

Issue

The cattle industry currently has no defence against the animal health disease "Akabane". The industry requires a vaccine to minimise this economic devastation. The Association has been working with Bioproperties and NSW DPI to try and make a commercial vaccine available for producers.

Background

- Akabane disease is a seasonal and sporadic virus infection of cattle that causes aborted fetuses or calves to be born with either curly limbs or brain damage and often swollen heads.
- Akabane, is an arbovirus disease of cattle which is borne by a biting insect, called a Culicoides midge. In areas where the midge is endemic and cattle are continuously exposed, most cattle develop immunity when they are young and therefore only a few losses occur due to the disease.
- NSW cattle producers in mild coastal areas and the eastern fringe are periodically experiencing calving losses as a result of Akabane disease.
- The Association has surveyed RLPBs and determined that approximately 34,000 head are potentially at risk from Akabane annually.
- Due to the relatively low occurrence of Akabane, the manufacture of this vaccine is not particularly lucrative for the vaccine manufacturers.
- Bioproperties has expressed a willingness to undertake the manufacture of an Akabane vaccine, using the Department of Primary Industries intellectual property.
- This arrangement would involve the commissioning a bulk batch of vaccine which would be placed in storage and later deconsolidated and packaged into individual lots for producers. The DPI has estimated that 100,000 doses would be consumed in about 2 years.
- The Association submitted their business plan to the Minister to seek funding to begin manufacturing the vaccine, the Minister declined to provide the seed funding however has allowed 2 batches of vaccine to be manufactured using the NSW DPI intellectual property free of charge .

Where to from here

- The Association is currently exploring alternative funding options to progress the manufacturing of an Akabane vaccine.
- The vaccine is ready for manufacture and can be produced as soon as sufficient funding is available

What the Association is seeking

- That a company enters a joint venture with the manufacturers of the vaccine to provide appropriate funding to initiate the manufacture of the vaccine for beef producers.
 - The key issue for a company to consider will be the provision of approximately \$350 000 in seed funding to enable the trial to commence.
 - The Association believes there is a genuine role for Government to assist the NSW cattle industry through the development of an Akabane vaccine, particularly as the regional nature and limited spread of Akabane disease prevents the commercial manufacturing of a vaccine.

For more information on Akabane go to;

www.nswfarmers.org.au/commodities/meat_and_livestock/current_issues/animal_health