



Editorial

Animal Health and Welfare Directorate and 3rd Korea-NZ Animal Health & Epidemiology Workshop

The Animal Health and Welfare Directorate is a relatively small but vital part of the animal health and welfare regulatory framework and provides science-based technical leadership in both areas.

The Directorate has three core functions: animal imports, exports and welfare. Animal imports sets the zoosanitary risk management standards for importation of biologicals, animals and animal products. Animal exports works with other government-competent authorities to facilitate export of live animals and germplasm. The Directorate is integral to MPI's biosecurity and animal health systems. Animal welfare is a dynamic and growing area, and evidence-based advice and standard-setting is crucial for informed and sensible debate. My team work tirelessly, whether servicing the two Ministerial advisory committees – the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee and the National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee – or our outreach programme (our *Safeguarding* team acting as the conduit for new regulations and codes), in emergency management or providing high-quality technical advice into policy development and other parts of MPI. Both areas are active internationally and provide input into international standard-setting and at various levels in the OIE.

As Director, my role is to think broadly both for MPI and across the primary sector and provide system leadership in animal health and welfare for the good of New Zealand. The complexities, competing interests and ever-changing landscape of animal health and welfare present significant challenge, but also opportunity.

Domestically the ever-increasing biosecurity tension that exists for trade to be a two-way street presents a significant challenge, but one that must be managed in a developed country reliant on exporting primary produce. Animal welfare science must continue to be central to our exceptional welfare framework as increasing public and consumer demands are placed on how we farm our animals. Globally there are risks from emerging disease in wildlife as a result of human activity, the rise of zoonotics, the ongoing threat of transboundary disease, and increasing challenge of antimicrobial resistance. However, I believe we can continue to be forward-thinking, agile and brave, with ever-improving disease surveillance, industry-led assurance and innovative thinking that combines market incentives with regulation to drive better outcomes.

I see my Directorate as pivotal to providing focus and direction to help navigate the animal health and welfare landscape ahead. Being appointed as a Chief Technical Officer (CTO Veterinary) under the Biosecurity Act, and as Director of Animal Health and Welfare, gives me the opportunity and responsibility to provide science-based advice to senior leaders within government. It also creates the opportunity to represent

and champion issues domestically and internationally. It's a responsibility that I'll relish and feel extremely privileged to have been given.

Shortly after my appointment, in November I was asked to lead the NZ delegation for the 3rd Animal Health and Veterinary Epidemiology Korea-NZ bilateral workshop, hosted by Korea in Seoul. Korea is a significant and valued export market and this collaboration between our animal-health agencies sits under the Korea-NZ free trade agreement signed in March 2015. This workshop was the third time that animal health experts from both countries have met to share ways of managing the biosecurity challenges that both countries face. The NZ delegation consisted principally of veterinarians and scientists from the Diagnostics and Surveillance Services (DSS) Directorate and built on the two previous workshops that have been reported previously (Watts 2016, 2017). The workshop was highly successful and the maturing relationship and collegiality was evident to me over the 3 days.

New Zealand facilitated and ran a hands-on tutorial showcasing our Standardised Analyses for Disease Investigation (SADI) platform – a practical epidemiological tool to help guide resource allocation and planning during disease outbreaks. Despite the language differences, the tutorial was a great success. It set the tone for candid discussions about the threat of African swine fever to pig production in Korea, and provided useful lessons from incursion investigations in both countries.

The benefits of these types of workshop cannot be underestimated, particularly when they build on previous workshops. They are hugely valuable to inform our domestic approaches and ground-truth policy, and to learn from a country that is under arguably greater threat of transboundary disease than we are. Development of key relationships and opportunities to share and collaborate bilaterally are rare, and I hope the ongoing benefit from the last 3 years of doing so continues in the years to come.

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