

Manual for the recognition of exotic diseases of livestock

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A Reference Guide for Animal Health Staff

Despite the relative small size of many Pacific Island countries and territories, agriculture and livestock production are major activities, from both the economic and social perspectives. While the production of traditional and commercial crops tends to dominate, livestock are becoming increasingly important. Countries in the region cover a wide spectrum in terms of livestock production ? from those with minimal commercial production in their livestock sectors, to those with significant export industries. There are also an increasing number of countries which are interested in establishing or expanding their livestock production beyond the present level in order to increase the availability of animal protein and to substitute for imported products.

The Pacific region is fortunate to be free of virtually all the major epidemic diseases and pests of livestock that limit production or interfere with trade in other parts of the world. This favourable status can be attributed to the relative isolation of countries in the region, their natural borders, strict quarantine and relatively recent introduction of most livestock species. One of the most important contributions that animal health staff in the region can make is to ensure that this favourable animal health status is maintained. To do this it is important that livestock producers and staff are alert to the possibility of an exotic animal disease when an unusual incident occurs.

A number of the Pacific Island countries currently have a limited capacity to investigate unusual disease incidents. The situation is exacerbated by poor communications and a lack of laboratory diagnostic capabilities or limited access to such facilities. Therefore the first line of defence against the incursion of an exotic animal disease will be clinical surveillance. The purpose of this publication is to provide a readily accessible reference source that animal health staff in Pacific island countries can use to obtain relevant information on important animal diseases that could be introduced.

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