
13. Talk to your neighbours, local community groups and family for support.	
14. Remain alert to updates via the media, local vets and government officers.	
15. <i>Other?</i>	

**Risk 2: Overseas export market closures and the loss of income and staff**  
EAD outbreaks often cause market closures, and the subsequent loss of income and staff impose severe financial hardship on grazing enterprises and related businesses (even those located a long distance from the outbreak). Actions taken before a period of financial hardship to improve resilience can mean the difference between whether your business survives or not.

<b>Actions for addressing Risk 2: Market closures, loss of income and staff</b>	<b>Priority? Tick if yes.</b>
<b><u>Before an outbreak</u></b>	
1. Think about your cash flow and financial reserves and investigate ways of accessing finance if an emergency did arise.	
2. Strengthen working relationships with your bank or other financial institutions, and accounting and legal firms, including making them aware that you have considered risk management planning processes, including those targeting EADs.	
3. Talk to your suppliers so they understand there could be a delay in payments if an emergency such as an EAD occurred. If possible, negotiate arrangements for payment during a business shock (such as that from a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak).	
4. Introduce labour-saving devices and technologies to improve business efficiency and your ability to cope with the additional livestock handling and decontamination requirements imposed by an EAD outbreak.	
5. Through training develop a multi-skilled, self-reliant workforce able to cope with stress and able to perform multiple roles in an emergency. For more assistance with training or available courses, contact your industry body, the Livestock	

Biosecurity Network (02 6269 5623), or view information online at: <a href="http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/programs/training-programs/">http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/programs/training-programs/</a>	
6. Review staff contracts. Do the terms allow for additional hours in the case of an emergency? Do clauses restrict your ability to lay-off staff temporarily or in the event of exceptional circumstances?	
7. Develop a plan for orderly staff lay-offs and for re-employment once the outbreak ends and your business returns to normal.	
8. Maintain links with industry organisations and local community as their support will be invaluable during an EAD outbreak.	
9. Review your property's insurance and lease agreements to determine the implications of an EAD outbreak for these and to ensure policies are up to date.	
10. Know your neighbours, customers, suppliers, and suppliers of suppliers (so you can better predict the impact of an outbreak on these business stakeholders—which will in turn affect your business).	
<b><u>During an outbreak</u></b>	
11. Use rosters to avoid staff burn-out for those assisting with response efforts.	
12. Be prepared to perform alternative off-farm work to maintain cash flow.	
13. If requested, be prepared to assist authorities responsible for controlling the spread of the EAD.	
14. <i>Other?</i>	

### Risk 3: Movement restrictions and feed shortages

A major principle of eradicating an EAD is stopping the movements of people, animals and things that could spread the disease. Depending on proximity to the outbreak, farms may be placed under movement restrictions for months, making it very difficult to manage the supply of feed to livestock and to move products such as wool from the farm.

<b>Actions for addressing Risk 3: Movement restrictions and feed shortages</b>	<b>Priority? Tick if yes.</b>
<b><u>Before an outbreak</u></b>	
1. Make plans to deal with a backlog of stock and/or wool on your farm, including performing orderly disposal, if required.	
2. Consider options to deal with feed shortages (such as increasing storage and reserves through silos, haysheds and silage), identify options for obtaining feed locally if needed (e.g. local grain or hay producers).	
3. Record state and territory government livestock authority contact details so that you can promptly apply for permits to move livestock if a national livestock standstill is declared.	
4. Develop a plan for staying fully informed about movement restrictions during an EAD.	
5. Provide negotiation training for senior managers so they are better prepared for potentially difficult conversations with suppliers, customers, neighbours and other business stakeholders.	

6. Preserve valuable genetics by harvesting and freezing semen and/or embryos.	
<b>During an outbreak</b>	
7. Consult your local DPI to obtain advice on the routine movement of product while minimising the spread of disease.	
8. Consult state authorities for advice on how to manage the essential movements of the herd between different sections of the property during a livestock standstill as restrictions may apply.	
9. <i>Other?</i>	

#### Risk 4: Managing disease control activities

Eradication of an EAD requires cooperation with animal health authorities to conduct surveillance, tracing, vaccination, valuation, animal destruction, carcass disposal, pest control, cleaning and disinfection. The ability of your farm to comply and assist with these disease control activities during an EAD will have some influence on the time it will take to return to normal business—for you, the community and the industry.

<b>Actions for addressing Risk 4: Managing disease control activities</b>	<b>Priority? Tick if yes.</b>
<b>Before an outbreak</b>	
<b>General</b>	
1. Identify (in advance) a senior staff member to oversee any actions required by the veterinary team responding to an EAD.	
<b>For surveillance, tracing and handling/vaccination</b>	
2. Plan the provision of biosecurity facilities (e.g. wash-down sites) for staff and surveillance teams.	
3. Ensure facilities for inspecting, handling and vaccinating animals are adequate.	
4. Provide staff training in low-stress animal handling.	
5. Ensure record keeping/information systems permit rapid retrieval and reporting of livestock health, movements and numbers, and include systems for sending data off-site without having to physically leave the property.	
6. Save the Emergency Animal Disease Watch hotline number (1800 675 888) in your mobile phone and ensure it is also prominently displayed in common work areas.	
7. Ensure efficient traceability systems are in place.	
<b>For valuation and compensation</b>	
8. If practical, install weighing scales.	
9. Keep good records of purchases and sales.	
10. Ensure financial systems allow retrieval of relevant data.	
11. Take video footage or pictures of the premises, infrastructure, equipment, livestock, landscape and other assets to support valuation.	
<b>For animal destruction and disposal</b>	
12. Consider where burial, composting and/or incineration sites could be located on your property.	
13. Have a control plan for feral and scavenging animals.	

14. Implement best practice policies for workplace safety. For advice, refer to the transport and slaughter section of the <i>OHS Reference Guide Australian Meat Industry</i> (a link is provided in the references here). Advice and training resources for developing policy are also available from state and territory workplace safety bodies.	
<b><i>For feral animal control</i></b>	
15. Monitor and control feral animal populations using humane and legal means.	
16. Rodent-proof feed storages.	
17. Manage dead-animal pits to prevent scavenging.	
<b><i>For decontamination</i></b>	
18. Ensure cleanliness and tidiness of the premises to facilitate rapid decontamination.	
19. Ensure the layout and design of premises and wash-down sites are convenient and provide for rapid cleaning with minimal damage to infrastructure.	
20. Have reserve water storage capacity in place to meet the increased clean water requirements of decontamination.	
21. Plan for isolation and decontamination of potentially infected animal products on site e.g. wool bales.	
22. Consider where and how you could decontaminate heavy equipment (e.g. trucks) on your property.	
<b><u>During an outbreak</u></b>	
23. Ensure adequate supply and storage of clean water and disinfectant for decontamination requirements. Check the relevant AUSVETPLAN Disease Strategy Manual for the appropriate disinfectant/decontamination agent to be used for the EAD outbreak.	
24. Where possible, seal transport trucks to prevent leakage of manure or urine if animals are permitted to be transported.	
25. <i>Other?</i>	

## Risk 5: Managing your obligations and responsibilities

EADs cause severe disruption and hardship to farms and related businesses in many ways, all of which will attract intense public scrutiny. Support from other farmers, community organisations, government agencies and other groups become very important during and after the event. Failing to 'do the right thing' can cause difficulties for your business, even long after the outbreak is over.

<b>Actions for addressing Risk 5: Managing your obligations and responsibilities</b>	<b>Priority? Tick if yes.</b>
<b><u>Before an outbreak</u></b>	
1. Ensure staff are aware of, and adhere to, codes of practice and/or standards for animal welfare, especially sections relating to land transport (see the link at the	



end of this document) and humane animal handling—available online at <a href="http://www.publish.csiro.au/nid/22/sid/11.htm">http://www.publish.csiro.au/nid/22/sid/11.htm</a>	
<b>During an outbreak</b>	
2. Ensure staff cooperate with response teams.	
3. Work with industry organisations and support industry spokespeople by directing media to a central point to safeguard the reputation of your business and the industry.	
4. Manage staff stress and ensure workplace safety standards are maintained.	
5. Keep good records of disease control measures and other activities on your property during the response.	
6. Participate in community organisations such as the local fire brigade and state emergency services, or service organisations such as the CWA, Rotary and Red Cross, that provide emergency assistance to farmers and others.	
7. Ensure good working relationships with government animal health, environmental and work safety authorities as well as Industry Livestock Biosecurity Network officers and Industry Liaison Officers. Have them advise and assist the business to operate within the law.	
8. If practical, make staff available to assist other businesses with disease control activities.	
9. <i>Other?</i>	

#### Step 4: Write down your action plan

Finally, in the table below, write down the actions you have identified as important, when they should be implemented, and who is responsible for them.

##### Your EAD survival plan

Action	Target date	Person responsible
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		
14.		

## Other resources

For further information to help you complete this plan, you might want to refer to the detailed risk management planning manual below (available online):

- Preparing your business to survive: A risk management planning manual for an emergency animal disease outbreak. This document is available online at the following websites:
  - [www.woolproducers.com.au](http://www.woolproducers.com.au)
  - [www.woolindustries.org/fawo.htm](http://www.woolindustries.org/fawo.htm)
  - [www.cattlecouncil.com.au](http://www.cattlecouncil.com.au)
  - [www.sheepmeatcouncil.com.au](http://www.sheepmeatcouncil.com.au)
- Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines 2013, Land Transport of Livestock, page 23: <http://www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au/files/2011/02/Land-transport-of-livestock-Standards-and-Guidelines-Version-1.-1-21-September-2012.pdf>

## Industry Resources

- National Farm Biosecurity Reference Manual: Grazing Livestock Production: <http://farmbiosecurity.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/National-Farm-Biosecurity-Reference-Manual-Grazing-Livestock-Production.pdf>
- Farm Biosecurity for Livestock Producers: <http://www.farmbiosecurity.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Farm-Biosecurity-for-Livestock-Producers.pdf>
- Occupational Health and Safety Reference Guide Australian Meat Industry: <http://mintrac-whs.com.au/wp-content/uploads/OHS-Reference-Guide-Part4.pdf>

## AUSVETPLAN Documents

- Operational Procedure Manuals
  - <http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/programs/emergency-animal-disease-preparedness/ausvetplan/operational-procedures-manuals/>
  - Valuation and Compensation: <http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/vac11final.pdf>
- Disease Strategies
  - <http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/programs/emergency-animal-disease-preparedness/ausvetplan/disease-strategies/>
- Enterprise manuals
  - Wool, at <http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/programs/emergency-animal-disease-preparedness/ausvetplan/enterprise-manuals/>

## The Livestock Biosecurity Network

- Head office (Canberra): (ph) 02 6269 5623, (email) [info@lbn.org.au](mailto:info@lbn.org.au), (website) [www.lbn.org.au](http://www.lbn.org.au)

**And remember, if you spot suspicious disease symptoms, contact the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888.**



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