

Question on Notice

No. 648

Asked on 1 May 2019

MR C WHITING ASKED MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise what measures the Department of Agriculture has taken to ensure staff are prepared for a possible foot-and-mouth disease outbreak?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for the question.

The Palaszczuk Government recognises the critical importance of keeping Australia free from foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) to protect the access of Queensland primary producers to valuable export markets. This is of particular importance to Queensland as the state with the largest cattle herd and the strong global demand for our beef.

As lead agency for an exotic animal disease incursion, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) has invested significantly in FMD preparedness. This includes enhanced surveillance activities for early detection of FMD; training of response staff; and contingency planning to implement the agreed national FMD response strategy.

Preparedness for a response to foot-and-mouth disease is well advanced, including:

- the Queensland Livestock Standstill Management Plan as the first response to any report of FMD;
- identification of suitable locations and necessary resources to facilitate the management of a whole-of-Government response to a foot-and-mouth disease incident;
- planning documents and operating procedures to manage mass animal destruction, transport and disposal activities;
- surge capacity planning for the veterinary diagnostic laboratory;
- extensive engagement with our industry partners and the State Disaster Management system to build a shared understanding of the enormity of an FMD response and the role and responsibilities to be played by all partners in such a response.

Training initiatives have been instrumental in preparing staff for a FMD outbreak. Examples include:

- Exercise Border Bridge was conducted last year with more than 260 people from across Australia to advance capability to respond to a nationally significant cross-border biosecurity emergency and strengthen partnerships with biosecurity stakeholders;
- DAF has supported five staff to undertake FMD disease real-time training in Nepal and to bring learnings back to share and refine our response approach.

- Exercise Dragonglass and Exercise Obsidian were undertaken to test arrangements for the supply and distribution of simulated FMD vaccine and vaccination equipment from the vaccine bank in the United Kingdom to the farm gate in Queensland;
- specific functional training to support any response is ongoing, including: infected site supervisor training; incident management team training and logistics; and planning real time exercises.