

Media Release

The Hon Ros Spence MP
Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Community Sport
Minister for Carers and Volunteers



Thursday, 27 June 2024

MOBILE COMMAND CENTRES TO FIGHT BIOSECURITY EMERGENCIES

Two new state-of-the-art Mobile Incident Command Centres have been deployed to Meredith to boost efforts to fight the current avian influenza outbreak in Victoria.

Minister for Agriculture Ros Spence today launched the two purpose-built Mobile Incident Command Centres and attended the first meeting of the Biosecurity Reference Group at Agriculture Victoria's Attwood Centre.

The trucks were previously used by State Emergency Services (SES) and have been refurbished and equipped with enhanced IT including satellite access and audio-visual equipment – allowing Agriculture Victoria's biosecurity team to be on ground where outbreaks are occurring and still have access to key facilities and equipment.

Agriculture Victoria's field operations teams have benefitted from the connected workspace already, with seamless communication and coordination between the officers at the outbreak and the Local Control Centre Incident Management Team set up in Ballarat.

The first truck was completed in May and has been stationed in Meredith since the avian influenza incident began, the second truck is now complete and will make its way to Meredith today.

The refurbishment was carried out by R.A Bell in Sunshine, a Victorian design and manufacturing company of emergency response vehicles.

Each truck is named after former Animal Health Officers – Aileen Eccles, the first female Animal Health Officer appointed in Victoria in 1980 and Alan Ross who was the longest serving Animal Health Officer for 55 years with Agriculture Victoria.

Victoria's Biosecurity Reference Group met today to discuss the biosecurity risks and challenges facing Victoria, including the current avian influenza outbreak. The group of 15 experts represent all areas of the biosecurity system, including Traditional Owners, agricultural sector, supply chains, community and environment.

Since 2022, the Labor Government has invested \$43 million to deliver dedicated emergency animal disease (EAD) preparedness – backed by \$12.9 million from the *Victorian Budget 2024/25* for EAD preparedness, coordination, waste disposal, technical and specialist capability, surge workforce readiness, and traceability systems.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Ros Spence

"Biosecurity emergencies can happen in any corner of our state and these new mobile incident command centres are key to ensuring we can get our expertise on ground as quickly and efficiently as possible."

"The Biosecurity Reference Group will be able to draw on their industry connections and diverse expertise to ensure that biosecurity actions and activities delivered across Victoria will be meaningful and relevant situations we face."

Quote attributable to Biosecurity Reference Group Chair Dr Katherine Clift

"Since its establishment in 2022, Victoria's Biosecurity Reference Group has been critical in ensuring industry and community views remain central to how biosecurity programs and activities are delivered in our state."