



NABSnet

Newsletter

#51 | 14 October 2024

NABSnet info

Hi all in the NABSnet network

I am super pleased to welcome Bill Tranter as the NABSnet Vet Adviser in Queensland. In the next few months Bill will connect with large animal and mixed practice vets in that state and support the network there. A bit more about Bill's life in cattle-vet-land and his contact details down below.

There's a great opportunity to connect at the next Masterclass (Townsville, 7-8 March 2025). The Expression of Interest is open now.

And items featured in this newsletter:

- Two different SDI reports of adult cattle with respiratory distress and fatalities
- The next 'mind map' - respiratory syndrome in cattle - ddx and sampling guide
- The cattle skin survey - reminder to join in
- Vet student placements – could be in your practice
- EAD Study Support Program - available from Boehringer

On a very sad note, we were all distressed by the passing of Dr John Hosie a couple of weeks ago. John was part of the NABSnet network. He presented one of his cases at a Masterclass in Darwin and encouraged other vets in his practice to work up SDIs. Losing such a great young colleague and friend is a tragedy for the profession and his people. Our sincere condolences to his family and colleagues.

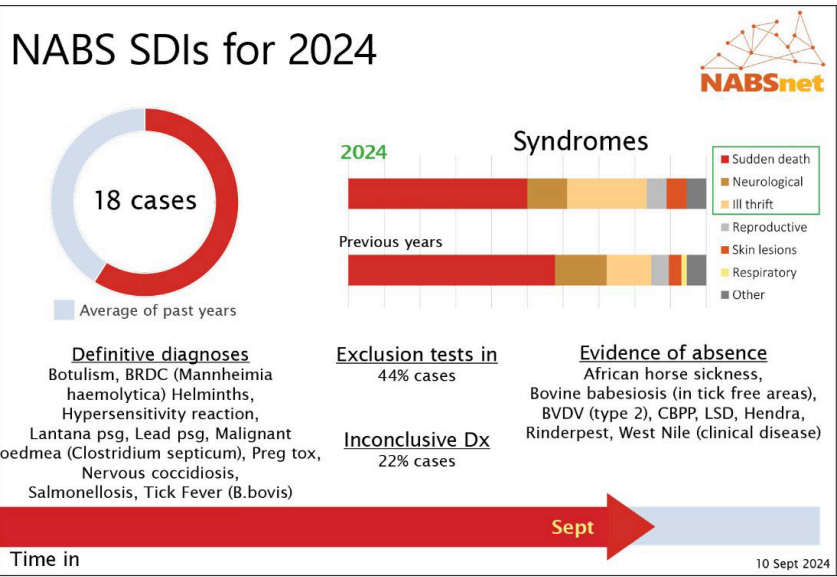
Best wishes Kev



Kevin Bell



Bill Tranter



NABSnet Masterclass 2025

Townsville, QLD

When: Friday 7th and Saturday 8th of March 2025
 (accommodation check-in available from Thursday 6th March)

Where: Mercure Townsville, and JCU

Who: Large and mixed animal veterinary practitioners in Northern Australia
 - the NABSnet network

What's on: The two day NABSnet Masterclass 2025 will be a great opportunity to get together with like-minded peers, start interesting conversations, and will focus on getting the most from disease investigations, post mortem examination techniques and practitioner participation in Emergency Animal Disease responses.

Participation at the Masterclass, accommodation, food and air travel will be subsidised by NABS for up to two veterinarians from each clinic.

Next step: To register your interest, download the form and send to Nina Kung by 13 December 2024 (details on the form).

[Expression of Interest form](#)

Respiratory signs in 20 adult cattle



In May 2023 a group of 250 adult Brahman cattle were moved on agistment from a property in western Queensland to the Tablelands in FNQ. They were treated for ticks and worms upon arrival and again in July.

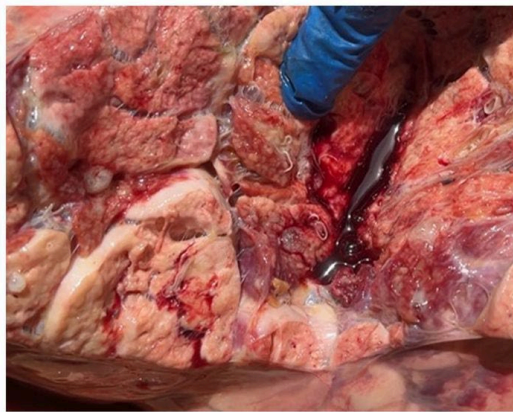
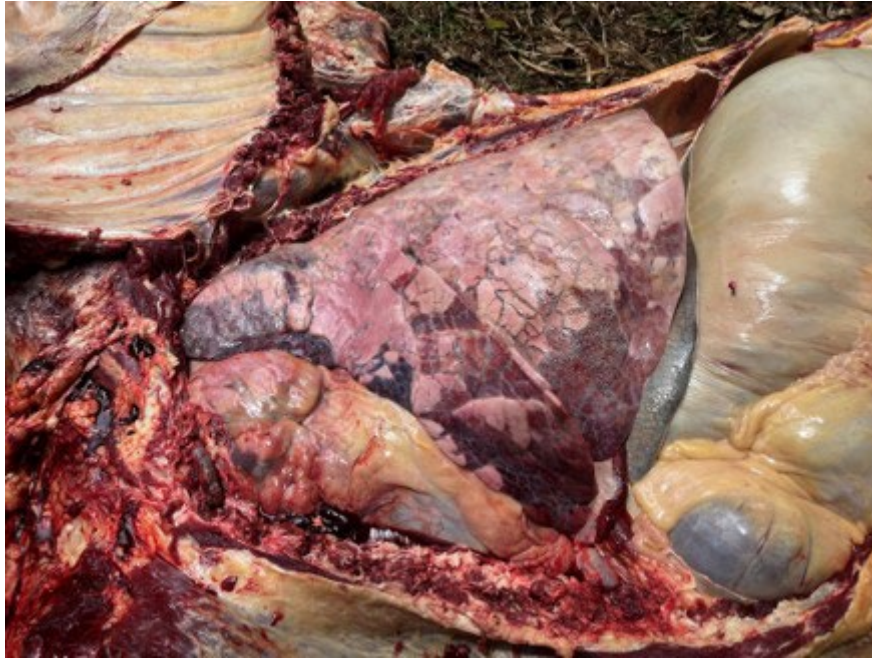
In mid-September the owner reported that there had been 6 deaths in the past two weeks and that another 15-20 animals were unwell. All affected animals were lactating cows. Several unwell animals were examined and found to have elevated temperatures, increased respiratory rates and abnormal lung sounds. High levels of coughing was present in animals in holding yard. Most sick animals were in poor body condition. Stocking density was high and pasture availability was low. A recently deceased animal was available for post mortem examination.

Gross post-mortem findings:

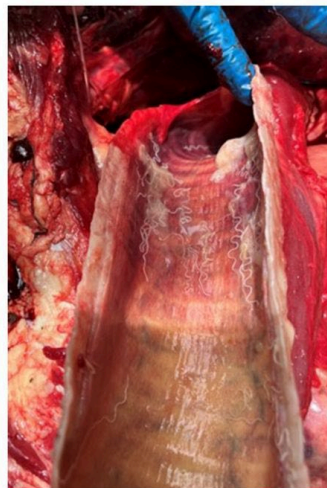
Adult lungworms were seen in lungs.

Samples submitted:

- Fresh and fixed lung, liver, heart, kidney, skeletal muscle, lymph node, spleen, small intestine
- Swabs (Amies) of bronchi, pleural fluid, pericardial fluid
- Rumen contents, faeces
- Aqueous humour



Lungworm in the lung and trachea



Lab findings:

- Diffuse, severe, bronchointerstitial pneumonia
- Adult and larvae *Dictyocaulus* sp
- Bacterial pathogens associated with BRDC (including *Pasteurella multocida*, *Bibersteinia trehalose*, *Mycoplasma bovis*) were cultured from lung tissue. No *Haemophilus* sp was isolated.
- Diffuse periacinar hepatic necrosis, probably a result of hypoxia.

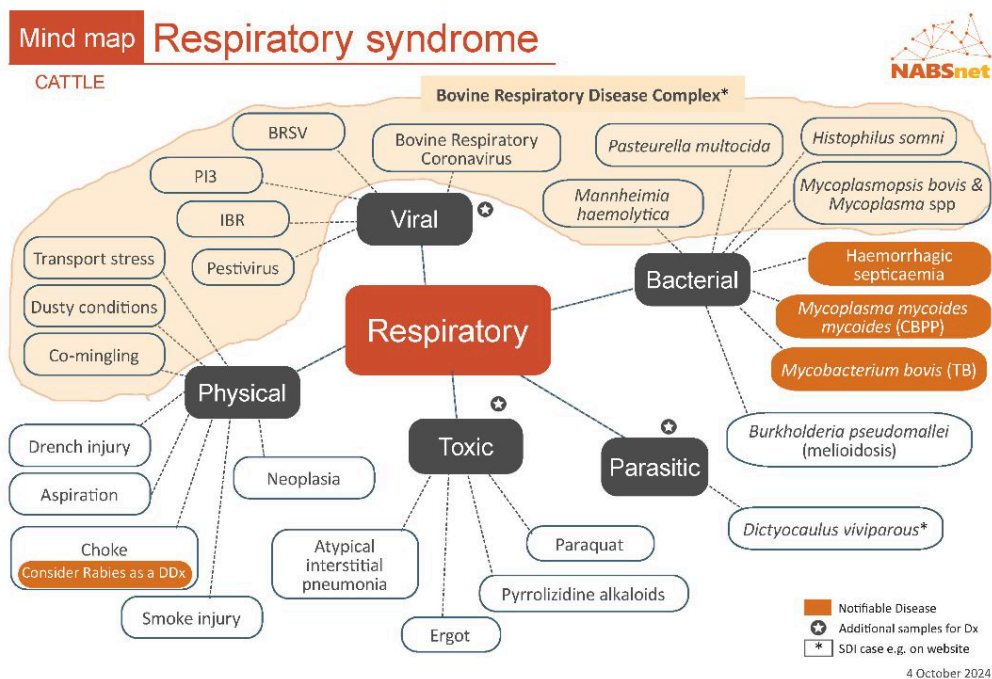
Diagnosis and interpretation:


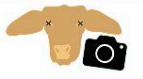
Multifactorial pneumonia, involving naïve animals introduced to pastures containing parasites; likely immunosuppression due to overstocking, nutritional/metabolic stress of lactation; and wet/cold climatic conditions.

Recommendations:

- Immediately treat all stock with effective anthelmintic.
- Treat clinically affected animals with antimicrobial and anti-inflammatories.
- Reduce stocking density and consider supplemental feeding.
- Always take care with introduction of stock from different areas.

Respiratory syndrome ddx and sampling guide



Ante mortem		
Bloods *3		
Blood smear		
Faeces		
Nasal swabs		
Post mortem		
	Fresh Individual, labelled, chilled	Fixed Pooled, formalin
Lung <small>record % visibly affected</small>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *
Trachea	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Bronch lymph node	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pleural swab	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> *	
Liver	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Kidney	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Spleen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Heart	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Brain	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Any lesions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Respiratory Sampling

Sampling considerations

- Several significant EADs.
- BRDC has many potential pathogen combinations and physical risk factors.
- Swabs from lungs, trachea, bronchial lymph nodes and pleurae needed for culture (bacteria, mycoplasma) and PCR (viruses, mycoplasma). Liquid Amies swabs (eSwabs) are suitable for both, or send swabs in solid agar for bacterial/mycoplasma culture, and in VTM for PCR.
- Send fresh and fixed samples of affected and unaffected lung and the margins between them – lesions may be subtle. Samples just from the 'sharp' edges of the lung may miss a range of airways.
- Bloods needed for pestivirus antigen/antibodies, viral antibodies (bacteria may be secondary invaders).
- Nasal swabs from live animals can be used for PCR (viruses).

Additional samples

- ✦ Suspect lungworm: send faecal samples
- ✦ Suspect feed (e.g. ergot): send feed sample, batch label and date, note batch details when problem started.
- ✦ Suspect toxins: 100 mL rumen fluid and 100 g liver.

4 October 2024

[Download the mind map and sampling guide](#)

Respiratory distress and death in about 15% of a mob in sale yards

In August 2024, over a week, approximately 25 of 200 cattle in a sale yard feedlot in NT appeared sick, showed respiratory signs and 7 died suddenly.

The cattle of mixed ages (mostly older cows) and unknown pregnancy status had been trucked about 400km to the sale yards about one month previously.

The animals' vaccination history was unknown. They had not received any vaccinations or treatment since arrival or prior to departure from the station.

A yard walk showed bales of jarra grass hay distributed in pens and water available and

clean. Troughs were low (it was the hottest part of the day) but water was running. Shade was available and there was no sign of heat stress. Many young calves were present, some recently born. The mob were mixed BCS. Faecal pats appeared normal.

A mature cow that had been dead about 2 hours was available for post mortem examination.

Gross PM findings:

- The animal was BCS 2.5 and had clear discharge from both nostrils.
- The parietal surfaces of the lungs were stuck to the rib cage with a large amount of fibrin-like adhesions.
- Lungs were dark red and consolidated over 2/3 of the tissue, particularly the cranioventral region.
- Other organs had no gross discernible abnormalities. The rumen was adequately filled and normal appearance.
- The cow was approximately 4 months pregnant.

Samples submitted:

- Fresh and fixed tissues
- Swabs from lungs
- Aqueous humour
- Bloods - noting that collection after death was likely to make them uninterpretable as many parameters may change due to leakage from cells/tissues.

Field differentials:

- Likely bovine respiratory disease complex / shipping fever resulting in a pneumonia with bacterial or viral involvement.
- Possible toxicoses

Lab findings:

Histopathology of the lung and pleura showed severe, subacute, fibrinosuppurative bronchopneumonia with intralesional small coccobacilli. The presence of moderately well organized fibroplasia in interlobular septae indicated the pneumonia had been present for at least 5-7 days.

Diagnosis

Shipping Fever Pneumonia. The histological lesion was consistent with bronchopneumonia caused by *Mannheimia haemolytica* (one of the agents of Shipping Fever Pneumonia'), which was isolated from the submitted swab of the lung.

Recommendations / Prevention:

Immediately:

- Move animals showing signs of infection or respiratory stress to a 'sick pen' and treat them with antibiotics and supportive care
- Allow the cattle out of the yards into a larger holding pen where they have more space and less dusty conditions to decrease crowding.
- Ensure animals have plenty of access to feed and especially water, during the heat of the day. If drinking exceeds the rate of filling for the trough then reduce the number of animals in the pen to accommodate this.

Longer-term:

- Pregnancy test animals and do not truck those more than 6 months pregnant.
- Where-ever possible, reduce stress associated with trucking, mustering and housing.
- Vaccination prior to transport can be beneficial for animals destined to be in feedlot style systems for some time after mustering.

Welcome Bill Tranter



Super welcome to Bill Tranter who has been part of NABSnet since its inception (he was one of the seven northern cattle practitioners who provided input to the original planning) and has now moved into the role of NABSnet Vet Adviser in Queensland. Bill joins Kevin so we now have Vet Adviser capacity in both the east and the west.

It's likely that everyone knows (or knows of) Bill. He has been in practice in Malanda since 1976, with a mix of cattle practitioner, teacher, consultant, academic and veterinary colleague in his trademark quiet and inspirational approach.

We asked him about the early days of his career.

“Actually I don't remember making a decision to be a vet. When my parents tried to talk me into going to ANU to study forestry, I didn't want to have a bar of it. I just knew what I wanted to do and that was a blessing, I was very fortunate.”

“I was inspired very early by herd level work – by working with Doug Blood, Jakob, Roger Morris and Norm Williamson.”

Bill was able to take time from practice in 1978-79 to do a residency at the University of California, and then in 1989-92 at Massey to do his PhD (researching the epidemiology and control of lameness in cattle).

“When you get the chance to do those sort of things, you come back absolutely passionate, and there was plenty to get my teeth into – herd health, flying aeroplanes to get out to more distant work, nutrition, farm consultancy. The more you get involved with farms, the more you understand their systems.”

The dairy industry in the north, and throughout Australia, has benefitted from Bill’s systems-thinking in many industry programs and research investment decisions.

One of Bill’s major contributions has been the design and delivery of the cattle course at JCU, in Townsville and in the practice at Malanda. He has taught and inspired each cohort of JCU students, as well as many others who have visited from elsewhere.

His comment on his teaching role “Well, actually I’m the one that’s inspired – it is really energising to be working with dedicated young people. It keeps everything fresh and interesting”.

Bill has made heaps of input to the profession via the AVA and Australian Cattle Veterinarians, and this was recognised in 2015 with ‘Practitioner of the Year’ awarded by the ACV.

In 2023 Bill’s commitment to the science underpinning veterinary work was acknowledged with an Honorary Fellowship from the Australian and New Zealand College of Veterinary Scientists.

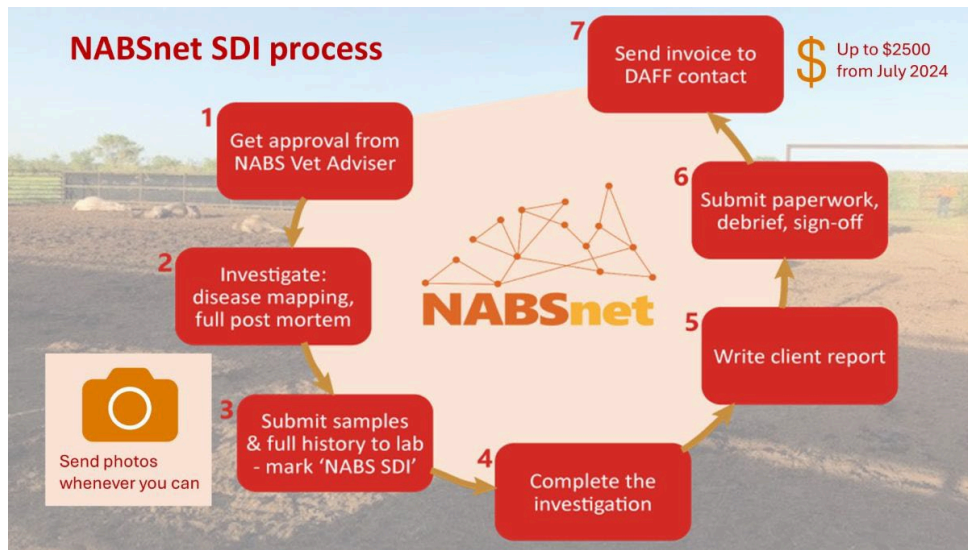
It’s not often that you feel sorry for forestry - but veterinary science, and cattle practice in particular, has benefited so much from Bill’s passionate input – thank goodness he pushed back on that course at ANU and went to Brisbane! It will be fantastic to have him in the mix with the NABSnet project in Queensland.

Bill’s contact details:

E: bill@tablelandvet.com.au

P: 0417 605 379

NABSnet SDI subsidy now up to \$2500



One of the key elements of NABSnet is the SDI process – where private vets in the north can investigate a significant disease event through to laboratory confirmation with the support of a financial subsidy and free lab tests.

The subsidy has now increased to 'up to \$2500 (including GST)'. This recognises the general increase in costs over this time, and reinforces the value to the overall livestock biosecurity effort that NABSnet SDIs contribute.

[More info and report template here](#)

Cattle Skin Survey - keep making a mark

The NABSnet cattle skin survey is making an important contribution to our understanding of the skin lesions that occur in northern Australia.

The funding arrangements for the survey continue until the end of this Financial Year (24-25). The subsidy has been increased to \$600+GST (+freight if required).



How to participate

- Take photos of the lesions
- Collect punch biopsies (fresh + 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. **You must send photos to be eligible for the subsidy.**

NT: BVL.DITT@nt.gov.au

QLD: bslclo@daf.qld.gov.au

WA: DDL@dpird.wa.gov.au

[More info and forms here](#)

Vet student placements – in your practice?

Vet students in years 4 and 5 have each been awarded a \$3,000 subsidy from the NABS program to complete a veterinary course placement in the Northern Australia between now and Dec 2025. Competition for the subsidies was strong - with 100 applications for the 40 available [WA (10), NT (10) and QLD (20)].

The aim is to introduce the students 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.

They will be paid directly to the student on completion of the placement. Students are responsible for sourcing their own placements.

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@dpird.wa.gov.au
- NT Anna Allan Anna.Allan@nt.gov.au
- QLD Nina Kung nina.kung@daf.qld.gov.au



EAD Study Support Program

From: Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health

As a world leader in vaccines to manage the risk and impact of infectious diseases, Boehringer Ingelheim understands the critical role of veterinarians in emergency animal disease (EAD) surveillance and response preparedness. Therefore, we are proud to announce a program to support veterinarians in their efforts to develop their knowledge and practical experience in the field of EAD.

The Program provides a financial contribution to veterinarians to support their expenses associated with visiting relevant countries to gain firsthand experience of EAD diagnosis and management, or participate in other activities proposed to enhance their skills and knowledge in the field of EAD.

Who can apply?

All private practitioners (veterinarians) registered in Australia can apply for funding support. Boehringer Ingelheim will support up to 3 participants each year for the next 3 years.

What to include in a proposal?

Your proposal should make reference to the following criteria to assist the review committee:

- Your general interest and experience in EAD
- Brief description of the activity you propose (high level only)
- Relevance of your proposal to the biosecurity of Australia

Candidates are encouraged to share their learnings with their peers.

How to apply or enquire?

To apply or enquire, veterinarians should reach out directly to Boehringer:

Attention: Greg Little or Phil McDonagh:

Email: customercare.Australia@boehringer-ingelheim.com

What will Boehringer Ingelheim contribute?

Boehringer Ingelheim will provide support (via re-imbusement) up to 75% for total travel expenses (up to \$7,500 per grant)



Key NABS SDI network contacts

Kevin Bell, NABS Vet Adviser

Contact at: nabsvetadviser@gmail.com / 0427 433 244

Bill Tranter NABSnet Vet Adviser, QLD

Contact at: bill@tablelandvet.com.au / 0417 605 379

or visit www.nabsnet.com.au

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

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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.