Wildlife Health Australia: Strategic Plan 2015-16 to 2017-18
Executive summary

Wildlife Health Australia is the peak body for wildlife health in Australia. Wildlife Health Australia has six strategic objectives for 2015-16 to 2017-18:

- Improve Australia’s overall national surveillance capability to support the protection of the natural environment.
- Ensure early detection of significant health and disease events involving wildlife.
- Maintain response readiness for wildlife diseases.
- Improve Australia’s ability to manage and respond to wildlife health and disease events.
- Improve knowledge of priority questions of wildlife health and diseases as identified by stakeholders and partners.
- Improve understanding of the risks posed to Australia by wildlife diseases.

Wildlife Health Australia is needed to help manage the adverse effects of wildlife diseases on Australia’s natural environment, biodiversity, trade, human health and tourism.
Who we are

Wildlife Health Australia is the peak body for wildlife health in Australia. We were established in 2002 as the Australian Wildlife Health Network, a national government initiative, and our work continues following incorporation as the independent, incorporated association Wildlife Health Australia in 2013.

Our Vision is "Healthy wildlife, healthy Australia". Our Mission is to develop strong partnerships to better manage the adverse effects of wildlife diseases on Australia’s animal industries, human health, biodiversity, trade and tourism.

What are we here for?

Our principal objectives are the protection and enhancement of the natural environment. We undertake research, investigation and monitor wildlife diseases in Australia.

Why are we needed?

Diseases and disease agents of feral animals and wildlife pose a threat to Australia's natural environment, trade, human health, biodiversity and tourism and are the most common source of emerging diseases. These diseases can impact upon people, food animals and biodiversity. Wildlife are important indicators of environmental health, and are also hosts and/or reservoirs for important diseases and disease agents that could affect Australia’s trade and market access. Detection of disease and disease agents in wildlife, and the lack of evidence of absence to satisfy trading partners, can have large economic costs. Furthermore, wildlife are susceptible to many of the important emergency diseases of production animals and spillover to humans and food animals can occur. All evidence suggests that the risks to Australia posed by diseases with wildlife as part of their ecology will become greater with changing land use, climate change and as societal attitudes bring wildlife, livestock and people into closer contact.
What guides us

Our principles guide our operation and management. They are for an organisation that:

- focuses on human and animal health issues associated with wild animals that might impact on Australia’s natural environment, animal and human health, biodiversity, trade and tourism;
- is based on scientific endeavour and scientific objectivity;
- initiates multi-organisational collaboration amongst federal, state, local government and non-government agencies;
- strives for collaboration and complementarity rather than competition;
- is non-regulatory, financially responsible and efficient, and;
- works in the national interest.

Focus

Wildlife Health Australia focuses on nationally important and significant diseases with wildlife as part of their ecology that impact on Australia’s natural environment, biodiversity, trade, human health and tourism. Emerging, exotic, zoonotic and agriculturally significant diseases are emphasised in the operations of Wildlife Health Australia. Diseases with feral animals as part of their ecology and those that impact upon the natural environment are a high priority.

Definition of wildlife and wildlife diseases

For the purpose of this plan:

- wildlife includes native and feral animals, including amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals. Free living fish are also included but are of lower priority
- wildlife diseases includes emerging, emergency and zoonotic animal diseases and diseases that can threaten the natural environment and biodiversity in Australia.
The plan

What we believe to be important (Areas of Focus), what we want to achieve (Strategic Objectives), how we are going to get there (Tasks to Achieve the Objectives), what we are going to contribute (Outputs) and what the overall result of our activities will be for Australia (Outcomes). *Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each area of focus are presented.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas of focus</th>
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<td>Smarter Surveillance</td>
<td>Improve Australia’s overall national surveillance capability to support the protection of the natural environment</td>
<td>• Assist and enable stakeholders to identify, develop, implement and manage specific surveillance projects involving wildlife. • Facilitate and assist in developing smarter ways of improving the scope, scale and sensitivity of wildlife health surveillance at a national level.</td>
<td>• Better tools for wildlife health surveillance to support Australia’s trade and animal health industries, human health, biodiversity and tourism. • Analysis, intelligence and written reports.</td>
<td>• Improved protection of trade and animal health industries, human health, biodiversity and tourism.</td>
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<td>• Ensure early detection of significant health and disease events involving wildlife.</td>
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<td>• Facilitate and assist in developing smarter ways of improving the scope, scale and sensitivity of wildlife health surveillance at a national level.</td>
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**KPIs**

- Management of field surveys and investigations of wildlife disease as agreed.
- Collection and management of relevant data for wildlife disease events / incidents, as agreed by responsible authorities.
- Moderation of national data as required, and collation of selected historical information, and reporting as relevant.
- Maintenance of data management procedures as required by stakeholders and data owners.
- Provision of data as agreed to inform policy and support strategy development.

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* KPIs are the required project outcomes as identified in the WHA core-funding grant for the 5 years from July 2013 until June 2018.
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- Improve Australia’s ability to manage and respond to wildlife health and disease events. | - Provide expert input into planning and response strategies that involve wildlife.  
- Provide effective analysis and foresighting. | - Better integration of wildlife into national preparedness and response frameworks.  
- Increased confidence in our ability to detect and respond to disease events associated with wildlife. | - A healthier and safer Australia. |

**KPIs**

- Horizon and environmental scanning for emerging issues of potential national significance and weekly reporting to the Australian Government Department of Agriculture.
- National wildlife health surveillance data available to support the development of regional and national wildlife health emergency preparedness and response documents.

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| - Improve knowledge of priority questions of wildlife health and diseases as identified by stakeholders and partners.  
- Improve understanding of the risks posed to Australia by wildlife diseases. | - Facilitate and guide research and investigation into the diseases of wildlife that may impact on Australia’s trade and market access, human health, biodiversity and tourism.  
- Provide input into planning and support for national research and education and training program priorities. | - Identification of knowledge, needs and opportunities.  
- Peer reviewed publications.  
- Access to information.  
- A strong, targeted wildlife health research sector. | - Increased recognition by stakeholders and the public of the benefits of wildlife health to Australia. |

**KPIs**

- Liaison with stakeholders on national wildlife health projects other projects as agreed by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture.
- Provision of technical advice, data and reports to relevant government and non-government agencies as agreed in the work plan.
- Reporting as requested to support Australia’s national and international reporting responsibilities.
- Special projects as requested by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture and agreed in the Wildlife Health Australia work plan.
# Cross-cutting areas

In 2015-16 to 2017-18 Wildlife Health Australia will also operate in three areas that cut across the areas of focus contained within the strategic plan. The areas are:

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| **The future** | • Future proofing Australia in the area of wildlife health.  
• Ensure that we can identify what we need to do to protect Australia from the adverse impacts of wildlife diseases into the future.  
• Ensure that we have appropriately trained people and the processes necessary to identify, respond and manage these risks. | • Improve awareness of the importance of wildlife health and surveillance to the community and stakeholders.  
• Increase Australia’s capacity for education and training in wildlife health by facilitating, contributing to and running education and training courses in wildlife health and preparedness. | • Knowing what we need to do and the people who know what to do and how to do it.  
• Education and training courses.  
• Better management of the risks associated with wildlife health and disease.  
• Better protected:  
  • animal industries, including improved trade and market access advantage, and;  
  • human health and biodiversity. | • A healthier Australia, including its people, livestock industries and ecosystems. |
| **Synergy**    | • Develop strong strategic alliances with partners and formalise these relationships.  
• Engage and work closely with partners to collect wildlife health data in the national interest.  
• Develop and implement a communications and marketing strategy that identifies the needs of stakeholders and facilitates funding and action. | | • Formal relationships for mutual benefit.  
• Coordination, cooperation and collaboration.  
• Funding and support for wildlife health activities identified as important by stakeholders.  
• A more efficient and effective approach to wildlife health management in Australia. | • Improved wildlife health management in Australia. |
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<td>To be a trusted and respected peak body for wildlife health in Australia.</td>
<td>Maintain the respect and trust of both government and non-government stakeholders and the public.</td>
<td>An efficient, cost effective and well coordinated and managed wildlife health sector for Australia.</td>
<td>Animal, human and environmental health systems that are better able to meet the needs of Australia into the future.</td>
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<td>To employ and retain the best people, who will commit and contribute to our country.</td>
<td>Ensure good management and best practice corporate governance of Wildlife Health Australia and its programs and projects.</td>
<td>Capacity building, future proofing and risk reduction by inclusion of appropriately trained and skilled people into Australia’s animal health arrangements.</td>
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<td>Leadership and looking after our people</td>
<td>Recruit the best quality staff and make a commitment to their continuing professional development that will allow them to achieve their full potential.</td>
<td>Improved coordination and management of issues associated with wildlife health in Australia.</td>
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Implementing this plan

This plan drives a business plan approved by an independently elected management committee, an annual operating plan and work plan.

About this plan

This plan is intended to be the key guiding document for Wildlife Health Australia to the end of the current funding period. It is an important enabler for the wildlife component of a number of other Australian national initiatives including the National Animal Health Surveillance and Diagnostic Strategy under the National Biosecurity Committee’s Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity (IGAB) National Surveillance and Diagnostics Framework (Figure 1). The Wildlife Health Australia strategic plan also recognises and supports the work of World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the OIE Wildlife Working Group.

Figure 1.
Review

This plan is reviewed each year by the Wildlife Health Australia management committee.