

Media Release

The Hon Gayle Tierney MP
Minister for Training and Skills
Minister for Higher Education
Minister for Agriculture



Thursday, 22 June 2023

MORE VETS TO COMBAT ANIMAL DISEASE EMERGENCIES

The Andrews Labor Government is set to call on more private veterinarians to strengthen support to future outbreaks of emergency animal diseases (EADs).

Minister for Agriculture Gayle Tierney met with veterinarian Jamie McNeil to acknowledge the valuable contribution private veterinarians would provide in an EAD response, stating their support would be essential in protecting our state's \$17.5 billion agriculture industry.

The risks of an EAD such as foot-and-mouth disease and lumpy skin disease entering Australia will remain heightened for some time, highlighting the need for private veterinarians to express interest in being involved in an EAD response.

The Labor Government recognises the value private veterinarians have shown in previous EAD responses - their extensive skills and experience will be pivotal in responding to an EAD outbreak.

Operating from veterinary clinics in both Korumburra and Koo Wee Rup, Dr McNeil possesses extensive experience collaborating with the Government during the Avian Influenza outbreak in 2020. Drawing from his firsthand involvement, he strongly encourages fellow private veterinarians to step forward.

The temporary roles would allow private veterinarians provide a range of services, including investigating suspect cases, conducting field surveillance, collecting diagnostic samples and if needed, vaccinating livestock.

Agriculture Victoria is hosting a free online forum on Wednesday 28 June, exclusively for registered veterinarians who wish to participate in an EAD response. Additionally, an Expression of Interest process is being conducted through an online questionnaire available on the Agriculture Victoria website.

To learn more and to express interest in supporting an EAD outbreak, email EAD.workforce@agriculture.vic.gov.au.

Biosecurity and EAD preparedness is a top priority for the Andrews Labor Government.

In the *Victorian Budget 2023/24*, the Andrews Labor Government invested \$17.5 million to continue to strengthen skills training and equipment to prepare for a rapid response to any animal disease detection, bringing a total investment over the past 12 months to \$43 million.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Gayle Tierney

"Our private veterinarians' unique skills and experience will be vital in an emergency animal disease response, ensuring Victoria's biodiversity is protected."

"The Andrews Labor Government is working with private veterinarians now, so that we are prepared and ready to work together if an emergency animal disease reaches our shores."

"If you're a private vet and want to know how you might help in an outbreak, express your interest with Agriculture Victoria and attend their events."

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