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Committee Catchment Management Committee
Author Wayne O'Donnell, Divisional Manager, Catchment Management

Review of the National Bovine Tb Pest Management Strategy

1. Purpose

To update the Committee on the recently notified proposed amended National Pest Management Strategy for Bovine Tb.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report do not trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

On 30 September Agriculture Minister David Carter announced that a review of the National Pest Management Strategy for Bovine Tb would commence. The formal notice of the review was published in the Gazette on 1st October. Newspaper notifications have followed.

This announcement initiates the formal review process. It is the culmination of 1-2 years work undertaken by the Animal Health Board (AHB), industry representatives (dairy, beef and deer), the Crown (via MAF Biosecurity) and regional councils.

The proposed strategy presented to the Minister contains some significant changes to the objectives. The principal objectives of the proposed strategy are:

- By 30 June 2025, to have eradicated Tb from wild animal populations in at least 2.5 million hectares of Tb Vector Risk Area (VRA), with consequent reclassification of this land as Tb Vector Free Area (VFA). In doing so provide proof of concept that Tb can be eradicated from the full range of Tb wildlife habitats in NZ;
- Prevent the establishment of Bovine Tb in possum populations in Vector Free Areas during the term of the strategy;

- Maintain the national annual Tb infected herd period prevalence at the lowest rate possible while achieving the above objectives, and at no greater than 0.4% throughout the term of the strategy.

The proposed strategy is aiming to move away from the current focus on reducing infected herd numbers to achieve international 'freedom' from Bovine Tb. Instead, the proposal seeks to prove whether eradication of the disease from wildlife is achievable across the full range of NZ environments. The AHB state that over the longer term, the risk of disease resurgence can only be removed if bovine Tb is eradicated from possums and other wildlife vectors. Large parts of remaining VRA contain heavily forested hill country where eradication is likely to be the most challenging. Significant resources will need to be applied in these areas for some years.

In the quest to prove the eradication concept, it is likely that infection levels in both wildlife and domestic cattle and deer will increase in parts of NZ where less intense control will occur. However, the AHB believe that unless eradication of Tb is achievable, expenditure on vector control will have to continue for a very long time. Conversely, achieving eradication across all habitats will enable a steady reduction in vector control expenditure over the next 20-30 years, and ensure large areas of NZ become Tb free thereby significantly reducing disease control related costs (e.g. stock testing, movement control restrictions).

4. Funding

The proposed strategy is seeking a similar level of total funding (\$82M p.a.). This suggests that some parts of NZ will receive less funding as the eradication 'proof of concept' only focuses on a few small areas initially. Regions such as Wellington, where infected herd numbers are at an all time low, will be very reluctant to allow infection levels to increase.

The proposed strategy is seeking to maintain 'regional' funding at existing levels i.e. around 10% of the total vector management cost (approximately \$6-7M p.a.). The AHB would prefer that the regional share continues to be generated via regional council rating systems. However, very few regional councils have included funding provision in their LTCCP' beyond 2009/10.

5. Implications for GW

GW has budgeted for a \$520,000 regional share contribution for 2010/11 only. No TB strategy funding has been included in the LTCCP beyond 2010/11.

GW will need to consider whether it wishes to remain a partner in the national Tb strategy and contribute the regional share on behalf of the Wellington community. An opportunity to discuss this matter is available at the Councillors workshop on the 27th October. The Wellington regional share for the first five year term of the proposed strategy (to June 2015) is estimated to be around \$500,000 per annum.

The current regional share is collected via the general rate and a specific works and services rate applied to all rateable properties in excess of 10ha. GW

should review this rating system, in light of changes to the proposed strategy objectives, should it wish to remain in the partnership.

Any changes to regional funding of the strategy, and the means by which any funds are collected, can be discussed with the community through the 2010/11 Annual Plan development process.

6. Partnership Opportunities

It is fair to say that relationships between the AHB and affected regional councils have been severely strained over recent years. Some councils' may decide not to re-enter a partnership with the AHB. If this occurs, the AHB will be forced to implement alternative funding arrangements in the affected regions. Alternatives are likely to be inefficient and expensive, compared to using a council rating system.

The strategy review presents an opportunity for GW to reset its relationship with the AHB. Particular opportunities exist with regards to possum management in areas transferring from VRA to VFA. Transitional arrangements should be considered that provide for co-funding during the changeover period.

GW should also consider enhancing reporting processes with the AHB and looking for opportunities to improve decision making transparency. For example, GW may wish to review and formally approve the proposed annual vector control programme, and receive regular progress reports from the AHB.

Maintaining a role in the Tb strategy will also enable GW to maintain strong relationships with rural communities and enhance networks with the dairy, beef and deer industries.

7. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*

Report prepared by:



Wayne O'Donnell
Divisional Manager, Catchment Management

Report approved by:



Dave Benham
Chief Executive