



EDITORIAL

Recognising the power of surveillance

The September annual report edition of *Surveillance* showcases the many and varied facets of animal, plant and environmental surveillance we do for biosecurity purposes. The aim of these interesting and varied streams of work is consolidated within the Ministry strategy that is directed toward ensuring the primary sectors can access the world's value markets, reduce biological risks to New Zealand and protect and enhance the integrity and reputation of our primary products.

To meet these outcomes, surveillance has three broad but overlapping objectives:

- timely and accurate detection of exotic, new and emerging diseases or pests, through both targeted and scanning surveillance activity, followed by rapid investigation;
- support of export certification through provision of data collected by statistically robust targeted surveillance that demonstrates freedom from diseases and pests; and
- enhancing or developing effective communications and transparent reporting of our national health status to support stakeholders, including meeting key obligations as defined in international standards.

The resources and tools involved here include mandatory reporting supported by legislation, voluntary reporting from industry, and services and data procured from a range of Crown-funded and private organisations that carry out field work, laboratory testing and research. Many service providers use efficient field-based information technology to collect, collate and provide data. Collaboration with universities and other science providers optimises survey and surveillance design and the Ministry teams strive to use best methods to analyse trends.

These are important sources of data contributing to the overall picture of New Zealand's animal health status that is regularly reported in *Surveillance* and to international standard setters such as the OIE.

Surveillance has been the Ministry's flagship publication since 1974 and the most notable difference between current editions and those early ones is the huge increase in breadth. What was once a purely animal-health-based and largely laboratory-focused publication now includes reports on international animal trade, the animal health

laboratory, animal health and wildlife surveillance programmes, arbovirus and honey bee surveillance, national pest management strategies, industry-led control and eradication programmes, marine port surveillance, environmental and plant pest surveillance, forestry programmes, and investigation reports from regional laboratories and MPI Incursion teams covering endemic, exotic and potentially emerging diseases and pests.

It's a notable evolution, as is the growth of the primary industry sectors driving the changes. The journal itself has also moved from hard copy to an electronic format and its distribution list domestically and internationally has increased. Exporters can readily access material to support statements of disease and pest absence through *Surveillance* as well as details behind changes of status. Additionally, in the animal health area the Ministry compiles and publishes on its website disease-freedom statements that can be immediately accessed. Ministry staff also submit extensive regular reports required to meet our obligations to organisations involved in international animal disease surveillance, such as the International Office of Epizootics (OIE) and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO). These organisations promote the transparent exchange of information on disease occurrence and thereby facilitate international trade in animal products.

Few developed countries are as highly dependent on agricultural trade as New Zealand: we export 80–90 percent of the food we produce. Meat, dairy, live animal and wool exports account for 12, 30, 0.5 and 2 percent respectively of all export earnings, with a total of more than 20 billion dollars a year. Farming industry bodies see a major biosecurity event as one of the biggest risks they face. It is only by investing in and recognising the power and value of surveillance that we will be able to minimise the risks to the primary industries and facilitate access to the world's highest-value markets.

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