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Australia's leader in comprehensive drug testing solutions.

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Phone: +61 2 6277 3511
rrat.sen@aph.gov.au

25th August 2022

RE: Inquiry into the Adequacy of Australia's biosecurity measures and response preparedness, in particular with respect to foot-and-mouth disease

Submission from Safework Laboratories to the following matters being considered by the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee for inquiry and report:

- (a) the adequacy of Australia's biosecurity measures and response preparedness, in particular with respect to foot and mouth disease and varroa mite; and*
- (c) any related matters.*

Introduction

Safework Laboratories is an Australian owned bespoke testing laboratory. We are a true national provider accredited by the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) with locations in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Port Hedland and Darwin and a staff of 200. We have operated successfully for over 10 years in Australia.

We have the expertise and scientific methodology, utilised through wastewater testing for COVID 19 during the pandemic, to provide large scale agricultural testing for foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), lumpy skin disease, avian flu and swine flu utilising Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) laboratory testing.

We have worked with large mining companies, construction, logistics, manufacturing and agricultural industries and have a proven track record.

We believe that wastewater collection and testing is an important and compelling tool in the arsenal of biosecurity measures. It would assist with detection in intensive industry such as dairies, piggeries, egg farms, and feedlots. It could be extended to registered screening points and abattoirs and provide an additional assurance for Australia's valuable export industry.

The economic cost of an outbreak is enormous, with ABARES estimating that an FMD outbreak could cost Australia \$80 billion. This innovative technology would assist with early detection which means finding disease more quickly and to ensure that eradication and control measures are put in place sooner.

Under our technology and with our facilities across Australia, results would be known within two days of testing.

Wastewater testing would provide an extra monitoring and surveillance tool.



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Recommendation

The Minister for Agriculture, Senator the Hon Murray Watt, recently launched the National Biosecurity Strategy on August 9, 2022 which focused on the following objectives:

- Enhance our national surveillance and early detection arrangements
- Encourage greater private sector investment in the development and delivery of biosecurity innovations
- Continue to invest in and roll out transformative technologies to digitise and automate processes, and support rapid and accurate detection, identification, traceability and response

Safework Laboratories' technology aligns with the Government's shared purpose and will assist in the development of "a risk based system underpinned by science that protects Australia's people, our environment and economy from the biosecurity threats of today and tomorrow."

As an innovative Australian company, we look forward to working collaboratively with the Government and the agricultural sector. We would be keen to explore these opportunities further, perhaps through a pilot program to prove the broader application of the technology which is already widely understood and accepted by the community through its use during the pandemic.

Yours sincerely

Managing Director and Founder
Safework Laboratories