FINAL REPORT

aquatic animal health subprogram

Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram: the revision of the Tasmanian fish health plan and incorporation into the Tasmanian control centre manual

Mary Lou Conway & Kevin Ellard

March 2004

FRDC Project 2003/648

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Tasmania
DEPARTMENT of PRIMARY INDUSTRIES, WATER and ENVIRONMENT

Australian Government
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2003/648	**Aquatic Animal Health Subprogram: the revision of the Tasmanian fish health plan and incorporation into the Tasmanian control centre manual.**

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OBJECTIVES:

1. Revision of the Tasmanian Fish Health Emergency Management Plan ensuring current relevance to Tasmania with special reference to stakeholder liaison.
2. Incorporation of the Tasmanian Fish Health Emergency Management Plan into the Tasmanian Emergency Animal Disease Management Plan and the Tasmanian control centre manual (now known as the Tasmanian Operational Plans and Logistics Manual).
3. Audit the resulting version of the Tasmanian control centre manual according to National Performance Standards.

NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY:

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED TO DATE

- Industry stakeholders have been given an opportunity for input into response plans and manuals for emergency aquatic animal disease.
- Those plans and manuals have been revised to enhance the efficiency of the response to an aquatic animal disease emergency, striving to minimise the impacts of an emergency disease on industry.
- Standard operating procedures for disease emergencies have been created for the aquaculture industry.
- Aquatic Emergency Animal Disease awareness has been heightened within the local aquaculture industry.

Manuals have become a necessary part of life, standardising and stream lining procedures in the workplace, and managing emergency animal disease (EAD) is no exception. The fortunate history of a relative lack of EAD events in Australia has meant that when an EAD does occur, drawing on personal experience is often not an option.

Thus much effort is expended both in maintenance and development of AUSVETPLAN and AQUAVETPLAN to ensure responses are appropriate for the disease and comply with funding criteria. This project enabled the finalisation of an EAD manual for aquatic animals and the incorporation of this plan into existing EAD response manuals and plans.

Manuals must have two basic features to be useful – they must be applicable to the current event, and the information they contain must be readily accessible to those requiring it.

Previously the local management of emergency aquatic animal diseases in Tasmania would have referred to the Tasmanian Fish Health Emergency Management Plan, the Tasmanian Operational Plans and Resources Manual and the Emergency Animal Disease Management Plan, as well as other manuals in the AQUAVETPLAN and AUSVETPLAN series where required.

The Tasmanian Fish Health Emergency Management Plan had been in draft form since March 2000 and consequently required updating and finalising. The other State EAD management plans, the Tasmanian Operational Plans and Resources Manual (an intra-departmental plan) and the Emergency Animal Disease Management Plan (multi-agency plan), were also under revision.

The revision process regarding aquatic animals initially concentrated on finalising the Tasmanian Fish Health Emergency Management Plan and incorporating it into the Emergency Animal Disease Management Plan. The Emergency Animal Disease Management Plan summarises the various activities leading to and during an EAD Operational Phase; includes Recovery Phase considerations; and lists the roles and resources each agency may be expected to contribute to the response. Extensive contact lists are also included.

During this part of the revision process, an aquatic animal version of the Tasmanian Operational Plans and Resources Manual (AQUATOM) was created. This document included detailed control centre management plans and procedures for state and local centres, standard operating procedures for field operatives, contact lists and job cards.

AQUATOM was used during Exercise Tethys (held in November 2003). The subsequent debriefing indicated that a single intra-departmental document would be preferable. This reflected the fact that in Tasmania, personnel deployed to EAD control centres would be the same whether there were aquatic or terrestrial animals involved.

The resultant document – the Tasmanian Operational Plans and Logistics Manual replaces the Tasmanian Operational Plans and Resources Manual and AQUATOM. It includes an appendix for control centre management procedures that are specific to aquatic animal EAD's. The contact lists and standard operating procedure sections include aquatic animal EAD references and procedures.

Alongside manual revision, the opportunity was taken to create EAD standard operating procedures and heighten EAD awareness for the aquaculture industry. This is an on-going process.

KEYWORDS: **Aquatic animal emergency disease; plans, manuals.**

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BACKGROUND

The Tasmanian aquaculture industry is a significant export earner for the State. Infectious disease, both endemic and exotic is a major threat to the financial viability of the industry. In recognition of the specific roles and responsibilities of State authorities within animal disease control frameworks, the maintenance of a fish health plan relevant to Tasmanian conditions is an on-going high priority for the industry and government.

With the importance of the aquaculture industry to the Tasmanian economy in mind several needs were identified in the areas of industry training and liaison in aquatic emergency disease response. Considering Tasmania's population and accompanying financial constraints there was also a need to broaden the skills of existing emergency response personnel in the aquatic and terrestrial environments.

These needs could not be addressed effectively without up-to-date and applicable references in the form of an intra-departmental manual and a multi-agency control centre management plan. Thus the objectives of this project centred around those documents.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives approved for the project were as follows:

- Revision of the Tasmanian Fish Health Emergency Management Plan ensuring current relevance to Tasmania with special reference to stakeholder liaison.
- Incorporation of the Tasmanian Fish Health Emergency Management Plan into the Tasmanian Emergency Animal Disease Management Plan and the Tasmanian control centre manual (known as the Tasmanian Operational Plans and Logistics Manual).
- Audit the resulting version of the Tasmanian control centre manual according to National Performance Standards.

REVISION PROCESS

Previously the local management of emergency aquatic animal diseases in Tasmania would have referred to the Tasmanian Fish Health Emergency Management Plan, the Tasmanian Operational Plans and Resources Manual and the Emergency Animal Disease Management Plan, as well as other manuals from the AQUAVETPLAN and AUSVETPLAN series where required.

The multi-agency Emergency Animal Disease Management Plan orientates all agencies in the emergency animal disease control framework. Specifically, the Emergency Animal Disease Management Plan summarises the various activities leading to and during an EAD Operational Phase; includes Recovery Phase considerations and lists the roles, responsibilities and resources each agency may be expected to contribute to the response. Extensive contact lists are also included.

The Tasmanian Fish Health Emergency Management Plan had been in draft form since March 2000 and consequently required updating and finalising. The other State EAD management plans, the Tasmanian Operational Plans and Resources Manual (an intra-departmental plan) and the Emergency Animal Disease Management Plan (multi-agency plan), were also under revision. This had been noted in the National Animal Health System Performance Standard audit completed for Tasmania in May 2003.

The revision process regarding aquatic animals initially concentrated on finalising the Tasmanian Fish Health Emergency Management Plan and incorporating it into the Emergency Animal Disease Management Plan. This has been achieved with emergency service authorities signing off on the final document.

During this part of the revision process, an aquatic animal version of the Tasmanian Operational Plans and Resources Manual (AQUATOM) was created. This document included detailed control centre management plans and procedures for state and local centres, standard operating procedures for field operatives, contact lists and job cards.

AQUATOM was used during Exercise Tethys (held in November 2003). The subsequent debriefing indicated that a single intra-departmental document would be preferable for all EAD responses.

This reflected the fact that in Tasmania, personnel deployed to EAD control centres would be the same whether aquatic or terrestrial animals are involved. It also satisfied one of the project's objectives in standardising EAD response activities. Stakeholders were given opportunities to provide input into the revisions and respond to various document drafts. Where relevant, submissions from stakeholders were included.

To allow changes and additions to be made as required by stakeholders and the further development of AQUAVETPLAN, the aquatic-specific control centre procedures and standard operating procedures for aquatic responses were placed in appendices of the Tasmanian Operational Plans and Resources Manual. The resultant document that replaced the Tasmanian Operational Plans and Resources Manual and the short lived AQUATOM was then renamed the Tasmanian Operational Plans and Logistics Manual to comply with Incident Control System terminology. This document as well as the Emergency Animal Disease Management Plan form part of AUSVETPLAN and AQUAVETPLAN.

Alongside manual revision, the opportunity was taken to create EAD standard operating procedures and heighten EAD awareness for the aquaculture industry. This is an on-going process that includes input from several other FRDC projects as well as industry.

All but the third project objective was achieved. The auditing of the resultant documents (third objective) will be undertaken formally during the next round of the National Animal Health System Performance Standard auditing. The revision however, has been undertaken to address areas identified as requiring improvement in the last audit.

CONCLUSION

While no emergency response reference can be evaluated without at least an appropriately designed exercise, in Tasmania there now exists two documents that contain up to date plans, procedures and contact lists that comply with existing AQUVETPLAN and AUSVETPLAN manuals.

REFERENCES

Draft Tasmanian Fish Health Emergency Management Plan, March 2000

Emergency Animal Disease Management Plan, Issue 6, September 2002

Emergency Animal Disease Management Plan, Issue 7, August 2003

Tasmanian Aquatic Operational Plans and Resources Manual, 2003

Tasmanian Operational Plans and Resources Manual, Edition 2, 1996

Tasmanian Operational Plans and Logistics Manual, Edition 3, 2004

APPENDIX 1:

Intellectual property

Tasmanian Operational Plans and Logistics Manual, Edition 3, 2004

Emergency Animal Disease Management Plan, Issue 7, August 2003

APPENDIX 2:

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