



#49 | 11 June 2024

## NABSnet info

Hi all

At the Masterclass in March pathologist Cathy Shilton from Berrimah Vet Lab did the near-impossible – she had the whole room keenly focused on histology slides as she walked us through LSD and rule-out conditions. The diagnostic importance of the lab workup in skin cases was really brought home to me in her talk.



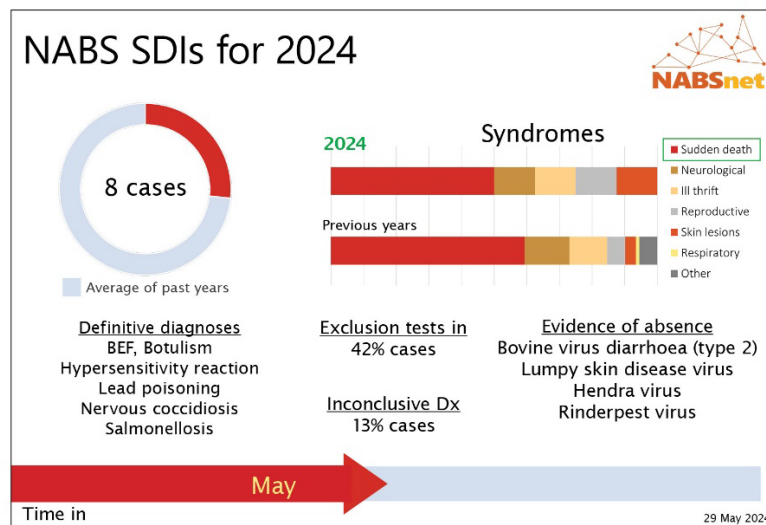
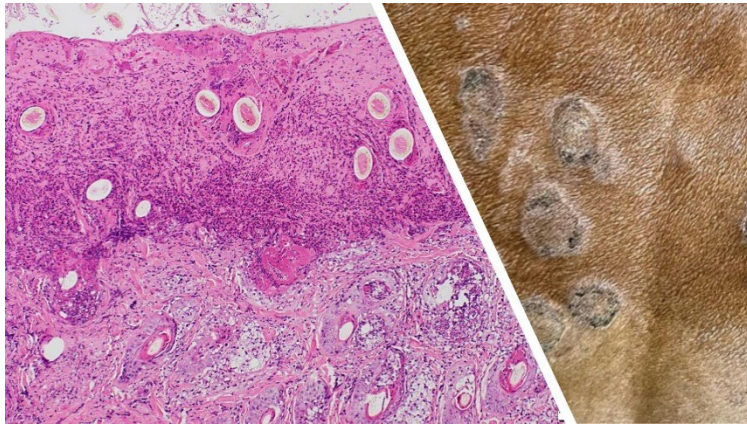
Our cattle skin survey has been supplying good info about skin conditions occurring in the north. Funding for the survey has been extended for 2024-25 and increased to \$600+GST per submission. See more details below.

When Tom Couston moved to Qld as the QDAF field vet for NABSnet, he said he'd come north for warmer weather and adventure. Then last November he continued his quest with a move to a DAFF role in the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer, in the team working in Timor-Leste and PNG. Thanks Tom for sharing some info about the Timor-Leste rabies campaign with us.

Other items below:

- \$3000 vet student subsidies available for placements in Northern Australia
- Warm welcome to Jane Giliam, Senior Veterinary Officer, NT DITT

Cheers Kev



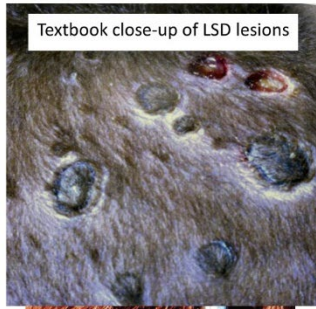
## Diagnosing skin conditions – field and lab required

Because of the proximity of LSD in our region, and the export trade ramifications of the presence of any cutaneous lesions, all eyes are on skin at present. Getting confirmed diagnoses of skin lesions is extremely important.

Key things:

- Histology and other lab tests are required to reach a definitive diagnosis
- Images of the lesions are very helpful to the pathologists – so sending photos is really important.

Here are some of the images from the Masterclass presentation by Cathy Shilton, Ayrial Foster and John Bingham that really demonstrate these messages.



Textbook close-up of LSD lesions

Jubb,  
Kennedy and  
Palmer,  
Pathology of  
Domestic  
Animals, 6<sup>th</sup>  
edition



Grigg, via  
USDA FADDL,  
Plum Island



NT yearlings with BHV2



**Pseudolumpy skin disease (Bovine Herpes Virus 2) and LSD can look very similar - appearance and distribution of gross lesions, histology and PCRs all used to differentiate**



Likely chronic BHV2 in NT



LSD from overseas



**Histology suggestive of insect hypersensitivity, BHV2 PCR negative**

## Cattle Skin Survey – new arrangements and \$\$

The NABSnet cattle skin survey is making an important contribution to our understanding of the skin lesions that occur in northern Australia. To date there have been 50 submissions (23 QLD, 12 NT, 14 WA) – 77 animals sampled in total. The majority of laboratory diagnoses have been dermatitis (likely insect hypersensitivity) with some others being papillomatosis, Dermatophilosis, demodex and Herpes.

**The funding arrangements for the survey have been extended so that it can continue for the next Financial Year (24-25). From 1 July 2024 the subsidy will be increased to \$600+GST (+freight if required).**

There is a NEW information sheet, NEW flier for producers, and NEW submission form available from the NABSnet website (button below).

In summary, requirements for participation in the project are:

- Take photos of the lesions.
- Collect punch biopsies (fresh and fixed).
- Collect serum and EDTA bloods (if possible, not critical).
  
- Fill in the lab submission form AND the Cattle Skin Survey submission form.
- Pack and freight to your relevant state lab, to arrive the next day.
- Submit photos to the state lab email  
**AND** to Teagan 0466 614 706.

NT: [BVL.DITT@nt.gov.au](mailto:BVL.DITT@nt.gov.au)

QLD: [bslclo@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:bslclo@daf.qld.gov.au)

WA: [DDL@dpi.wa.gov.au](mailto:DDL@dpi.wa.gov.au)

Note: You must submit the images to be eligible for the subsidy.

[NEW 2024-25 fliers and submission form here](#)

## Working in Timor-Leste - Rabies Vaccination Campaign

Following an outbreak of canine rabies in West Timor in 2023, Timor-Leste's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Fisheries and Forestry (MALFF) initiated a collaborative response program involving a coordinated dog vaccination campaign. The Australian Government, through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade provided 200,000 doses of canine rabies vaccine and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry provided technical assistance and operational support.

Timor-Leste has over 250 km of land border with West Timor and many communities have village dogs that pose the greatest risk in spreading rabies and potential infection of people.

As the first step, an international dog behaviour and rabies prevention expert, Daniel Stewart, helped to develop an operational plan, and provided training on dog handling for vaccination.

The vaccination program began in January 2024. Initially, the four main high-risk areas targeted for vaccination were the three municipalities that border West Timor, and the capital Dili. In the first few weeks of the campaign, 14 different vaccination teams were deployed across these four municipalities, doing door-to-door visits, with the immediate aim of vaccinating 70% of the dog populations.



Map credit: Euro Surveill. 2024 May;29(18):2400241.

As is the case in northern Australia, maintaining vaccines in appropriate cold chain was a challenge in hot, remote environments without ready access to electricity. Practical solutions included using car fridges fitted with solar panels for cooling during the day, with smaller eskies with ice bricks used by walking teams when vaccinating in the villages. There were constant issues of finding freezers each night to refreeze the ice bricks.

MALFF staff led public awareness and education activities and there was very little resistance to the rabies vaccination campaign of dogs in the communities.



The DAFF team departing Australia for Timor-Leste with eskies in their luggage.



Team work and collaboration has been a key part of the rabies vaccination campaign.

In January DAFF also organised a two-day, in-country course in rabies diagnostic sampling and testing for the MALFF veterinarians and laboratory staff. Experts from the CSIRO Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness presented training on field sampling techniques and the use of rabies rapid test kits to bolster disease detection and response.

Unfortunately despite the pre-emptive vaccinating campaign, in march 2024, Timor Leste had its first fatal human case of rabies recorded in the Oecusse enclave - a person who was bitten by an aggressive dog approximately three months earlier. MALFF is now working with World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) The World Health Organization (WHO) and Timor-Leste Ministry of Health on a one health response.

The campaign to vaccinate dogs is providing an important foundation to reduce the impact of the disease and is continuing very effectively. By the end of April 2024 more than 35,000 dogs in the border areas and Dili had been vaccinated.

The campaign has provided a lot of lessons around vaccine transport logistics, maintaining cold chains and disease education that may be applicable to northern Australia.

## Vet student subsidies for placements – in your practice?

Following a really successful program last year, vet students in years 4 and 5 have been invited to apply for \$3,000 subsidies from the NABS program to complete veterinary course placements in the Northern Australian livestock industry in 2024 and 2025. The aim is to introduce them to the north – with the anticipation that some will return after graduation!!

The subsidies are to assist with travel / accommodation costs for undertaking livestock orientated:

- a. farm placements on pastoral properties, and/or
- b. clinical extramural placements with veterinary practices or abattoirs, and/or
- c. placements with the state Departments of Agriculture.

There are 40 subsidies available - northern WA (10), the NT (10) and northern QLD (20) – for placements until 30 November 2025.

The subsidy will be paid directly to the student on completion of the placement. Applications are now open (until 31 July 2024). Students are responsible for sourcing their own placements.

**If you have students who have already arranged to come to your practice, encourage them to apply for a subsidy.**

**If you would like to host a student in your practice, contact the organiser for your state/territory (below) and they will pass on your details to the students.**

- WA Marion Seymour - [marion.seymour@dpiird.wa.gov.au](mailto:marion.seymour@dpiird.wa.gov.au)
- NT Jane Giliam - [jane.giliam@nt.gov.au](mailto:jane.giliam@nt.gov.au)
- QLD Nina Kung - [nina.kung@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:nina.kung@daf.qld.gov.au)



## Warm welcome to Jane Giliam, NT Senior Vet Officer

Jane Giliam is the Senior Veterinary Officer of the Livestock Biosecurity Unit within the NT Government – and warmly welcomed to the NABSnet team.

Jane is a Massey graduate, who worked in both mixed and small animal practices in New Zealand before moving to Australia in 2017. She worked in a small animal and wildlife clinic in Darwin and then spent six years in WA in mixed practice clinic and as a mobile vet. In her spare time she and her husband founded the Ningaloo Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Centre. Prior to taking up her current role, she completed a one-year contract with DAFF as an on-plant vet. Working in Northern Australia fostered a desire to return to the NT and passion for biosecurity.

Prior to gaining her veterinary qualifications, Jane ran a successful horse-riding school in South Africa, developing desensitization courses to promote off-the-track Thoroughbreds as pleasure and competition and police horses.

Jane lives on a 5-acre property outside Darwin with an ever-growing pack of SPCA-acquired dogs, a plethora of wildlife—including various named (but wild) frogs and wallabies—and her husband.



## Key NABS SDI network contacts

Kevin Bell, NABS Vet Adviser

Contact at: [nabsvetadviser@gmail.com](mailto:nabsvetadviser@gmail.com) / 0427 433 244

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

- QLD **Nina Kung** [nina.kung@daf.qld.gov.au](mailto:nina.kung@daf.qld.gov.au)
- NT **Jane Giliam** [jane.giliam@nt.gov.au](mailto:jane.giliam@nt.gov.au)
- WA **Marion Seymour** [marion.seymour@dpird.wa.gov.au](mailto:marion.seymour@dpird.wa.gov.au)

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

To subscribe: [join here](#)

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

Let us know any topics you'd like to see covered here.