



## **SDIs from across the NABS network**

G'day all

Our NABS network has been operating for 18 months now and there have been 56 SDIs come in from 28 veterinarians from 11 different practices. This is a great indicator that we have a vibrant network in place.

What type of SDIs have we seen from across the north? Primarily cattle (as expected), with the geography matching the distribution of cattle vet practices. The syndromes have been predominantly ill-thrift/sick, neurological and sudden death.

Our goals:

- diagnosis supported by laboratory confirmation
- opportunities for exclusion testing
- producers confident with the advice received and willing to go again.

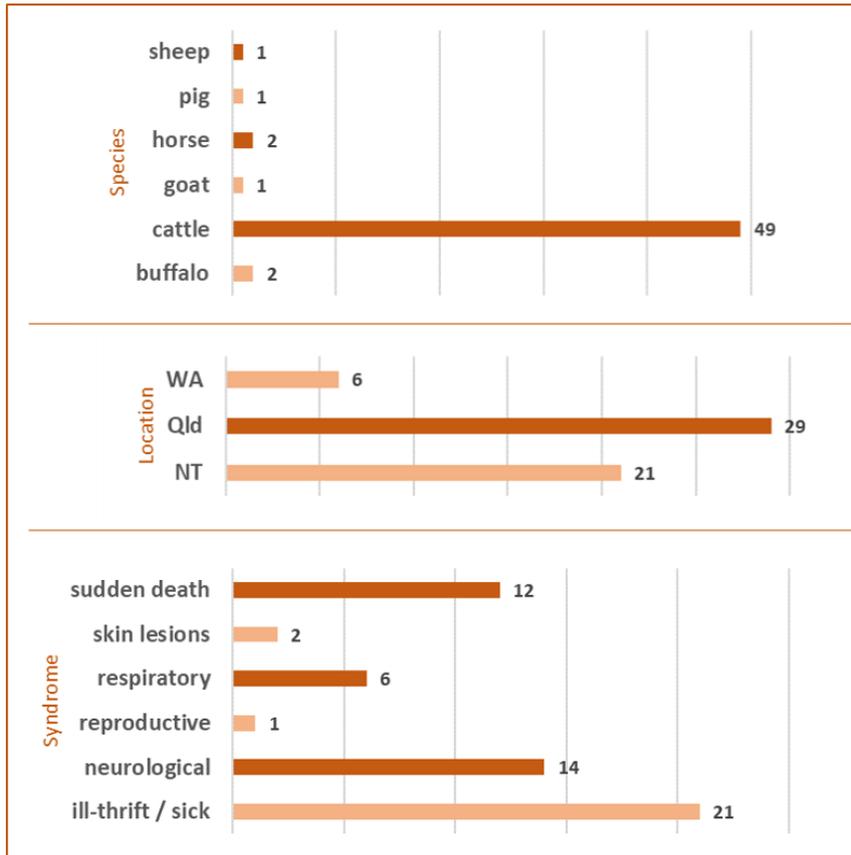
One SDI was an abortion outbreak - we have featured some tips about sampling in abortion investigations in this newsletter. There are also some new repro investigation resources available.

The current arrangements for the NABS program will continue until March 2020, supported by the Dept Agriculture. So keep up the good work. Contact me at any time you have an SDI emerging or on the go and would like to discuss.

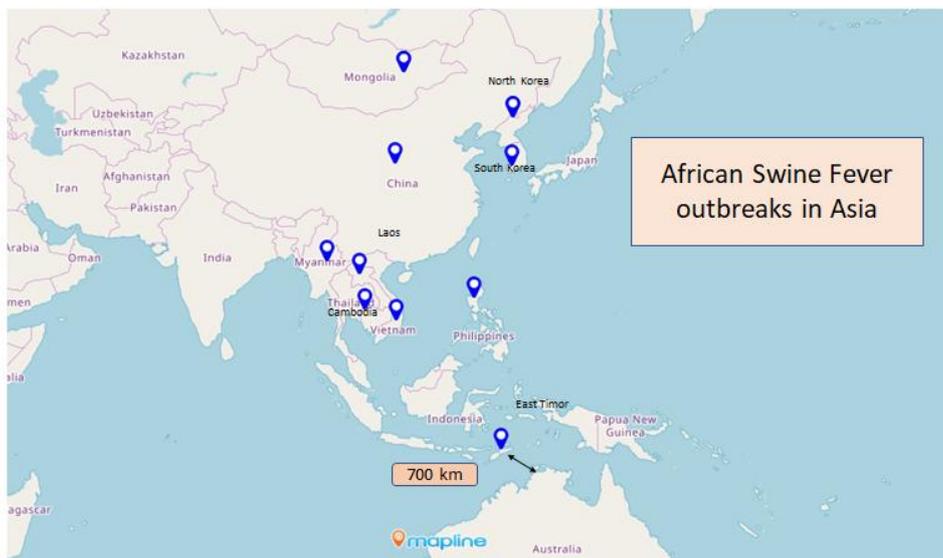
And ASF marches on, ever closer to our northern shores, now at Timor-Leste only 650km away. Keep on full alert for any reports of crook pigs – farmed or feral.

Cheers Kev

Newsletter #15 (3 October 2019)



## African Swine Fever - nearer than ever



From Beef Central, 30 Sept 2019

Recent positive identifications include The Philippines, South Korea, and now Timor-Leste just across the Timor Sea..... 100+ locations in the Dili area.

Contaminated products may arrive from endemic countries via commercial aircraft or ships, the international postal service, or waste from fishing vessels. Provided *Australia's modern intensive piggeries continue to practice a high level of biosecurity*, the most likely sites of entry for ASF would be smaller commercial or backyard establishments, or scavenging feral pigs. (Emergency Animal Disease Bulletin #120)

**Be on full alert for any indications of pig disease events. Report any suspicions - the EAD Hotline and your jurisdiction VOs are your immediate go-to contacts. Make sure you have the relevant numbers in your quick dial.**

**EAD Hotline: 1800 675 888**

**NABS network contact Govt VOs in each jurisdiction:**

#### **Western Australia**

Graham Mackereth, Broome, ph=(08) 9194 1420, mob=0477 358 066  
[Graham.Mackereth@dpiird.wa.gov.au](mailto:Graham.Mackereth@dpiird.wa.gov.au)

#### **Northern Territory**

Megan Pickering, Katherine, ph=(08) 8973 9716, mob=0437 527 372  
[Megan.Pickering@nt.gov.au](mailto:Megan.Pickering@nt.gov.au)

#### **Queensland**

Derek Lunau, Rockhampton, ph=(07) 4843 2613, mob=0467 814 322  
[Derek.Lunau@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:Derek.Lunau@daf.qld.gov.au)

[Read more](#) about ASF

[Weekly updates from FAO](#)

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## **Dead heifers - lead poisoning a reportable disease**

In September 2019 four heifers on a property near Katherine collapsed and died shortly after the owner noticed they appeared blind, frenzied and staggering. All died following a brief period of seizure activity.

A field diagnosis of lead poisoning was made when it was found that the fence around the station dump was down and the cattle had been chewing on exposed batteries.

One animal was necropsied. Samples were sent to confirm the diagnosis and also provide exclusion testing for rabies, Aujeszky's and ABLV - an important contribution from SDIs to industry information of on-going 'evidence of absence'.

Blood lead was 1.15ppm (results above 0.5ppm are conclusive).

Lead poisoning is a reportable disease because of the risks to human health (particularly children) from even low levels of exposure.

Lead persists in body tissues for a very long time – possibly indefinitely – and cattle that have been exposed to lead sources are subject to movement and slaughter restrictions. This prospect can be stressful for producers so requires good communication with them.

In this case the other animals in the mob were tested and were below Maximum Level (ML) allowable under the Australian & NZ Food Standards Code.

[Read more](#)

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## Repro syndromes – infectious diseases – some exotic



Most investigations of low pregnancy, calving or branding rates centre around nutrition, bull power and endemic infections, but there are some exotic infections that should be remembered, especially where signs include abortion, stillborn calves, weak calves or retained placentas.

<i>Endemic</i>	<i>Reportable</i>
<b>BVD virus (BVDV-1)</b>	<b>Tick fever</b> outside cattle tick infected zone
<b>Vibriosis<sup>#</sup></b>	<b>Bluetongue virus</b>
<b>Botulism</b>	
<b>Neosporosis<sup>#</sup></b>	<i>Exotic</i>
<b>Akabane<sup>#</sup></b>	<b>Brucellosis<sup>#</sup></b>
<b>Leptospirosis<sup>#</sup></b>	<b>BVD virus (BVDV-2)<sup>#</sup></b>
<b>Trichomoniasis<sup>#</sup></b>	<b>Infectious Pustular Vulvovaginitis<sup>#</sup></b>
<b>Bovine Ephemeral Fever<sup>#</sup></b>	<b>Bovine Herpesvirus (exotic)<sup>#</sup></b>
<b>Clostridial diseases</b>	
<b>Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis</b>	

# Reproductive Disease FactSheet published 2019

[New Reproductive Disease FactSheets are here](#)

## Tips for sampling abortions (BSL Qld)

The **foetus (and membranes where available)** are the most important specimens for obtaining a diagnosis. They can be sent intact (chilled but not frozen) if it is possible to arrive at the laboratory within 24 hours of expulsion.

Otherwise, the foetus crown-rump length should be measured, a necropsy done and the following specimens collected:

- swabs of abomasal content, lung and liver chilled for bacteriological culture
- swabs (or fresh portions) of foetal membrane, including cotyledon, for bacteriological culture
- foetal heart blood or fluid from body cavities for serology
- fresh tissues (heart, lung, liver, spleen, kidney) for possible molecular studies
- fixed tissues (heart, lung, liver, spleen, thymus, kidney, whole brain, skeletal muscle and foetal membranes) for histological examination

**Uterine discharge** (guarded swab) from the dam for bacteriological culture.

**Clotted and EDTA blood samples** from the dam at the time of foetal loss. A follow-up paired sample in 3-4 weeks is also recommended if possible.

Bleeding a number of suspect animals in the cohort (10 or more) is appropriate where multiple abortions have occurred.

**Wear PPE to examine animals and collect tissues**  
**Avoid splashing or inhaling body fluids**

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## Repro investigation resources available

The NABS program has produced a guide to investigation approaches for reproductive problems in beef herds in the north. [More info and download here](#)

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## NABS Network update - power on to March 2020

Support for SDI investigations by private veterinary practices with NABS practice packages will continue in the current format until March 2020.

Please contact Kevin Bell or Cass Wittwer if you have any queries about the logistics of the NABS program.

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### Happy to help

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

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or visit [www.nabsnet.com.au](http://www.nabsnet.com.au)

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