

# **Agriculture Victoria Statement of Expectations – Annual Progress Report 2024-2025**



On 12 September 2024, the Minister for Agriculture issued a Statement of Expectations letter (SOE Letter) for Agriculture Victoria's regulatory functions for the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2027.

This progress report details progress and achievements against these expectations across the first year of the SOE Letter (i.e., 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025).

Priority area	Minister's Expectations	Key Year 1 deliverables against each of the 3 priority areas and expected delivery timeframes	Progress as of 30 June 2025
<b>Risk-based Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritise the continuous improvement of regulatory practices by regularly reviewing the effectiveness of managing regulatory risks, including biosecurity incidents such as avian influenza.</li> <li>• Enhance compliance planning and the development of risk-based compliance strategies.</li> <li>• Strengthen preparedness and emergency response capabilities for biosecurity threats.</li> <li>• Effectively communicate Agriculture Victoria's regulatory approach and framework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct annual health checks of the 3-year Compliance Program Strategies and annual operational plans across all regulatory areas, including developing enforcement guidelines for Livestock Traceability, Product Integrity, and Livestock Welfare.</li> <li>• Develop risk-based compliance strategies, including new approaches for horticulture sectors such as berries, leafy vegetables, and melons.</li> <li>• Prepare a new Domestic Animal Regulation compliance strategy for 2025-2028, replacing the current one expiring in June 2025.</li> <li>• Enhance the Victorian Government's readiness for Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) outbreaks through the EAD Preparedness Program, including H5N1 planning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture Victoria's ten regulatory programs continued to review and update their 3-year Compliance Program Strategies, which guide how risks of harm are prioritised and addressed. Annual operational plans were developed from these strategies, ensuring regulatory decision-making is structured, risk based, and aligned with longer term objectives. An annual health check process was undertaken by regulatory programs to confirm that strategies remained current and fit for purpose.</li> <li>• <b>Apiary and Chemical programs:</b> Both program strategies (2022-2025) expired in June. New 2025-2028 strategies were developed and approved, providing updated direction for the next three years.</li> <li>• <b>Horticulture Food Safety:</b> A dedicated compliance strategy was developed to guide regulation under the <i>Food Act 1984</i>. It focuses on seed sprouts, berries, leafy vegetables, and melons, and incorporates the new Primary Production and Processing Standards that came into effect on 12 February 2025.</li> <li>• <b>Domestic Animal Regulation Compliance Strategy:</b> Development of the 2025-2028 strategy was delayed due to the deployment of key personnel to two biosecurity emergency responses. Work will resume in 2025-26.</li> <li>• <b>Protecting Victoria from Biosecurity Threats Program:</b> Delivery remained focused on Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) preparedness, with particular emphasis on the high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 strain. High-risk wildlife species and locations were identified, and tailored policies and procedures were finalised to respond to wildlife impacts.</li> <li>• <b>EAD Waste Management Preparedness:</b> Implementation of the EAD Waste Management Plan progressed, including new burial pit designs and site assessments across Agriculture Victoria land. These designs were successfully applied at the Rutherglen research farm during the 2025 HPAI outbreak. A carcass composting trial - supported by EPA Victoria - is</li> </ul>

Priority area	Minister's Expectations	Key Year 1 deliverables against each of the 3 priority areas and expected delivery timeframes	Progress as of 30 June 2025
			underway, while updated guidance for on-farm carcass burial was published in August 2024. Preparedness has continued to mature across national policy, surge workforce, and diagnostic capacity, reflecting a stronger, more coordinated system for managing major disease threats.
<b>Improved delivery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement operational improvements in the delivery of regulatory services.</li> <li>Ensure all Agriculture Victoria regulatory staff are well trained and knowledgeable about their authorising legislation and related regulatory frameworks and procedures.</li> <li>Enhance business processes and technology systems that support the efficient and effective delivery of regulatory services, recognising external dependencies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain and review Standard Operating Procedures across all regulatory areas to ensure relevance and effectiveness.</li> <li>Enhance the skills of Authorised Officers in investigation and compliance, while fostering knowledge sharing through forums and communities of practice. This includes hosting events such as the Biosecurity Roundtable and engaging in outreach such as field days.</li> <li>Develop the Biosecurity Services Centre to centralise the administration of regulatory services such as the provision of National Livestock Identification System tags, beekeeper arrangements, livestock export permits, property identification codes and horticulture food safety registrations.</li> <li>Maintain existing online services including Livestock Tags, Property Identification Codes, Bee Registration and Plant Health Certification and Pet Exchange Register.</li> <li>Implement new regulatory arrangements in Agriculture Victoria Connect, for example plant biosecurity market access permissions.</li> <li>Advance the Agriculture Victoria Digital Channel Strategy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):</b> Agriculture Victoria's regulatory programs continued to maintain and review their SOPs to ensure consistency, effectiveness, and relevance. Updates included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Submission of Information Reports SOP</i> – providing clear guidelines for Authorised Officers (AOs) and Inspectors on preparing reports, requesting intelligence checks and handling sensitive information.</li> <li><i>Ruminant Feed Ban Program SOP</i> - outlining compliance processes for sites that manufacture, sell and use stock feed for livestock.</li> <li><i>Pest Animal Permit Administration SOP</i> – newly developed to drive consistency and improve regulatory outcomes in the processing of pest animal permits.</li> <li><i>Check-In Arrangements for Field Staff SOP</i> - introduced to support staff safety, aligned with the roll-out of the Journey-Mate system and Garmin Mini devices.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Building Investigative Capability:</b> During the 2024-2025, 57 officers pursued the Certificate IV in Government Investigations, with 12 successfully completing the qualification to date. Training outcomes included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>23 officers completing Client Interaction and Defensive Tactics training.</li> <li>6 completing gap training in Client Interaction and Defensive Tactics.</li> <li>20 completing AO Introduction training.</li> <li>19 completing the Statute Law e-learning module.</li> <li>37 completing Management Systems Auditing, and</li> <li>20 completing the Module 3 of the Certificate IV course.</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Digital Transformation and AV Connect:</b> Significant steps were taken to modernise regulatory services through the Agriculture Victoria (AV) Connect program, improving</li> </ul>

Priority area	Minister's Expectations	Key Year 1 deliverables against each of the 3 priority areas and expected delivery timeframes	Progress as of 30 June 2025
			<p>business and consumer access, engagement, and overall experience. Achievements included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Launch of a new food safety regulatory framework for horticulture in February 2025</b>, delivered via AV Connect enabling businesses to meet compliance obligations.</li> <li>○ <b>Funding secured through the Department of Treasury and Finance's Business Acceleration Fund</b> to digitalise the scientific licensing program, including online submission of animal use returns by July 2026 (discovery commenced in January 2025; build phase underway).</li> <li>○ <b>Development of automated plant biosecurity importation notification and verification</b> was delayed due to resource demands and avian influenza and tomato brown rugose fruit virus emergency responses. This project will enable consignors to register online for faster processing and improved traceability will resume in 2025-26.</li> <li>○ <b>Ongoing maintenance of existing online services</b> such as Livestock Tags, Property Identification Codes, Bee Registration, and Plant Health Certification, and Pet Exchange Register, with migration to AV Connect progressively underway.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Improved compliance activity:</b> Agriculture Victoria led a major crackdown on Victoria's largest known illegal network trading in exotic pest animals, preventing serious biosecurity risks and dismantling the trade. Operation DJANGO was delivered in partnership with the Conservation Regulator, Crime Stoppers Victoria (CSV), Victoria Police, and other state and federal agencies. Key outcomes included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Intelligence-led enforcement:</b> Twenty search warrants were executed, resulting in the seizure of exotic animals and digital evidence. Nine offenders were prosecuted or fined for offences relating to importation, sale, and possession with penalties exceeding \$115,000. This included the largest single fine ever issued under the <i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i> (\$54,000), and five offenders received convictions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Priority area	Minister's Expectations	Key Year 1 deliverables against each of the 3 priority areas and expected delivery timeframes	Progress as of 30 June 2025
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Community Awareness:</b> Through collaboration with CSV, the '<i>Your Pet, Our Pest</i>' campaign raised public awareness and generated valuable crime reports.</li> <li>○ <b>Building capability:</b> Officers received specialist training in intelligence analysis, digital forensics, surveillance, genetic forensics, and search warrant execution, strengthening Agriculture Victoria's future enforcement capability.</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholder consultation and engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure stakeholders are informed of Agriculture Victoria's strategic priorities and compliance activities to promote a culture of shared responsibility.</li> <li>• Actively engage with external stakeholders to effectively manage risk and support compliance.</li> <li>• Foster enhanced collaboration with other relevant agencies and regulatory bodies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educate stakeholders on biosecurity and animal welfare obligations through guidance materials and media releases.</li> <li>• Proactively collaborate with key partners, including local governments, RSPCA Victoria, and Community Pest Management Groups, through forums and regular functions.</li> <li>• Engage with Better Regulations Victoria to improve and engage Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to ensure culturally informed regulatory functions.</li> <li>• Continue partnerships under Memoranda of Understanding and professional service agreements, such as with RSPCA and PrimeSafe, to deliver co-regulatory outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In November 2024, Agriculture Victoria hosted a Biosecurity Roundtable with more than 160 participants from industry, community, and government. Key stakeholders took part in three workshops to co-develop a shared approach to implementing the Biosecurity Strategy, with discussions centred on prevention, response, and collective action.</li> <li>• To strengthen compliance preparedness, Agriculture Victoria engaged widely with external stakeholders to communicate strategic priorities and manage risks. Key initiatives included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Building capability:</b> 5 eLearning modules attracted more than 3,200 enrolments from external stakeholders and industry participants.</li> <li>○ <b>Awareness raising:</b> 12 podcasts, animations, newsletter articles, and events on H5N1 reached over 5,500 producers and stakeholders.</li> <li>○ <b>Practical resources:</b> H5N1 delivery packs were developed for Agriculture Victoria staff to present at meetings and community events.</li> <li>○ <b>Direct outreach:</b> Information displays were provided at five major industry events across Victoria.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Digital Channel Strategy:</b> To support digital service delivery, Agriculture Victoria developed a Digital Channel Strategy Change and Implementation Plan. Two short-term actions have been completed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Agriculture Victoria Website Architecture and Content Review, and</li> <li>○ Customer Contact Centre and Knowledge Article integration review.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Strategy also initiated piloting of channel planning processes, starting with Agriculture Victoria's Facebook presence which will continue into 2025-26.</li> </ul>

Priority area	Minister's Expectations	Key Year 1 deliverables against each of the 3 priority areas and expected delivery timeframes	Progress as of 30 June 2025
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In November 2024, Round 3 of the <i>Partnerships Against Pests</i> grants program was successfully delivered, supporting community-led initiatives that improve voluntary compliance.</li> <li>• Agriculture Victoria also maintained regular engagement with peak bodies, industry, and community groups including through the following forums:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>The Agriculture Industry Stakeholder Reference Group</b> which met monthly to consider strategic and emerging issues.</li> <li>◦ <b>A renewed Biosecurity Reference Group (BRG)</b> was appointed in June 2024, with expanded membership to include under-represented sectors such as the environment, Non-Government Organisations, and Traditional Owners. In 2024-25, the BRG met four times, focusing on identifying Biosecurity Strategy implementation priorities that strengthen collaboration, foster industry and community-led action, and enhance public participation in biosecurity.</li> <li>◦ <b>The Livestock Industry Consultative Committee</b> met twice, supporting Agriculture Victoria's ongoing work to strengthen livestock sector preparedness and resilience.</li> <li>◦ <b>The Australian and New Zealand Animals in Research and Teaching Regulatory Community of Practice</b> convened four times to discuss emerging issues, explore collaboration opportunities, and share best practice approaches.</li> <li>◦ <b>The Victorian Invasive Pest Advisory Board</b>, established in October 2023, held its sixth meeting on 8 May 2025, with a program of further meetings already scheduled.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Agriculture Victoria's <i>barpangu yurpangu Self-Determination Action Plan</i>, rolling out in 2025–2026, commits to empowering First Peoples in the agricultural sector by reforming internal systems, practices, and policies. It aligns with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action's <i>Pupangarli Marnmarnepu</i> strategy and the Victorian government's Aboriginal Affairs Framework.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ The plan represents a strategic opportunity for Agriculture Victoria to embed self-determination into</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Priority area	Minister's Expectations	Key Year 1 deliverables against each of the 3 priority areas and expected delivery timeframes	Progress as of 30 June 2025
			<p>its core business. By centring First Peoples priorities, it strengthens Agriculture Victoria's capacity to deliver more inclusive services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture Victoria continued to uphold its commitment to collaboration through quarterly meetings with RSPCA Victoria under the existing Memorandum of Understanding, ensuring ongoing alignment on shared animal welfare priorities. Partnerships with Victoria Police remained a key focus, with joint investigations conducted across several areas, most notably in Livestock Traceability. In addition to these investigations each agency supported the other's operational requirements, reinforcing a strong, coordinated enforcement presence.</li> </ul>