

CHAIR: Do you know what percentage of containers that have been in those high-risk areas for khapra beetle are fumigated?

Mr Weidemann: We'd have to take that question on notice, because it's not something that we have.

CHAIR: If the department knows that a container has been in a high-risk area, will they elevate that or seek to fumigate it as a matter of course?

Mr Weidemann: Again, this is an area that has been a long discussion point with department through PHA as well and other plant industry groups and other members of the National Management Group when we've been looking at where these things have come into the country. So, again, it's a point that we would have to come back to with information on.

CHAIR: Is there an active piece of work globally to progress this, or does it require coordination?

Mr Weidemann: Again, I'd have to take that on notice. But to me it's an important facet, and we have to try and manage this because of the potential for not only that but the other things out there that can have a very severe impact on our industry, on the grains industry. But that impact is also then measured across other industries because of the impact on another one. It's similar to the varroa mite impact on the grains industry as well because we do have a lot of pollinated crops, particularly beans and canola, and we're quite aware of the importance of bees in that whole environmental potential.

The Department of Agriculture is the correct source for this precise information regarding percentages etc. However, GPA is aware work has commenced recently, resulting from recent budget investments by the Federal Government, to take urgent actions to improve Khapra beetle risk analysis and identification, with preventative measures such as fumigation.

<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/plant/khapra-beetle/urgent-actions>

Senator CICCONE: Has that committee only met once in the past three years?

Mr Weidemann: No. We will have to come back with the exact number, but it has met at least twice a year. We've met virtually, because of COVID, but we've had face-to-face meetings. I think we've had two face-to-face meetings in that period, but COVID has obviously played a part—

The GPA Biosecurity Committee has met four times since the members and key principles were finalised at the GPA Policy Council meeting in April 2021. The Committee was implemented to increase member engagement, communication and actions – including education and training opportunities – in response to increasing grower and community concern about biosecurity and the need to advocate for stronger, tougher preventative measures. Biosecurity has also been a regular agenda item at GPA Policy Council meetings which are held two or three times per year. This approach is also supported by ongoing conversations and engagement among members and growers about specific issues related to GPA's representative responsibilities and broader policy and advocacy such as RD&E priorities and market access.

<https://www.grainproducers.com.au/biosecurity-committee>

Senator CICCONE: Have you done work on a strategy in terms of how you tackle varroa or—and I know we've been focusing on varroa tonight—FMD as well and what impact that would have?

Mr Weidemann: Yes, that's where the work on the costs of around \$15.5 billion impact on our industry comes from.

Senator CICCONE: But do you have a strategy in place to deal with that?

Mr Weidemann: There are strategies in place, working with PHA, around all of these particular potential incursion issues that we might face as a production sector.

Senator CICCONE: Okay. What have you identified as areas of improvement within the biosecurity system, and what actions are you undertaking for any of those improvements?

Mr Weidemann: Again, it's all about prevention. People coming into the country at the moment are obviously a real problem—if they're coming from areas known to have FMD, lumpy skin and all of those

things. The bigger risk we have with LMD is the fact that it's a bacteria that can potentially float in the air, whereas FMD seems to be more of a contact issue. The learnings around that are, again, prevention and spending as much money as we can afford to on that, because if we get any of these things in Australia—given the nature of our industry as a major exporting country—we're in a world of pain if we don't stop it first. Again, it's having that prevention. The question is similar to what we did with the Karnal bunt issue: doing those simulation trials around what happens, and we're training people to be able to deal with that. There are very extensive work plans around all of these potential pests and diseases that have been worked on over quite a long period of time.

The other thing that's also identified in a lot of these processes is the need for particular chemicals to be made available, potentially, should they be needed. We actually hold a number of permits for those already.

Senator CICCONE: I'm mindful of the time. You mentioned a strategy; could you provide us with a copy of that strategy?

Mr Weidemann: Yes.

Plant Health Australia's website provides a source for these strategies. As the lead coordinating body for plant biosecurity in Australia, PHA's role is to facilitate and drive the development of strategies and policies that underpin Australia's plant health system. PHA works with governments and national plant industry organisations to develop and secure commitment to the implementation of these strategies. An example of bringing government and industry together to develop such strategies and support Australia's preparedness is the National Khapra Action Plan that was released late last year. PHA also provides resources, activities and actions through the Grain Farm Biosecurity Program, along with the GRDC, to support the delivery of these strategies. GPA has various long-standing responsibilities representing the interests of all levy-paying grain producers in Australia, as a member of PHA, to support these processes and improve biosecurity protections.

<https://www.planthealthaustralia.com.au/strategies/>

<https://www.grainproducers.com.au/biosecurity>

<https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/pests-diseases-weeds/plant/national-action-plans>