

# ALFA EAD Biosecurity Project

## Strengthening Australia's readiness for emergency animal disease

Report - March 2026



# ALFA

AUSTRALIAN LOT FEEDERS' ASSOCIATION



MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA

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# ALFA's feedlot biosecurity project – Strengthening Australia's readiness for emergency animal disease

## INTRODUCTION

Australia's biosecurity system provides a multi-layered defence against the introduction of emergency animal diseases (EADs), with the detection of Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD) and Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) in Indonesia in 2022 highlighting increased risk to the Australian cattle feedlot sector.

In response, Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) funded the Australian Lot Feeders' Association (ALFA), using grain fed levies matched by federal government investment, to deliver a comprehensive biosecurity preparedness project to strengthen prevention, response and recovery.

The project delivered updated guidance, practical tools, and enhanced NFAS biosecurity standards, including feedlot-specific EAD action planning and improved destruction, disposal and decontamination (DDD) preparedness. Collectively, these outcomes have improved feedlot readiness, strengthened industry understanding of national EAD frameworks, strengthened ALFA's capacity, and contributed to a more resilient feedlot industry with clearer response arrangements and faster recovery and return-to-trade potential.

## BACKGROUND

In May 2022, the confirmation of Lumpy Skin Disease and Foot-and-Mouth Disease in Indonesia heightened national biosecurity risk and renewed scrutiny of preparedness across Australia's livestock sectors, particularly the cattle feedlot industry, which manages around 36% of Australia's cattle turnoff.

Recognising the need to strengthen operational biosecurity capability to prevent disease entry and support an effective response, Meat & Livestock Australia funded the ALFA EAD Biosecurity Project to operationalise national EAD frameworks at a feedlot level, improve the practicality and accessibility of preparedness tools, and build capability across feedlot operators, service providers and ALFA as the peak industry body.

## BENEFITS TO INDUSTRY

The ALFA Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) Biosecurity Project delivers significant benefits to the red meat industry, particularly the cattle feedlot sector, by strengthening biosecurity and emergency preparedness.

Through the adoption of best-practice biosecurity measures and more robust planning arrangements, the project reduces biosecurity risk and improves the industry's ability to both prevent disease entry and respond effectively to an EAD incursion, supporting faster recovery while maintaining strong day-to-day biosecurity.

Early and targeted planning for destruction, disposal and decontamination (DDD) enhances response capability by identifying logistical constraints and alternative disposal options in advance, shortening response timeframes and improving coordination with state biosecurity authorities.

Modelling indicates that reducing an FMD response by six months through well-planned DDD arrangements could return approximately \$1.6 billion to the cattle sector and \$2.6 billion across other livestock industries. More broadly, the development of industry-specific EAD preparedness frameworks provides transferable benefits to the wider red meat supply chain, including the sheep and goat sectors.

## BIOSECURITY ENHANCEMENT OBJECTIVES AND PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- 1. Review the AUSVETPLAN Enterprise Manual for Beef Feedlots (last updated in 2010)**  
**Outcome:** Delivery of an updated AUSVETPLAN Enterprise Manual for Beef Feedlots to ensure that it is up to date and fit for purpose
- 2. Develop Model Feedlot Operational Procedures for preventing and responding to an LSD/FMD incursion that meet AUSVETPLAN and NFAS requirements**  
**Outcome:** Delivery of practical Model Feedlot Operational Procedures for preventing and responding to an LSD/FMD incursion that align with AUSVETPLAN and NFAS requirements, meet industry and government authority needs and are presented in a format that maximises adoption by feedlot operators
- 3. Build feedlot enterprise capability to prevent and respond to an LSD/FMD incursion at the feedlot enterprise level**  
**Outcome:** Each Australian cattle feedlot understands, has in place and is practicing enhanced Operational Procedures for preventing and responding to an LSD/FMD incursion
- 4. Build feedlot industry service provider's knowledge and understanding of the feedlot industry's Operational Procedures for preventing and responding to an LSD/FMD incursion**  
**Outcome:** Feedlot industry service providers, being Feedlot Veterinarians, Feedlot Nutritionists and AUS-MEAT NFAS Auditors, understand the feedlot industry's enhanced preventative and response measures to the threat of LSD/FMD
- 5. Build ALFA EAD response capacity**  
**Outcome:** ALFA has dedicated resources to field inquiries from feedlot operators, feedlot industry service providers, and government authorities on EAD technical and operational matters

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT DECISION MAKING AND ENCOURAGE COMMERCIAL ADOPTION

A national communications and training program supported adoption of the new resources and NFAS enhancements through ten face-to-face workshops across major feedlot regions, a targeted service-provider webinar, coordinated communications campaigns, promotion of additional training opportunities, and collaboration with AUS-MEAT to align auditor requirements.

These activities were designed to improve awareness, build practical capability and enable peer-to-peer learning, and were well attended, with 29 service delivery personnel participating in the webinar and 220 participants attending workshops representing 859,921 head of cattle.

The project was further supported by the establishment of the [ALFA Biosecurity Hub](#), which provides a central access point for feedlot operators and service providers to biosecurity resources, guidance and training materials. The hub consolidates project outputs with existing tools, supporting ongoing adoption beyond the life of the project and reinforcing consistent, practical biosecurity practices across the feedlot sector.

## BEHAVIOUR CHANGE RESULTS & ATTITUDES TOWARDS BIOSECURITY

Workshop surveys captured participant perceptions of biosecurity and identified training priorities:

- **61.33%** of participants already considered biosecurity highly important.
- **37.33%** increased their rating from "important" to "very important" after the workshop.

- Participants identified DDD planning, particularly destruction and disposal, as the most challenging aspect of EAD preparedness.
- Word-cloud analysis indicated priority areas including humane destruction options, pre-border biosecurity, NLIS/traceability, composting, communications and improved training.

These insights have informed ongoing ALFA priorities and future R&D priorities.

Participant surveys were used to assess attitudes toward biosecurity before and after attendance at the ALFA EAD Biosecurity Workshops. Prior to the workshops, most participants already placed a high level of importance on biosecurity, providing a strong baseline for understanding industry attitudes. Following the workshops, results showed a positive shift, with 61.33% of participants already rating biosecurity as highly important and a further 37.33% increasing their rating from important to very important, indicating a 37% uplift in recognition of biosecurity's importance and the need to address exotic animal diseases. Only a small proportion of respondents (1.33%) reported no change in their views.

The survey also explored which aspects of biosecurity participants found most challenging to inform future training priorities. Destruction, disposal and decontamination (DDD) emerged as the primary challenge, with just over half of participants identifying the DDD process as the most difficult, reflecting the complexity and logistical demands involved. In particular, many participants highlighted the close link between destruction and disposal and the importance of planning for both, while smaller proportions identified disposal alone, destruction and decontamination combined, or decontamination alone as key challenges.

## THE FUTURE OF FEEDLOT BIOSECURITY

The future direction for feedlot biosecurity reflects the priorities identified through the workshop participant survey, which also informed the word cloud analysis. This analysis showed the need for stronger prevention measures, improved destruction, disposal and decontamination planning and continued investment in training and capability.

These insights reinforce the importance of embedding preparedness into everyday operations so the feedlot sector can respond quickly, limit impacts and maintain a resilient pathway back to trade.

Survey participant word cloud analysis



## CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR LOT FEEDERS

To ensure the red meat industry achieves full value from the project's findings, the following adoption activities will be a focus for ALFA in the future:

- Continued delivery of feedlot-focused EAD preparedness training, including practical DDD planning, NFAS LM7 implementation and personal biosecurity.
- Ongoing development of the ALFA Biosecurity Hub as a central repository for EAD resources, training and updates.
- Engagement with veterinarians, nutritionists and auditors to ensure biosecurity knowledge remains current and consistent across service providers.
- Regular simulation and desktop exercises with state governments to test response procedures, communication pathways and industry roles under the EAD Response Agreement.
- Annual review and updating of templates, fact sheets and action plans to ensure alignment with national frameworks and emerging biosecurity risks.

- Engagement with vaccine companies and supply chain to articulate the benefits of vaccine programs to reduce the movement of endemic disease via the supply chain.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Most importantly, ALFA recognises Australian feedlot operators for their strong engagement, commitment to best practice biosecurity and willingness to invest in preparedness. Their leadership positions the industry for a resilient and sustainable future.

## **CONCLUSION**

Australia's freedom from many of the world's most significant animal diseases is underpinned by its geographic isolation and robust biosecurity systems. However, an incursion of an emergency animal disease (EAD), such as foot-and-mouth disease, would have significant and far-reaching consequences for the red meat industry. These impacts would extend beyond immediate animal health outcomes to include the suspension or loss of export markets, oversupply into domestic markets, and likely devaluation of red meat products.

The ALFA EAD Biosecurity Project has played a critical role in strengthening the preparedness of the Australian cattle feedlot industry by lifting the benchmark for best-practice biosecurity. Importantly, the project has been designed to deliver lasting value beyond its delivery timeframe, establishing a strong biosecurity legacy that continues to enhance industry readiness.

Implementation of the project outcomes has materially improved the cattle feedlot sector's capacity to respond to an EAD incursion through more operationalised preparedness, clearer planning frameworks, and stronger biosecurity systems. At the same time, the project has identified priority areas for further improvement, including targeted investment to address existing gaps such as mass destruction and disposal capabilities for cattle.

In parallel with the development of practical resources, ALFA has recognised the ongoing need for industry training to support the operationalisation of preparedness. Continued investment in capability building will be essential to ensure feedlots are well supported to meet their role within shared responsibility biosecurity frameworks.

Biosecurity is not static. Australia's risk profile will continue to evolve as tourism, global trade, and supply chain complexity increase. Maintaining Australia's disease-free status will therefore require biosecurity investments that are agile, strategic, and forward-looking. By embedding preparedness into everyday operations and continuing to strengthen partnerships between industry and government, the feedlot sector will remain well positioned to manage emerging biosecurity challenges and protect its long-term viability.

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