

# AGFORCE POSITION ON THE IMPORTATION OF LIVE LSD VIRUS INTO AUSTRALIA



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## Introduction

The Federal Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) is undertaking a risk assessment for the importation of live lumpy skin disease (LSD) virus to the high security laboratory facilities at the CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP) in Geelong. The Deputy Secretary Biosecurity from DAWE seeks the view of NFF, CCA, ALFA, AMIC, ALEC, ADF (Australian Dairy Farmers) and AHA (Animal Health Australia) as to whether we support the importation of live LSD virus, subject to risks being satisfactorily managed to meet Australia's appropriate level of protection (ALOP).

LSD rapidly spread through Asia and was first reported in Indonesia in March 2022. The risk of an LSD incursion into Australia has significantly increased. To ensure Australia is prepared for any further spread and possible incursion of LSD, there is the need to expand Australia's capability to quickly detect and respond to the presence of LSD, noting that vaccination plays a vital role in controlling and eradicating the disease.

DAWE asks for industry's support the importation of live LSD virus to:

- Enable development of new diagnostic capabilities, which can be deployed to states and territories.
- Permit rigorous testing of any potential live attenuated LSD vaccines to ensure that they are of the highest possible safety standard. These candidate vaccines need to be imported into ACDP since Australia has no LSD vaccines in the country.
- Assist with creating newer, safer LSD vaccines and improved understanding on how the virus behaves under simulated Australian conditions,
- Allow research on survivability and transmission of LSD with Australian livestock and vectors (insects).

Should import be permitted, live LSD virus will never leave ACDP. And the import of LSD virus to ACDP does not change Australia's disease-free status.

## AgForce position

AgForce, in principle, supports the importation of live LSD virus into Australia. AgForce supports the above-mentioned reasons to permit importation with the following additions:

- Newly developed diagnostic capabilities should also be deployed to assist Indonesia, Timor, and Papua New Guinea in their response to LSD.
- The live LSD virus/stream needs to come from a source which is tested overseas by an independent laboratory with a highly trusted quality assurance program in place.
- Industry needs to be part of prioritization and decision-making on the development of new vaccines, diagnostics, and other methods to reduce further spread. Considering 70% of beef is exported annually, the development of the mRNA synthetic vaccine must be given high priority.
- A reliable and practical DIVA test (Differentiating Infected from Vaccinated Animals) needs to be developed to differentiate between vaccinated animals and non-vaccinated animals.

AgForce can support the importation of live LSD virus when the above additional caveats are taken into account by DAWE.