



NABS network – people and approaches

The NABS Masterclass in Broome last week was a great opportunity for vets across Northern Australia to connect. Thanks to Andrew Larkins and Graham Mackereth (and DIPRD WA) for all the organisation and lots of the content.

13 of the 33 participants were new to the NABS network – so welcome to all.

Bryce Mooring walked us through his use of the new [NABS Repto Disease Investigation Guidelines](#) and Richard Loh from the WA Lab described the best samples and diagnostic tests to use, and [causes of reproductive failure](#) at different stages of the reproductive cycle.

We had an update on Exotic Animal Diseases of importance in northern Australia and Graham gave us epi tips and traps to enhance any outbreak investigation – also helpful now we are following coronavirus so closely too!



The NABS network started in Feb 2018, and in 2 years we've achieved a lot. More than 70 SDIs have been submitted and there are a heap of [resources to use](#).. There are now 21 practices 'signed up' across northern Australia (network practice and lab locations on the map below) and we are getting to know each other pretty well.

If you have others in your business or lab who would like to receive this newsletter, do send it on to them - and encourage them to subscribe – easy online: [join here](#)

Cheers Kev

Newsletter #18 (18 March 2020)



NABS SDIs (private and govt)



Message today from Cass Wittwer

Given the risk of COVID-19 spread, the Department has issued a directive for staff to cease all non-essential travel - as such our upcoming surveillance and training activities have been postponed for the time being. This means our ability to collect samples for routine animal health surveillance data and provide face-to-face training information to stakeholders is on hold.

So now more than ever we are relying on the NABS vets and your clients to be vigilant in reporting animal health concerns and investigating where appropriate, *whilst maintaining precautions for your own and others' health*. One positive out of cancelling our surveillance activities is that we can redirect that budget towards SDIs, so keep them coming!!



12 steers in a mob of 300 die of obstructive urolithiasis

In January 2020 in northern Qld, approximately a dozen 2yr old Brahman steers became ill and died over a period of a week. All were around a water trough with a malfunctioning windmill.

Steers were lethargic, walking with heads down and tails out, bloated and dribbling urine. Gross PM findings confirmed obstructive urolithiasis. Lab analysis of the calculi showed they were calcium carbonate with traces of calcium oxalate.

Immediate recommendations addressed the volume of water available and distance to walk to feed. Follow-up has covered mineral testing of water and checking if there had been consumption of high oxalate plants.

[Read more](#)

Epi tips – thumb rules from Graham Mackereth

- * **A putative source should be seen in 70% of cases**
 - most, eg 70%, cases should have the factor/agent you are considering, but don't expect to see it in all cases.
- * **Cause precedes effect**
- * **Record structured observations for cases and controls**
 - non-cases are important

Confirming tick fever in dead animals

One recent SDI from Qld looked like Tick Fever – but the animals were dead (and fairly autolysed) – was there a way to reach a definitive diagnosis?

Brain smears are extremely valuable in diagnosing *B. bovis* infections because this parasite has the tendency to accumulate within brain capillaries.

Check out the resources available on:

- [Getting brains out intact](#)
- [Making brain smears](#)
- [Sending brains to the lab](#)



How to age a foetus - repro tip from Tristan Jubb

Ever been asked how old the foetus is when you've cut up a pregnant cow?

Next time, here's an easy-to-remember formula. Measure the crown rump length in inches, multiply by two then take the square root. This gives foetal age in months accurately enough to put you in the ball park. Works for sheep and goats too!

NABS Masterclass 2020



Front row: Nina Kung, Brittany Newton, Peter Nugroho, Sue Fitzpatrick, Kevin Bell, Dave Morrell

Second row: Allison Crook, Lorna Melville, Lil Stedman, Michelle Rodan, Hamish Brett, David Roper, Toby Wass

Third row: Mariah Maughan, Zoe O'Brien, Tracy Sullivan, Megan Pickering

Fourth row: Alison Thomas, Regan Lynch, Hannah Brodie, Derek Lunau, Graham Mackereth, Skye Fruean, Cass Wittwer, Andrew Larkins

Back row: Lee Taylor, Brendan Brieffies, Bryce Mooring, Jonathon O'Donnell, Richard Sanders, Richmond Loh, Jason Mansfield

Missing: Pauline Brightling

Missed earlier newsletters? [read them here](#)

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Happy to help

Let me know anything you'd like covered here or on the website

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Newsletter sent on Kevin's behalf from the team at Harris Park Group