

## NAQS ANIMAL HEALTH SURVEILLANCE IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES.

Dr Joe Schmidt

Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) a program of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Agriculture

Strategy:

- To implement a third-party based animal health pilot project in remote communities based on syndromic surveillance methods of domestic and wild animals, to complement the other surveillance activities undertaken by NAQS to detect exotic animal pests and diseases in northern Australia.
- The reports will be compiled by Indigenous ranger groups (or possibly animal management workers where appropriate and agreed) on a fee-for-service basis in communities identified through NAQS risk-identification processes as being at relatively higher risk of incursion of animal pests and diseases (such as rabies).
- Syndromic surveillance is an approach to monitor populations for change in disease levels. It is based on monitoring for general characteristic syndromes of specific NAQS targeted pests and diseases however should also provide evidence of any emerging diseases.
- Syndromic surveillance will allow the monitoring of trend analysis of changing disease status within the domestic animal population of the community and between communities in the same area for the early detection of exotic pests and diseases. Reporting will also assisted with the gathering of negative data to provide evidence of the absence of NAQS targeted diseases.
- The initiation of this pilot program will support and enhance current surveillance strategies already carried out by NAQS such as public awareness and community visits associated with annual survey activities.

Proposal:

- Based on the current NAQS risk area review, remote communities will be chosen on a risk return basis, across northern Australia.
- A questionnaire-based report format has been developed with the primary focus on general clinical signs and syndromes of four NAQS targeted diseases:
  - 1) Rabies
  - 2) Surra
  - 3) Foot and mouth disease
  - 4) Screw worm fly

These diseases have been selected based on current relative risk of entry associated with NAQS specific pathways and relevance to animal species commonly found in or around Indigenous communities.

- Participant groups in the pilot project will be asked to collate information from a range of relevant groups and individuals working and living in remote communities including Indigenous ranger groups, community animal management workers/ environmental health workers, local police, community health clinics, tourist operations, visiting remote area private veterinarians and people known to regularly participate in recreational hunting activities.

- Data collection and reporting to NAQS to be carried out quarterly.
- iTracker software has been developed to assist with data collection but can also be completed in hard-copy if preferred.