Annual performance report against  
Agriculture Victoria’s   
Statement of Expectations for Biosecurity, Animal Health and Welfare, and Domestic Animals   
(1 January 2018 to 30 June 2019)

February 2020

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# Introduction

On 6 January 2018, the Hon Jaala Pulford MP, former Minister for Agriculture, provided with a Statement of Expectations (SOE) for Agriculture Victoria’s biosecurity, animal health and welfare, and domestic animals functions (for the period 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2019).

This report details progress and achievements against the improvement activities outlined in Agriculture Victoria’s response to the Minister for Agriculture’s SOE. This report covers full SOE period.

# Improvements and targets

Agriculture Victoria’s priorities for improvement are outlined below.

## Timeliness

| **Improvement** | **Target** |
| --- | --- |
| Develop principles to guide the design and implementation of digital administrative processes for applications and information management, including e-capability and information provision. | 30 June 2018 |
| Prioritise online capability for the remaining 33 licence, permit, certification, and registration application processes by regulated parties. | 31 December 2018 |
| Increase the number of biosecurity application processes that are available online to at least 9, focusing on identified priority areas. | 30 June 2019 |
| 100 per cent of new application processes introduced will be made available online in the first instance. | Ongoing |

## Risk based strategies

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Improvement** | **Target** |
| Review and update all risk-based compliance strategies. | 31 December 2018 |
| Review and update all risk-based compliance operations plans. | 30 June 2019 |
| Investigate gaps in current legislative powers and provisions to effectively address marine pest biosecurity for Victoria. | 30 June 2019 |
| Develop a marine pest biosecurity policy that includes priority areas for data collection. | 30 June 2019 |

## Compliance related assistance and advice

| **Improvement** | **Target** |
| --- | --- |
| Prepare a plan to review current website content to ensure advisory material for regulated parties is current, relevant and accessible. | 30 June 2018 |
| Implement first stage of website content review. | 30 June 2019 |
| Introduce an ongoing monitoring program of website content to ensure information remains contemporary to legislative requirements and appropriate for use. This will include engagement with end-users to determine their ongoing information requirements as appropriate. | 30 June 2018 |
| Collect stakeholder information and report on the accessibility and effectiveness of available advisory information relating to EID of sheep and goats in Victoria. Report responses to any recommended improvements. | 31 December 2018 |

## Role clarity

| **Improvement** | **Target** |
| --- | --- |
| Review current agreement on operational arrangements between DEDJTR[[1]](#footnote-1) and Victoria Police for regulating poppy and hemp production. | 30 June 2018 |
| Develop an agreement with Department of Health and Human Services for Agriculture Victoria staff to be authorised under the *Drugs Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981.* | 30 June 2018 |
| Clarify roles and responsibilities between DEDJTR and Department of Health and Human Services for primary production related food safety incident management under the *Victorian Food Act 1984*. | 30 June 2018 |
| Document the Victorian enforcement framework for animal welfare in Victoria and identify where greater clarity is required. | 30 June 2018 |

## Cooperation among regulators

| **Improvement** | **Target** |
| --- | --- |
| Conduct at least one disease emergency exercise per year in consultation with other state and federal departments as required. | Annually |
| Undertake a monitoring and reporting program in association with at least one other regulator to increase community reporting of high-risk invasive animal activity in Victoria. | 30 June 2019 |

## Stakeholder consultation and engagement

| **Improvement** | **Target** |
| --- | --- |
| Identify and plan opportunities to increase consultation and engagement with key stakeholders (including but not limited to consultative committees, representative bodies, product manufacturers, producers, and exporters) regarding new regulatory reforms. | 30 September 2018 |
| Undertake stakeholder consultation on 100% of regulatory reviews. | Ongoing |
| Provide feedback to all parties making submissions on proposed regulatory reviews within two months of the comment period closing. | Ongoing |
| Engage with stakeholders about reform of Victoria’s animal welfare legislation through written documents and face-to-face consultation. | 30 December 2019 |

## Clear and consistent regulatory activities

| **Improvement** | **Target** |
| --- | --- |
| Identify options for a new case management system for animal health and welfare to centralise compliance systems, processes, and data management. | 30 June 2018 |
| Monitor the implementation of changes that have been made in response to evaluation of emergency responses and or exercises. | Annually |

## Evaluation

| **Improvement** | **Target** |
| --- | --- |
| Evaluate the performance improvements and targets contained in the SOE. | Annually |

# Timeliness

Agriculture Victoria provides advice to regulated parties on expected decision timeframes for an increasing number of licences, permits, certifications, registrations and administrative processes. Approximately 40 types of permits, licences, approvals, certifications and registrations are currently administered by Agriculture Victoria.

Agriculture Victoria delivered the following improvements:

* **Develop principles to guide the design and implementation of digital administrative processes for applications and information management, including e-capability and information provision *(Completed)***.

Agriculture Victoria adopted the Whole-of-Victorian-Government Digital Standards Framework, that includes 12 Digital Design Principles for best practice. All future online services will be designed and implemented in line with these principles. Further information on the Digital Standards can be found at: <https://www.vic.gov.au/digitalstandards/design-build/>

* **Prioritise online capability for the remaining 33 licence, permit, certification, and registration application processes by regulated parties *(Completed)*.**

The prioritisation of these processes has now been completed. Many of these process improvements have now been implemented or are currently underway. A number of the small volume processes have not been pursued because they were assessed as low priority against the range of Agriculture Victoria priority technology projects for 2018-19. Agriculture Victoria uses two service models to categorise and prioritise the digital transformation of its application processes. These are:

1. Regulated parties are provided a template that can be downloaded, completed online and printed or submitted by email. During 2017-18 new online templates were developed for animal sale permits, declared bird organisations and approved commercial dog breeder applications.
2. Regulated parties undertake the process completely or substantially online. High volume processes have been prioritised for delivery as online services. These include livestock tag sales, Property Identification Code (PIC) registrations, beekeeper registrations, chemical user permitting and the Pet Exchange Register.

Agriculture Victoria has implemented 10 authenticated online processes (listed in the next improvement area).

* **Increase the number of biosecurity application processes that are available online to at least 9, focusing on identified priority areas *(Completed)*.**

Currently, there are 10 authenticated online processes:

* + - animal PIC applications
    - plant PIC applications
    - purchase of livestock tags
    - Agriculture Chemical User Permit applications (with four endorsement types)
    - bee keeper registrations
    - Plant Health Certificates
    - Pet Exchange Register

Service Victoria is a program of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. It delivers authenticated online services to the Victorian community. Agriculture Victoria is investigating opportunities for Service Victoria to be a key partner in delivery of future online services. Agriculture Victoria has developed services for issuing permits associated with biosecurity emergency responses. These services will leverage the external forms tool set developed to provide integrated online service delivery within MAX, the Biosecurity and Agriculture Services web-based case management platform. These services will only be made publicly available in the event of an emergency response.

* **100 per cent of new application processes introduced will be made available online in the first instance *(Ongoing)*.**

Agriculture Victoria has been working on a new online solution to provide private veterinarians with an online platform for interacting with the department and support the management of the workflow for animal disease reporting and payments to these veterinarians. This is expected to be rolled out in early 2020.

# Risk based strategies

Risk-based compliance strategies to address biosecurity risks and issues are in place across all program areas. These strategies, and their corresponding operational compliance plans and enforcement processes, are being reviewed during the term of this SOE to ensure their relevance.

In describing responsibilities for marine pest biosecurity in Victoria, Agriculture Victoria has worked collaboratively with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to develop policy, review legislation and identify additional data to inform risk-based strategies.

Agriculture Victoria delivered the following improvements:

* **Review and update all risk-based compliance strategies *(Completed)***.

Agriculture Victoria reviewed and updated the risk-based compliance strategies following the review of the department’s compliance policy. Further reviews and updates will occur as the department modernises its approach to biosecurity regulation.

* **Review and update all risk-based compliance operations plans *(Completed)*.**

Agriculture Victoria has formulated risk-based compliance plans for Chemicals (Agricultural and Veterinary), Apiary, Forest Protest Management, Hemp and Poppy industries, Invasive Species, Plant Biosecurity, Livestock Welfare and Domestic Animal Services.

* **Investigate gaps in current legislative powers and provisions to effectively address marine pest biosecurity for Victoria *(Completed)*.**

Agriculture Victoria has completed its review of regulatory powers to protect Victoria from marine pest risks. The outcomes will be considered through the Strengthening Victoria's Biosecurity System project.

* **Develop a marine pest biosecurity policy that includes priority areas for data collection *(Completed)***.

A draft marine pest module under the Invasive Plants and Animals Policy Framework has been developed and will be finalised following further stakeholder consultation in 2020-21.

# Compliance related assistance and advice

Agriculture Victoria provides considerable advisory material to regulated parties via its website and is reviewing the clarity and currency of this material.

The transition to electronic identification (EID) of sheep and goats in Victoria is a key reform for the traceability of livestock in Victoria. As part of this transition, Agriculture Victoria is working closely with stakeholders to provide information about the new regulatory requirements. This includes online information and videos, targeted communications, on-farm workshops and guidance materials. Agriculture Victoria is using existing data collection methods to evaluate and report on the success of these services.

Agriculture Victoria delivered the following improvements:

* **Prepare a plan to review current website content to ensure advisory material for regulated parties is current, relevant and accessible** ***(Completed)*.**

Agriculture Victoria developed an approach to audit, review and assign web content to authors within the current website platform. The initial focus is on 2,500 pages of biosecurity-related content.

* **Implement first stage of website content review *(Completed)*.**

The initial audit of biosecurity related web content identified opportunities to make improvements to ensure content is regularly reviewed and updated.

An initial audit of biosecurity related web content on the Agriculture Victoria website identified opportunities to make improvements to ensure content is regularly reviewed and updated. This was used to inform the business case for the redevelopment of the website. The project was approved, and the second phase commenced in April 2019.

* **Introduce an ongoing monitoring program of website content to ensure information remains contemporary to legislative requirements and appropriate for use. This will include engagement with end-users to determine their ongoing information requirements as appropriate *(Completed)*.**

Agriculture Victoria has developed an approach to audit, review and assign web content to authors within the current website platform. The initial focus is on 2,500 pages with biosecurity-related content and authors are tasked with periodically reviewing this content. The Agriculture Victoria website redevelopment project was initiated in April 2019 and user experience research was concluded in July 2019. The project is now in delivery and will upgrade the website platform, deliver a new content architecture and undertake a content audit of the existing website to identify content to be written, retired, edited, repurposed and migrated. A content strategy will be developed to ensure the purpose of the website is clear, content is engaging, accessible, relevant, current and accurate and has a consistent structure, tone and style.

* **Collect stakeholder information and report on the accessibility and effectiveness of available advisory information relating to EID of sheep and goats in Victoria. Report responses to any recommended improvements *(Completed)*.**

An external evaluator conducted a mid-term project evaluation providing analysis of the availability and effectiveness of advisory information, including recommendations for future activities related to advisory information for the implementation of electronic identification for NLIS (Sheep & Goats).

# Role clarity

Regulation of new industries sometimes results in new regulators, or new parties entering a regulatory framework. Coordination and accountability will be enhanced by developing and reviewing agreements for new and existing regulatory activities.

Agriculture Victoria delivered the following improvements:

* **Review current agreement on operational arrangements between DEDJTR and Victoria Police for regulating poppy and hemp production *(Completed)*.**

**Hemp Production** - The agreement was reviewed and the ongoing arrangements between the department and Victoria Police have been confirmed.

**Poppy production** - The agreement was reviewed and the ongoing arrangements between the department and Victoria Police have been confirmed.

* **Develop an agreement with Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for Agriculture Victoria staff to be authorised under the *Drugs Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* *(Completed)*.**

In May 2018, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Secretaries of DEDJTR and DHHS for Agriculture Victoria staff to be appointed as authorised officers under the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981*. This enables officers to investigate and undertake action in relation to the illegal supply and possession of agricultural and veterinary chemicals.

* **Clarify roles and responsibilities between DEDJTR and DHHS for primary production related food safety incident management under the Victorian *Food Act 1984 (Completed)*.**

The department and DHHS have agreed to a protocol for the management of food borne illness outbreaks for on-farm investigations.

* **Document the Victorian enforcement framework for animal welfare in Victoria and identify where greater clarity is required *(Completed)*.**

Agriculture Victoria engaged an independent consultant to review the Victorian enforcement framework for animal welfare. The review identified areas for improvement as part of development of a new animal welfare act.

# Cooperation among regulators

Agriculture Victoria regularly conducts emergency response exercises for biosecurity related incidents. Recent exercises involved attendance from several key Victorian agencies such as Victoria Police, DHHS, and federal agencies including the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, and Plant Health Australia. All exercises are evaluated, with a range of recommendations developed for consideration. Agriculture Victoria will continue to run emergency response exercises focusing on coordination between the department and other emergency response agencies, with a focus on implementing lessons learned.

Agriculture Victoria’s invasive species program continues to work collaboratively with DELWP to monitor and regulate the illegal trade in exotic pest animals. The program also works with Crime Stoppers Victoria to encourage the community to report any activities or information relating to the illegal trade of high-risk invasive animals.

Agriculture Victoria delivered the following improvements:

* **Conduct at least one disease emergency exercise per year in consultation with other state and federal departments as required *(Annual)*.**

Agriculture Victoria participated in the national *Bee Prepared* apiary emergency response exercise on 13 March 2018. The exercise facilitated by Plant Health Australia tested Agriculture Victoria’s capability and capacity to undertake surveillance and respond in the first 2-7 days post a Varroa mite detection. The after-action review indicated that the scenario was effectively managed and that Agriculture Victoria’s response capacity is well positioned to manage such an incident in the future.

*Exercise Coombes* was conducted over two days in May and June 2018 with a scenario based on an incursion of the tarnished plant bug (Lygus lineolaris), a pest insect with a wide range of commercial host species. The first day of the exercise centered on a discussion and functional format involving Agriculture Victoria staff. The second day was a practical exercise involving Agriculture Victoria staff and representatives of horticulture industry sectors.

In October-November 2018, Agriculture Victoria conducted a series of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) desktop exercises in collaboration with other state and local agencies. The scenario covered the early hours of a detection of FMD in Australia and aimed to raise all agencies’ awareness of the consequences of an outbreak of FMD to Australia and to the Victorian community and economy. Following the success of the FMD desktop exercises, Agriculture Victoria ran a functional pre-season Regional Emergency Management Team (REMT) FMD exercise to illustrate the urgent actions Agriculture Victoria would take and how other agencies would support Agriculture Victoria in its response to managing the wide-ranging impacts on the Eastern Metropolitan region.

* **Undertake a monitoring and reporting program in association with at least one other regulator to increase community reporting of high-risk invasive animal activity in Victoria (*Completed*).**

From July to December 2017, Agriculture Victoria partnered with the DELWP and Crime Stoppers Victoria to run the ‘Trafficked, Traded, and Traumatised’ campaign. The multi-faceted media and marketing campaign used a broad range of media and social media platforms to increase public awareness about the risks created by the trafficking of wildlife (both exotic and native) in Victoria. It was also used to encourage the public to report information that may restrict the trade of illegal wildlife. A total of 28 intelligence reports were received from the public as a result of the campaign. The campaign generated significant media coverage with 145 media articles across 56 different media outlets and four media channels, with a potential reach of 34 million people. The reach of the campaign was further extended using social media and advertising via Facebook (over 207,000 impressions), Tribe (2,000 video views) and Gumtree (45,000 impressions). Images used for the campaign were: Top Left A red-eared slider turtle pictured with a cardboard box; Top right A hedgehog, pictured with plastic containers; Bottom left A chameleon pictured with tape; and
Bottom right A boa constrictor pictured with hessian sacks.


* A red-eared slider turtle pictured with a cardboard box;
* A hedgehog, pictured with plastic containers;
* A chameleon pictured with tape; and
* A boa constrictor pictured with hessian sacks.

# Stakeholder consultation and advice

Agriculture Victoria recognises the importance of proactive engagement with stakeholders and the broader community to support the delivery of policies, programs and information. It is committed to seeking input on legislative reform and regulatory reviews and looks for new opportunities to engage on new regulatory reforms.

Agriculture Victoria delivered the following improvements:

* **Identify and plan opportunities to increase consultation and engagement with key stakeholders (including but not limited to consultative committees, representative bodies, product manufacturers, producers, and exporters) regarding new regulatory reforms *(Completed)*.**

During 2017-18, Agriculture Victoria increased consultation and engagement with key stakeholders for the following regulatory reforms:

* *Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Act 2017* and Domestic Animals (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Regulations 2018
* *Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breed Dogs) Act 2017* and Domestic Animals (Infringement Notice) Regulations 2018
* Code of Practice for the Keeping of Racing Greyhounds
* Livestock Disease Control Regulations 2017
* Meat Industry Regulations 2015

During 2018-19, Agriculture Victoria increased consultation and engagement with key stakeholders for the following regulatory reforms:

* Domestic Animals Amendment Regulations 2019
* Remaking of the Prevention to Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2008 and associated Regulatory Impact Statement.
* **Undertake stakeholder consultation on 100% of regulatory reviews *(Ongoing)*.**

During the period of the SOE, Agriculture Victoria consulted on all of the following regulatory reviews.

* *Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Act 2017* and Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Regulations 2018
* *Domestic Animals Amendment (Restricted Breed Dogs) Act 2017* and Domestic Animals Amendment (Infringement Notice) Regulations 2018
* Code of Practice for the Keeping of Racing Greyhounds
* Code of Practice for the Operation of Breeding and Rearing Businesses
* Code of Practice for the Operation of Pet Shops
* Impounding of Livestock Regulations 2008
* Livestock Disease Control Regulations 2017
* Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Regulations 2017
* Domestic Animals Amendment Regulations 2019
* Remaking of the Prevention to Cruelty to Animals Regulations 2008 and associated Regulatory Impact Statement
* **Provide feedback to all parties making submissions on proposed regulatory reviews within two months of the comment period closing *(Ongoing)*.**

As standard practice, Agriculture Victoria provided feedback to all parties that make submissions on regulatory reform. Examples are provided below:

* Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Regulations 2018 - consultation and response via email within two months of comment period closing
* Code of Practice for the Keeping of Racing Greyhounds – 60-day public comment period, all submitters received an acknowledgement email and formal response via letter or email within two months of comment period closing and a formal response following the release of the final Code and the associated Statement of Reasons
* Impounding of Livestock Regulations 2008 - All stakeholders supported the proposed regulations
* Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Regulations 2017 and the Livestock Disease Control Regulations 2017 - written responses were provided to all parties providing submissions
* Livestock Disease Control Regulations 2017 – amendments to regulate national bee biosecurity standards – industry supportive and two concerns resulted in revisions to the new regulations
* Domestic Animals Amendment Regulations 2019 – Consultation report made available on Engage Victoria.
* **Engage with stakeholders about reform of Victoria’s animal welfare legislation through written documents and face-to-face consultation (*Well-progressed, ongoing during reform process)*.**

Agriculture Victoria is progressing work to engage with stakeholders to reform Victoria's animal welfare legislation. Victoria’s first [*Animal Welfare Action Plan - Improving the Welfare of Animals in Victoria*,](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/animal-health-and-welfare/animal-welfare/animal-welfare-action-plan) was released on 2 January 2018. The action plan takes a shared approach to improving animal welfare, encouraging proactive approach across all Victorians in caring for the welfare of animals. It reflects extensive public and industry feedback on the draft Action Plan, which received more than 600 submissions.

Agriculture Victoria has commenced a review of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*. This has so far involved consultation and engagement with over 200 stakeholder groups. Since the beginning of 2018, workshops have been held with the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee and authorised officers across Victoria. Further public engagement on proposals for new legislation will occur, including opportunities for stakeholders to provide written feedback, as well as to meet with departmental representatives about the potential reforms.

# Clear and consistent regulatory activities

Agriculture Victoria monitors the changing external environment and identifies opportunities to improve the efficiency of its operations. Agriculture Victoria investigated options for a new case management system to enhance data collection and tracking of inspections and investigations.

Regulations provide Agriculture Victoria with emergency response powers to enable efficient and effective action when required. Agriculture Victoria evaluates its performance in biosecurity emergency responses in line with continuous improvement and implements recommendations arising from emergency responses and the evaluation of emergency response exercises.

Agriculture Victoria delivered the following improvements:

* **Identify options for a new case management system for animal health and welfare to centralise compliance systems, processes, and data management *(Completed)*.**

MAX is the Biosecurity and Agriculture Services web-based case management platform. This has been used to develop ‘Compliance MAX’, which is now used by Animal Health and Welfare authorised officers for compliance case management.

* **Monitor the implementation of changes that have been made in response to evaluation of emergency responses and or exercises *(Annual)*.**

Evaluation reports on emergency responses and exercises are managed in a web-based platform call BioWeb. Since early 2018 the national lessons management process of collecting and analysing observations, insights and lessons (OIL) has been used for all these evaluations to improve consistency and rigour. Management actions are developed against lessons identified, and these actions are recorded in a register. Progress against these actions is monitored and reported within Agriculture Victoria. Progress towards lessons learnt, based on evidence emerging from future responses or exercise activities, is regularly discussed at Agriculture Victoria Emergency Preparedness Committee meetings.

Emergency management evaluations completed 2018 and 2019 include:

* Anthrax response March 2018
* Barwon South West Fires response March 2018
* Giant Pine Scale response April 2018
* Exercise Coombes (Tarnished Plant Bug) June 2018
* Exercise Bee Prepared (varroa mite) June 2018
* Varroa response June 2018
* Anthrax response November 2018
* Brown Marmorated Stink Bug response January 2019
* Gippsland Fires response March 2019

An example of a lesson identified across multiple responses related to food hygiene for emergency responders. Evaluations of both the Barwon South West Fires and the Anthrax March 2018 responses identified a lack of appropriate storage for food and drink in hot weather. This finding resulted in an update to the Job Safety Plan: Field Operations to require the inclusion of ‘Insulated container for storing sandwiches and packed meals’ in all vehicles.

# Evaluation

Scientific research, intelligence gathering, data and statistics underpin Agriculture Victoria’s regulatory programs. The Biosecurity Evidence Framework systematically guides the collection of evidence and achievement reporting for most of Agriculture Victoria’s regulatory activities.

* **Evaluate the performance improvements and targets contained in the SOE (Annually).**

In December 2018, an evaluation of Agriculture Victoria’s SOE (1 January 2018 – 30 June 2019) was completed by the Regulatory Improvement team within the Biosecurity and Agriculture Services. Regulatory Improvement team is structurally independent from the team that developed the SOE, ensuring credibility and transparency of the evaluation process.

The evaluation found that Agriculture Victoria was making progress towards the agreed targets of the SOE and appeared to be well positioned to complete its remaining commitments. As per the DTF guidelines the evaluation report is published on the department’s website.

1. Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)