

TARONGA

CONSERVATION SOCIETY AUSTRALIA™

Taronga Zoo Sydney
Taronga Western Plains
Zoo Dubbo
Taronga Foundation
Research and
Conservation Centre
Australian Conservation
Genetics Centre
Wildlife Hospital
Australian Wildlife
Health Network
Australian Registry
of Wildlife Health
Marine Rescue Unit
Australian Marine Mammal
Research Centre
Education Centre
Training Institute
Zoo Mobile

26 June 2008

Mr. Roger Beale AO (Chairman)
Quarantine and Biosecurity Review
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
GPO Box 858, Canberra ACT 2601.

Dear Mr Beale

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Quarantine and Biosecurity Review Panel to discuss the integration of wildlife and invasive species health into Australia's biosecurity systems.

During our meeting, we discussed the significance of wildlife health to Australia's biodiversity, livestock health, tourism and trade, and illustrated the socio-economic impacts of diseases with wildlife as part of their ecology. We also discussed the significance of wildlife as sentinels of environmental health relating to human health, bioterrorism detection, and climate change.

We are already experiencing numerous wildlife disease and mortality events linked to climate change, particularly related to vector-borne disease, drought related disease, and the accumulation of biotoxins.

Perhaps the most compelling argument regarding the role of wildlife and invasive species health in biosecurity is the recent recognition that "zoonoses from wildlife represent the most significant, growing threat to global health of all emerging infectious disease" (Jones, et al., 2008, Nature). There is a critical need to have systems in place to rapidly detect, diagnose and respond to emerging diseases in wild and feral animal populations in Australia to best secure our collective health and favourable international trade status.

Thank you for your commitment to addressing the many gaps that currently exist within Australia's wildlife health surveillance system. While we were focused on the lack of clarity regarding roles, responsibilities and the overall meagre investment in wildlife health, your panel quickly identified that perhaps this current situation stems from an overall legislative gap relating to responsibility for wildlife health.

Ultimately Australia needs a nationally integrated system to manage wildlife and feral animal health issues, with communication and collaboration across the human, environment and agriculture portfolios. Additional needs identified during our interview and at the Registry's Wildlife Health and Biosecurity Workshop (July, 2007) include:

- clear identification of a lead agency;
- creation of a cross-sector government and industry management body;

TARONGA

CONSERVATION SOCIETY AUSTRALIA™

- a service provider sitting outside of government to best collect available surveillance information, harness existing funding opportunities, and leverage government investment (also shielding government from controversial wildlife health events); and
- adequate resources for this national wildlife health surveillance program.

Australia's current investment of \$250 - 500K/yr must be enhanced. Indicative budgets for similar wildlife and feral animal surveillance systems overseas range between \$4.5 and \$9M/year. An increased investment will provide important biosecurity outcomes such as an improved disease detection and diagnosis chain, rapid alert and response mechanisms, and the creation of biosecurity intelligence (through mapping, tracking, predictive analysis, risk assessment, and risk prioritisation). This biosecurity intelligence can then be used to inform policy, decision making, expenditure, risk communication risk management, and to support our disease free status.


The Taronga Conservation Society Australia (TCSA) has a long history of involvement in wildlife health programs, education and research. The TCSA partnered with the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and others to drive the creation of the Australian Wildlife Health Network (AWHN - which we now host), and we have a 23 year history of operating the Australian Registry of Wildlife Health (ARWH).

We hope that an improved national wildlife health system will build upon the solid foundations of the AWHN and ARWH. These programs have been very successful in bolstering wildlife and invasive species biosecurity, yet their funding base is fragile.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the Quarantine and Biosecurity Review and to meet with the Review Panel. If you wish to clarify any items relating to our submission, our activities or our discussion with your Panel, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely



Guy Cooper
Director and Chief Executive

Karrie Rose DVM, DVSc
Manager, Australian Registry of Wildlife Health

Taronga Zoo Sydney
Taronga Western Plains
Zoo Dubbo
Taronga Foundation
Research and
Conservation Centre
Australian Conservation
Genetics Centre
Wildlife Hospital
Australian Wildlife
Health Network
Australian Registry
of Wildlife Health
Marine Rescue Unit
Australian Marine Mammal
Research Centre
Education Centre
Training Institute
Zoo Mobile

Taronga Conservation Society Australia

Taronga Zoo, Bradleys Head Road, Mosman, PO Box 20 Mosman, NSW, Australia, 2088

T 02 9978-4749 F 02 9978-4516 E krose@zoo.nsw.gov.au

Taronga Conservation Society Australia is a Trade Mark of the Zoological Parks Board of NSW ABN 41 733 619 876

Australian Registry of Wildlife Health www.ARWH.org