

# FARM BIOSECURITY

## 2020 Producer Survey Summary

### Background and summary

Animal Health Australia (AHA) and Plant Health Australia (PHA), through our partnership in the Farm Biosecurity Program, are committed to undertaking regular producer surveys to track trends in attitudes towards farm biosecurity and measure producer awareness of the program and its key messages.

The most recent survey was commissioned and conducted in 2020 and was undertaken by the KG2 rural research company. The survey was designed so that results could be compared with similar results from the surveys conducted in 2010, 2013 and 2017.

The survey was conducted in March–June 2020, by telephone, involving a total 1,209 producers across the main producer groups of livestock and crops. Producers interviewed did not include hobby or ‘lifestyle’ farmers.

The following is a summary of the survey’s key findings. The results show some positive changes in attitudes to practicing on-farm biosecurity and a greater awareness about the Farm Biosecurity Program specifically. Equally, this summary identifies areas where improvements can be made to increase producer awareness and use of on-farm biosecurity measures. With four datasets over 10 years, definite trends are emerging, giving us confidence in the results.

For AHA and PHA, as partners in delivering the Farm Biosecurity Program, this survey will be a valuable tool in guiding future strategic directions with the aim of improving awareness and practice of biosecurity amongst Australian livestock and crop producers to help them secure their farm and their business future.

\*The information contained in this summary is a guide only. Please contact [info@phau.com.au](mailto:info@phau.com.au) or [aha@animalhealthaustralia.com.au](mailto:aha@animalhealthaustralia.com.au) if you wish to verify or use any data in this summary.

QUESTION CATEGORY	SUMMARY OF PRODUCER RESPONSES
<p><b>Understanding of the term ‘biosecurity’</b></p> <p>The overall level of understanding of the term ‘biosecurity’ amongst Australian producers in 2020 was similar to that in 2017.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Without any prompting, 57% of all producers surveyed related the term ‘controlling diseases, pests and weeds’ to biosecurity. There has been a stepwise increase from the 37% who reported this in 2010, and 47% in 2013, to 56 and 57% in 2017 and 2020.</li> <li>• A further 19% thought, without prompting, that biosecurity meant ‘border protection/quarantine’. This was similar to the results in 2010, 2013 and 2017.</li> <li>• There is a growing trend for producers to define biosecurity as ‘good farm management practices’, from 8% in 2010 to 18% in 2020.</li> <li>• There was a further reduction in the proportion of producers surveyed who responded ‘nothing’ or ‘don’t know’ when they hear the term ‘biosecurity’. The answer ‘don’t know’ has decreased stepwise from 21% in 2010, to 15% in 2013, 8% in 2017 and almost zero in 2020.</li> <li>• When prompted with four different statements to choose from, 92% of all respondents identified ‘Measures taken to protect farm production from disease, pests and weeds’ as the best definition of biosecurity. There has been an incremental increase in this response from 79% in 2010, to 87, 88 and 92% in the following surveys.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Practices undertaken to protect crops and livestock</b></p> <p>Most producers surveyed continued to implement many of the same practices they reported in 2010, 2013 and 2017. When prompted about activities undertaken <b>in the last three years</b> there were significant increases in the practices of ‘monitoring crops and livestock’ and ‘controlling crop and livestock pests and diseases’.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A broad range of activities were reported by producers in answer to the unprompted question about <b>current practices</b> undertaken to protect crops or livestock from diseases, pests and weeds.</li> <li>• At 31%, ‘controlling weeds’ remained the most reported practice by producers.</li> <li>• There has been an increase in the number of all producers who reported ‘control visitor movement on the property’ (9, 14, 13, 30%) and ‘restrict access to property’ (11, 14, 16, 25%). ‘Livestock’ producers were above average, with 34% and 30% respectively for these activities (nationally).</li> <li>• When prompted about biosecurity practices undertaken <b>in the last three years</b>, answers indicated further increases since 2010 for record keeping, monitoring stored products, checking the health status when purchasing new planting material and livestock, restricting access to properties, controlling feral animals, and controlling visitor movement on property.</li> <li>• Notably, ‘monitoring crops and/or livestock’, and ‘controlling crop and/or livestock pests and diseases’ increased from 44 and 58% in 2017, to 96 and 97% in 2020.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Sources of animal health, crop protection &amp; biosecurity information</b></p>	
<p>Producers seek and gather information from a wide variety of sources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As seen previously, producers reported using many sources of information on animal or crop protection, tending to fall along producer lines – vets for livestock producers (38%) and agronomists for plant and grain producers (31% and 51% respectively).</li> <li>• Departments of primary industry (31%) and industry bodies (27%) were the most important sources overall. Rural press, however, was being used less as a source of information, from 25% in 2017 to 9% in 2020.</li> <li>• When asked what information was needed about biosecurity, the top answers were ‘pest and disease types and symptoms’ (steady at 33% from 2017 to 2020), ‘what are the risks and how to identify them’ (10% in 2017, to 26% in 2020) and biosecurity warnings and alerts (down from 33% in 2017, to 22% in 2020). ‘Solutions/practices to reduce risk/prevent disease’ was steady at 17%.</li> <li>• A growing number of producers wanted information about regulations and legal obligations, increasing from 2 and 3% in 2013 and 2017, to 16% in 2020.</li> <li>• 67% of producers overall preferred to receive information by email in 2020, increasing from 34, 48 and 53% in 2010, 2013 and 2017 respectively.</li> <li>• Fewer producers tended to prefer a ‘hard copy in the mail’ (22%) or ‘on a website’ (14%). There has also been a steady decrease in producers who preferred face to face ‘one-on-one’ information sessions or ‘meetings’ (7 and 4% in 2020).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Use of social media</b></p>	
<p>A growing number of producers are using social media platforms to view or share biosecurity information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions about social media use have only been asked in the 2017 and 2020 surveys.</li> <li>• Facebook was the most-used platform by producers (45% up from 14%) followed by YouTube (27% up from 5%), Instagram (15% up from 4%) and Twitter (11% up from 3%). However, 43% of producers used no social platform.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Awareness of the Farm Biosecurity Program</b></p>	
<p>Awareness of the Farm Biosecurity Program has increased since 2010.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A total of 60% of respondents said they had heard of the Farm Biosecurity Program, up from 40% in 2017, 36% in 2013 and 28% in 2010. Awareness was 54% amongst plant producers, 64% of grain producers and 70% of livestock producers.</li> <li>• When asked where they had heard about it, 34% (up from 25% in 2017) said via an industry association.</li> </ul>
<p><b>On-farm biosecurity monitoring</b></p>	

When asked who monitors crops or livestock for disease or pests, most producers identified themselves or their family or staff. There has been an increase in the use of a range of different people for monitoring activities.

- 93% of all producers did their own monitoring, while 78% relied on family or staff, which is more than 67% reported in 2017, and 31% reported in 2013.
- 48% of all producers monitored daily, but it varied from 28% of grain producers, to 41% of crop producers, and 52% of livestock producers.
- 67% of producers overall relied on an agronomist or cropping consultant in 2020, up from 36, 25 and 23 and 36% in 2017, 2013 and 2010, respectively. 89% of grain growers relied on an agronomist or crop consultant.
- The use of a vet or animal consultant by livestock producers also increased from 15% in 2013, to 25% in 2017, and 52% in 2020.

### Identifying and reporting new or unusual pests and diseases

Almost all producers surveyed said they would report an unusual pest or disease on their property.

- Producers reported a variety of ways to identify a pest or disease. Most grain producers (72%) and plant producers (49%) named an agronomist or advisor, while 55% of livestock producers named a vet.
- Use of the internet to search for information is 21% in 2020, having increased from 10%, to 12% and 22% in 2013, 2017 and 2020.
- Nearly all producers said they would report a new pest or disease found on their property.
- Departments of primary industries were still favoured by most producers to report a pest or disease at 52%, similar to 53% in 2017, but down from 59% in 2013 and 65% in 2010.
- 41% of livestock producers would report to a vet, while 47% of grain growers would report it to an agronomist or local consultant, and 55% of plant producers favoured a department of primary industry.

### Benefits of implementing biosecurity practices

'Freedom from diseases, pests and weeds' and 'protection of incomes and livelihoods' were the most often cited reasons to implement biosecurity practices.

- 'Freedom from diseases, pests and weeds' was the main benefit, reported by 51% of producers.
- The next most reported benefit was 'protect livelihood/income' at 36%.
- 'Continued or improved market access' was at 13%.