

12 June 2023

Senator Glenn Sterle
 Chair, Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
 Sent via email:

Dear Senator Sterle,

RE: May 2023 Senate Estimates

I write to provide more detail on key issues following the recent Senate Estimates hearing of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport legislation committee.

Update on the eNVD mobile app

The electronic National Vendor Declaration (eNVD) app has been developed and managed by MLA subsidiary company, Integrity Systems Company (ISC). It is a mobile, offline solution for livestock consignments. Since the app was first made available in November 2022, there have been 15,581 downloads, with 3687 consignments submitted covering 221,876 head. Interest in the app continues to grow and ISC is continuing to work with industry to encourage adoption of the technology, including through a communications campaign and ongoing webinars explaining the app.

More information on the eNVD mobile app can be found at this link: [eNVD mobile app information](#).

Biosecurity investment

There was significant discussion with MLA, and other agencies, regarding biosecurity investment. The following table summarises the existing statutory levies and how they are distributed.

Commodity	MLA (R&D)	MLA (marketing)	AHA	National Residue Survey	Current total
Grassfed cattle	\$0.92	\$3.66	\$0.13	\$0.29	\$5
Grainfed cattle	\$1.50	\$3.08	\$0.13	\$0.29	\$5
Bobby calves	\$0.16	\$0.48	-	\$0.26	\$0.90

Sheep	\$0.077	\$0.087	\$0.018	\$0.018	\$0.20
Lambs	\$0.37	\$0.90	\$0.15	\$0.08	\$1.50
Goats	\$0.167	\$0.105	\$0.045	\$0.06	\$0.377

Significant contributions to biosecurity research and activities are made via MLA investments, driven by the R&D levy and leveraged with government and other contributions. Our forecast for FY23 is that MLA will make \$26 million in biosecurity investments through activities such as control of endemic disease, Integrity Systems Company, invasive species control, foot and mouth disease, lumpy skin disease, and vaccine development. Primary producers also make significant contributions within their business to biosecurity investment such as through feral animal control, weed and pest control and much more.

mRNA vaccine development and research

MLA has recently funded research to produce and test mRNA vaccines that can be rapidly mass produced in Australia in the event of an exotic disease outbreak. This project will develop a mRNA vaccine pipeline initially for LSD, but potentially for other emergency diseases. It would enable capacity for rapid mass production of a vaccine for LSD, if required.

No mRNA-based vaccines are registered for veterinary use in Australia yet. While some killed vaccines for LSD exist overseas, the path to registration in Australia for traditionally-produced vaccines is potentially longer than that of an mRNA vaccine.

The LSD vaccine construct is now being tested for efficacy in animals. By the end of this year, we will know if this vaccine is effective in ruminant animals.

The establishment of an mRNA production capability and development of an LSD vaccine will be the initial flagship, stand-alone project within a larger program: *Adoption of RNA technology to rapidly produce vaccines for emergency animal disease*. The larger program unites a network of expertise to bring the advantages of next-generation vaccine technologies to the livestock industries and potentially provides a game-changing solution to enhance biosecurity in Australia. The program includes mRNA vaccine development for the two main strains of foot-and-mouth disease as well as exotic Bovine pestivirus and Border disease in sheep.

Evidence to date indicates that mRNA vaccines do not alter the genome of the recipient. We believe it is likely that the *Office of the Gene Technology Regulator* will classify these vaccines as non-GMO (genetically modified organism) but as no vaccines have yet been presented for classification this is yet untested.

Upcoming sheep and cattle projections

MLA's six-monthly sheep and cattle projections will both be published in coming weeks and will be publicly available on the MLA website. The cattle projections will be published on June 20 and the sheep projections on July 11.

We appreciate your interest in MLA and the Australian red meat and livestock industry.

Jason Strong
Managing Director, Meat & Livestock Australia