



NABSnet info

Hi

In this newsletter:

- Details of two recent SDIs - one a new syndrome of necrotising wounds in Wagyu calves, and another of a well-known disease exacerbated by environmental conditions
- A new 'column' from the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer to provide us with regular snapshot updates on regional EAD disease developments
- A 'how to' for keeping knives razor sharp from Tristan Jubb - good video to watch
- Insights from the USA response to screwworm fly - what we can learn for northern Australia
- Also a quick guide to the process for doing a NABSnet SDI - especially for any vets who haven't participated in the process as yet.



Bill Tranter
NABSnet Vet Adviser

We are all closely watching the national situation with H5 HPAI of course. At this point there are no messages that are specific to the north, but we will keep you informed if that does occur. There is some excellent information available for all Australian vets, including:

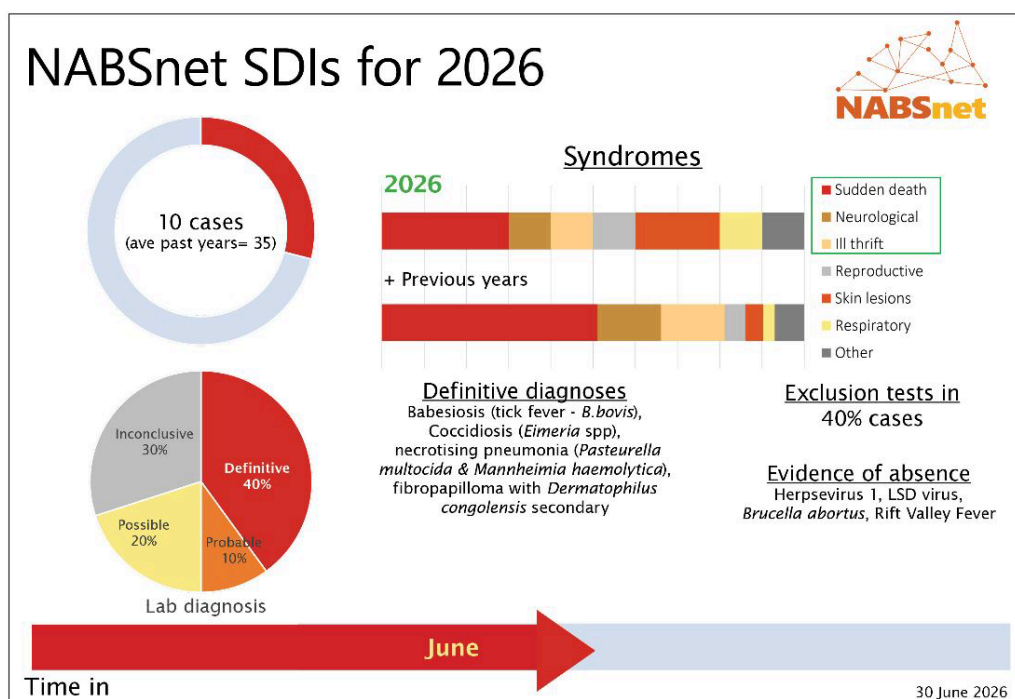
[National H5 high pathogenicity avian influenza guidelines for veterinarians](#)

[Vets and bird flu - DAFF](#)

And, if you haven't already, do put the EAD Hotline in the quick dial in your phone 1800 675 888.

A REMINDER: SDI REPORTS - MUST NOW BE SUBMITTED WITHIN 3 MONTHS OF THE FINAL PATH REPORT

Best wishes Bill



On the website there is also a list that summarises key features of the SDIs over the last 12 months - worth looking through to check what diseases others have been seeing.

The cases from this time last year are shown below.

Date	State	Animals	Presentation	Numbers [sick/dead/at risk]	Diagnosis with lab findings	Dx confidence	NND exclusions
Aug 25	QLD	cattle	ill thrift	6 / 0 / 80	Copper deficiency	probable	none
Aug 25	QLD	cattle	respiratory signs, death	? / 6 / ?	Pasteurella multocida & Mannheimia haemolytica	definitive	none
Aug 25	QLD	cattle	lameness, sudden death	0 / 5 / 70	Clostridium chauvoei - Black leg	definitive	none
Aug 25	QLD	cattle	sudden death	0 / 4 / 200	urea toxicity	definitive	none
Sep 25	QLD	cattle	ill thrift	1 / 2 / 230	E coli and T	definitive	none
Sep 25	QLD	cattle	other, death after previous heart leaf psg event		trichobezoar (hairball)	definitive	none
Sep 25	QLD	cattle	weak, poor body condition	100 / 2 / 1200	Severe negative energy balance and protein deficiency	probable	TSE
Oct 25	QLD	cattle	sudden death	0 / 24 / 100	Clostridium chauvoei - Black leg	definitive	none
Oct 25	QLD	cattle	sudden death in feedlot pen	1 / 12 / 220	unknown, severely autolysed	inconclusive	none
Nov 25	NT	cattle	ill thrift	21 / 0 / 400	tick burden	probable	none
Dec 25	QLD	cattle	sudden death	0 / 18 / ?	Clostridium chauvoei - Black leg	definitive	none
Dec 25	NT	cattle	respiratory signs, lethargy, ataxia in Wagyu bulls, pyogranulomatous pneumonia	>10 / 12 / 84	Acanthamoeba sp.	definitive	BVD (2)

check out the full list of SDIs in the last 12 months

Purulent necrotising shoulder wounds in Wagyu calves

At branding approximately 2% of 2500 1-4 month old calves were observed to have purulent necrotising sinus tracts consistently located over the shoulder region. Affected calves were depressed, some were febrile, several died or required euthanasia because of extensive tissue damage and loss of condition.

The syndrome occurred exclusively in calves born to a recently purchased cohort of PTIC fullblood Wagyu cows on a property in NT and was subsequently recognised in calves from the same maternal source on a property in Queensland. Histopathology demonstrated severe chronic ulcerative and suppurative dermatitis with

subcutaneous abscess formation consistent with chronic traumatic injury complicated by secondary bacterial infection.

Despite extensive investigation, no definitive underlying cause could be identified. The distinctive epidemiological pattern suggests an underlying predisposing factor—potentially anatomical or genetic—and warrants continued surveillance and further investigation should additional cases occur. Importantly, no evidence of an emergency animal disease was identified.

Time and location: January 2026, on two properties - NT and Gulf region of Queensland.

Case definition: Fullblood Wagyu calves born during the 2025/26 calving season exhibiting a unilateral necrotising skin lesion or chronic purulent draining sinus over the dorsal cranial shoulder/scapular region.



Disease mapping:

Lesions occurred only in mobs containing calves (of both sexes) born to the purchased PTIC Wagyu cows. Composite calves grazing similar environments were unaffected. No abnormalities were observed in cows.

Gross findings:

Veterinary examination occurred at weaning (4 months later). One heifer was euthanased for post-mortem examination with gross findings:

- Chronic draining sinus over shoulder with marked fibrosis surrounding lesion
- Minimal active deep tissue infection beneath sinus
- Well-encapsulated abscess immediately cranial to the scapula
- Bilateral bony projections (~10 mm) extending medially from the cranial scapular margin (significance uncertain)
- No other abnormalities detected

Field differential diagnoses

- Chronic traumatic injury with secondary bacterial infection
- Predatory bird injury (possible, but not observed over many years)
- Foreign body penetration
- Pressure injury associated with dystocia (unlikely anatomical site)
- Injection-site reaction (unlikely)
- Congenital or genetic predisposition (supported by one maternal cohort)
- Dermatophilosis (unlikely – lesions highly localised and developed before significant rainfall)

Emergency Animal Disease differential

- Brucellosis (fistulous withers). Included because chronic draining lesions over the shoulder could resemble fistulous withers.



Necrotising skin lesion or chronic purulent draining sinus over the dorsal cranial shoulder/scapular region.

Laboratory findings:

Histopathology demonstrated severe chronic ulcerative dermatitis, suppurative inflammation, extensive granulation tissue and encapsulated subcutaneous abscess formation.

These lesions were consistent with chronic traumatic injury with secondary bacterial infection and extension of infection into the subcutis. Possible initiating causes that were suggested were penetrating trauma; pressure injury; injection-site reaction; other local tissue injury. No specific infectious agent or primary disease process was identified.

No evidence of an emergency animal disease was identified.

Recommendations:

1. Continue close surveillance of calves born from the affected maternal bloodlines during subsequent calving seasons.
2. Examine affected calves as soon as lesions are first recognised to improve diagnostic yield. Collect fresh: bacterial swabs, tissue biopsies, blood samples, and, where possible, complete postmortem examinations before treatment.

3. Document lesion progression photographically from early lesions through to healing.
4. Monitor affected calves closely and institute prompt antimicrobial therapy where appropriate to minimise chronic tissue damage.
5. Consider genetic parentage profiling should further cases occur.
6. Continue investigation of any future outbreaks to ensure exclusion of emergency animal diseases and to better define the underlying aetiology.

Reminders - Skin Survey submissions



Take pictures of the animal and lesions

Then please send the actual picture files, not screen shots from your phone.

The pictures add to a library of good quality images of skin conditions in the north - screenshots don't make it.



Send fixed AND fresh tissue

Fresh tissue is required for PCR if the lab chooses to run this test.

For these submissions, don't worry too much if the tissue is likely to become moderately autolysed (if distance and time to lab is not optimal) - PCR is reasonably robust.

Severe papillomavirus-associated limb lesions in weaners

In an outbreak of unusually severe, wart-like proliferative lesions affecting the distal limbs of weaner cattle, laboratory investigation confirmed an uncommon presentation of bovine papillomavirus infection complicated by secondary *Dermatophilus congolensis* infection. A prolonged wet season likely impacted the disease presentation and severity.



Time and location: April 2026 in North Queensland

Case description: 7 weaners between 9-12 months of age from a herd of 50 cattle were presented with lesions affecting the distal limbs. The lesions were multifocal to coalescing hyperkeratotic and nodular in appearance with some areas ulcerated with purulent discharge. Some of the affected cattle had cutaneous lesions on the trunk and head that were grossly consistent with papillomavirus. The owner had applied topical antiseptics to no effect.

There were no other significant findings on physical examination. The most severely clinically affected heifer was selected for postmortem. Tissue samples were taken from the diseased limb for histopathology, bacterial and fungal culture. No other significant findings were found grossly on postmortem.

All animals were ear notched and antigen negative for BVDV.



Disease mapping: All the affected animals were weaners (7/19), no older cattle were affected (0/31). There had been no new introductions to the herd for the past two years. The herd was routinely vaccinated and regularly treated with endo- and ectoparasiticides. The stock are rotationally grazed around the property throughout the year. The paddocks are frequently waterlogged in the wet season. Two similar cases had been observed in April 2025 (without veterinary investigation) during wet weather.

Field differential diagnoses

- Dermatophilosis
- Papilloma virus with secondary bacterial infection
- Pythiosis (*Pythium insidiosum*) (swamp cancer)
- Caustic dermatitis from bleach treatment
- Other bacterial or fungal dermatitis

Laboratory findings:

Cutaneous fibropapilloma with superficial necro-suppurative inflammation and secondary invasion of bacteria including *Dermatophilus congolensis*. Continual wetting or physical abrasion of the primary papilloma was likely contributing to the severity of the lesions.

Recommendations:

- Fencing of the property to allow avoidance of waterlogged country, particularly keeping the weaner mob out of the wettest paddocks.
- Monitoring feet in the wet season so that early intervention with antibiotic and anti-inflammatory therapy can be commenced for a more positive prognosis.
- Use of lick blocks and/or injectable trace mineral prior to the wet season to ensure immune function is adequate. Zinc, selenium, copper, chromium are all particularly important for immune function.
- The use of autogenous vaccination may be considered in the future if the above management practices do not rectify the issue.

NABSnet SDIs - guidelines for vets

Current support available:

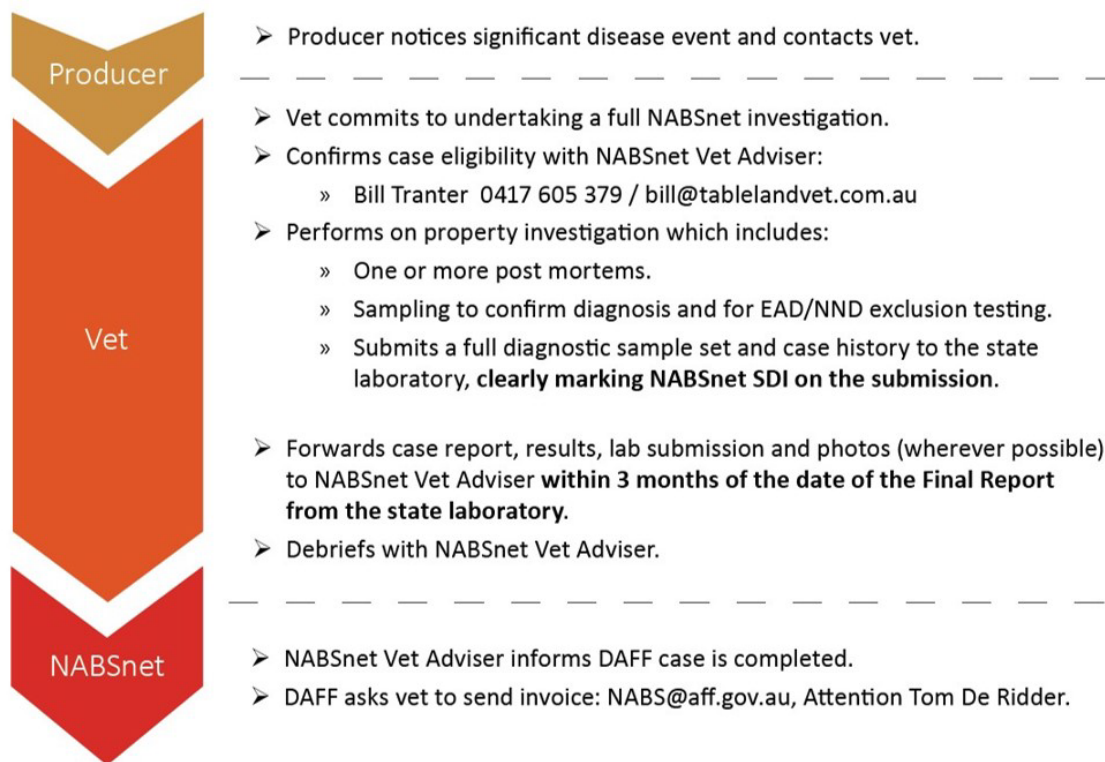
Up to \$2,500+GST per case to subsidise costs associated with disease investigation, including:

- Professional fees including for repeat visits.
- Mileage including for repeat visits.
- Freight costs for samples.

Case eligibility:

- Significant disease in livestock, or other species, as approved by the NABSnet Vet Adviser (see below).
- Property located north of the Tropic of Capricorn in Queensland and WA or anywhere within the NT.

Steps and responsibilities:



outline template for SDI reports

OCVO regional disease snapshot - Aug 2026

The top 3 recent regional EAD disease developments

1. Indonesian lumpy skin disease (LSD) response support

Following the detection of LSD in Bali in early 2026, the Australian Government is working with the Government of Indonesia to support their LSD response and control. This includes an investment of up to \$1 million funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for vaccines and technical planning assistance, with further funding from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

This support is aligned with the National LSD Action Plan. It aims to strengthen regional biosecurity outcomes and reduce spread of LSD and other key diseases of livestock in our region, including towards Australia.

2. Movement of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) serotype SAT-1

The recent emergence of FMD serotype SAT-1 outside its traditional range is one of the most significant developments in global FMD epidemiology in recent years. Since first being reported in Iraq in March 2025, SAT-1 has spread through large parts of the Middle East and has subsequently been detected in Cyprus, Greece, China and Mongolia. As one of seven FMD serotypes, SAT-1 is antigenically distinct, meaning immunity or vaccination against other serotypes does not provide protection. The spread of SAT-1 is separate from, and unrelated to, the serotype O outbreaks reported in Germany, Hungary and Slovakia in 2025.

Australia's import conditions are designed to manage FMD risk across all serotypes, including SAT-1, and remain appropriate.

3. Rabies field testing in Timor-Leste

Definitive rabies diagnosis in a suspect animal requires testing of brain tissue, collected post-mortem. While serology can be used to assess a vaccine response, there is currently no validated ante-mortem test that can reliably exclude rabies infection.

Timor-Leste's current rabies response has utilised a rapid field test to detect rabies virus antigen in brain tissue. Unexpected positive field test results, such as those in new geographical locations, are verified through confirmatory testing at the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP) using the gold standard Direct Fluorescent Antibody (DFA) test.

Although field tests are not currently approved for use in Australia, they can provide rapid results in remote and resource-constrained settings, supporting surveillance activities and timely decision-making.

Tips - keeping knives razor sharp



A sharp knife is a thing of joy - especially when you have 3 or 4 animals to post-mortem.

Tristan Jubb has some excellent tips if you are keen to sharpen your skills. Watch his demo on YouTube or download his detailed guide.

[watch YouTube demo or download the guide](#)

Screwworm awareness: insights from the United States response

The current US response demonstrates the importance of rapid, coordinated action and early reporting. For veterinarians in northern Australia, maintaining vigilance and submitting samples remain essential to protecting livestock industries.

The June 2026 detections of New-World screwworm fly (NWS) in the United States have renewed global attention to screwworm fly (SWF) risk and highlight the importance of ongoing vigilance in northern Australia. While Australia's primary biosecurity risk pathway is the movement of Old-World screwworm fly (OWS) from northern near-neighbours, the

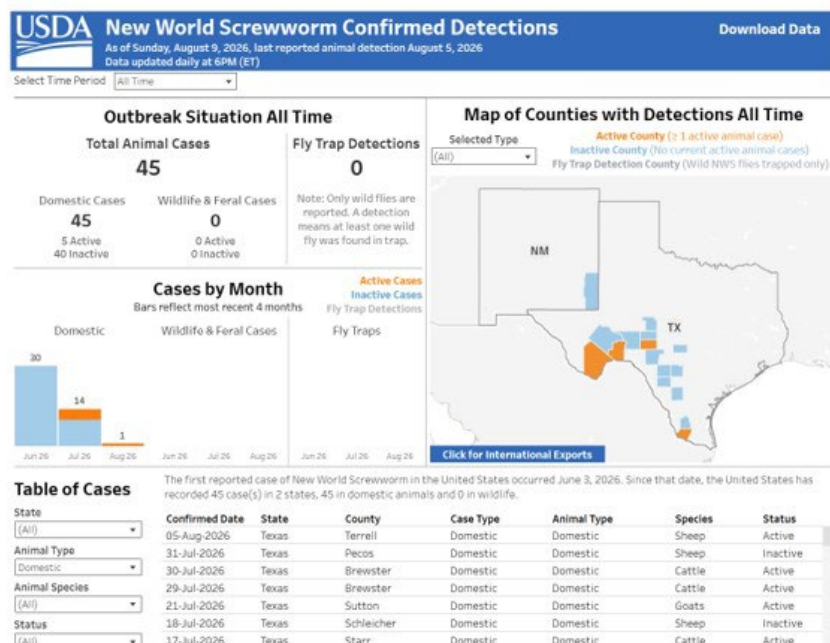
current US response demonstrates the critical role veterinarians play in early detection and control.



a) Adult female Old-World SWF; b) Adult male Old-World SWF.

Source: DAFF (NAQS)

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) is leading a coordinated One Health response to combat NWS. The tactical response is outlined in the USDA [NWS Response Playbook](#), which emphasises containment through early detection, management of cases, surveillance, movement controls and effective communications. Australia's nationally agreed approach to a SWF response is contained in the [AUSVETPLAN](#) for SWF.



United States Department of Agriculture, New-World screwworm fly dashboard

Central to the US response is the sterile insect technique (SIT). This proven method has successfully achieved eradication of established SWF populations, including previously from the US. SIT involves releasing sterile male SWFs that mate with wild females, producing no viable offspring. As female SWFs typically mate only once, repeated releases of sterile males progressively suppress and ultimately eliminate the population. Other measures, such as surveillance, movement controls and treatment support containment and enable targeted implementation of SIT.

In the current US response, SIT is being used in multiple ways. Localised releases target and suppress populations identified by either fly surveillance or live animal case detection. This localised SIT is expanded adaptively based on spread, ecology and surveillance, rather than a fixed buffer distance. This control is complemented by broader regional SIT programs operating across Central America, Mexico and the US–Mexico border to limit repeated cross-border spread. In the US this layered approach has underpinned previous eradication programs and remains central to managing incursions.

The detection of NWS in the US has not changed Australia’s risk of SWF disease. Existing health certification requirements and import conditions continue to manage screwworm risks from countries where SWF is present.

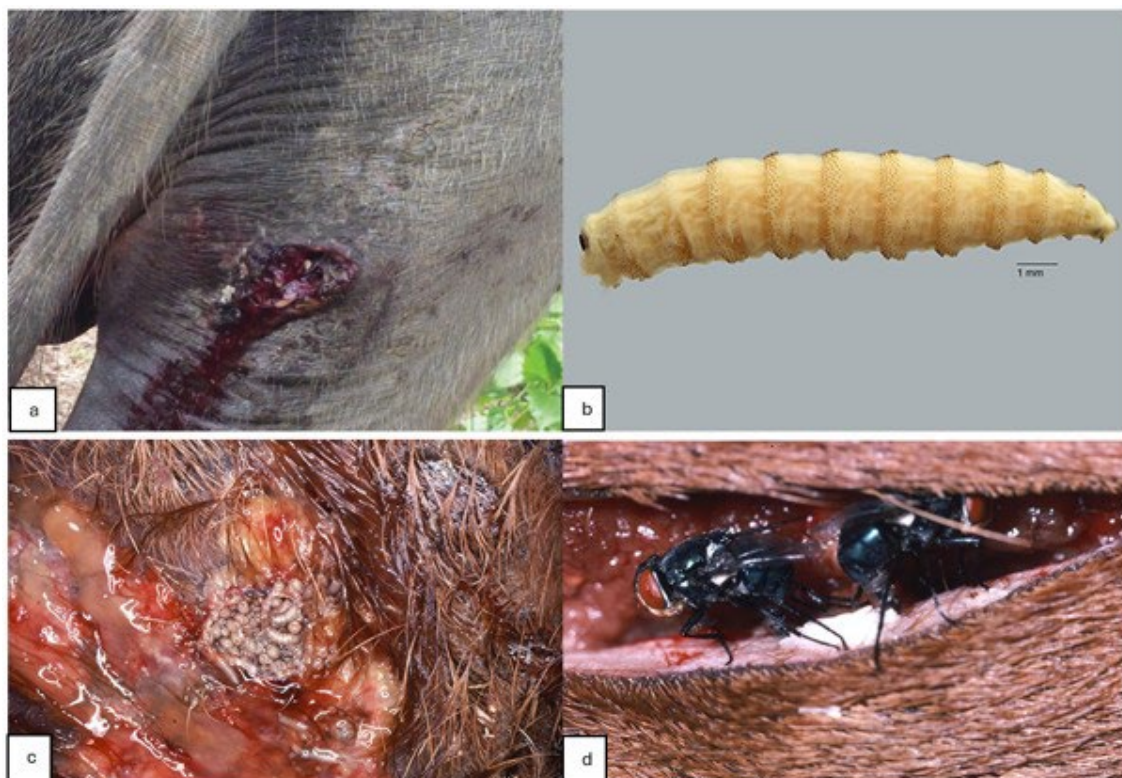


Screw-Worm Fly Surveillance and Preparedness Program (SWFSPP) work across Australia.

Source: AHA

Australia's risk from OWS reflects its presence in Australia's northern neighbours. A potential pathway for introduction into northern Australia is via infested animals on unregulated maritime arrivals, including foreign fishing vessels. Adult SWFs are unlikely to be viable as hitchhiker pests on these vessels, but rather it is the larval stages on a live, infested animal, or human, that pose the risk. This is actively managed through initiatives such as Operation Lunar, a whole-of-government response that integrates biosecurity measures into maritime border protection activities.

Targeted surveillance for SWF remains a priority across northern Australia, supported by national surveillance programs for early detection of cases. This includes fly trapping and targeted myiasis monitoring, as well as surveillance across livestock and wildlife populations.



a) SWF larvae feeding on fresh tissues and associated fluids of live animal wound; b) Singular SWF larvae; c) SWF maggot in a wound; d) SWF laying its eggs in an open wound.

Sources: AUSVETPLAN, DAFF (NAQS)

Early detection is essential, as it greatly minimises impacts and increases the likelihood of successful eradication. The Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy [maggot collection](#) and identification program is a critical component of surveillance and is being strengthened in 2026. This includes a renewed public and industry awareness campaign to increase sample submission from infested wounds on live animals.

NABSnet veterinarians can contribute by raising awareness of SWF with producers and other clients, as well as collecting and submitting any maggots observed in wounds on live animals of all species (including wildlife) for identification.

see info on collecting SWF maggots

Key NABSnet SDI contacts

Key contacts

EMERGENCY ANIMAL DISEASE WATCH HOTLINE
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Charlotte Watson
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Ben Rhodes
0492 196 392

Cass Wittwer
0417 094 633

Tom De Ridder
0401 877 670

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Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT
Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

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