



## BIOSECURITY WORKING GROUP - TERMS OF REFERENCE

*The AAA would like to establish a Biosecurity Working Group to revise the current biosecurity tools in the industry and look at opportunities for new tools to be added.*

### Background

Why is biosecurity important for the alpaca industry? The number of incursions of pests, weeds and diseases into Australia is increasing and there is a range of reasons for this including: increased international travel and trade; changing demographics and patterns of land use; new and emerging diseases arising from changed interactions with animal populations; and climate change. International markets are also increasingly sensitive to the disease status and integrity of livestock products.

To date the alpaca industry has not been significantly affected by these events. However, we cannot be complacent. A significant outbreak of an exotic disease could be devastating, particularly for our market access and productivity.

The alpaca industry previously supported two biosecurity programs – AlpacaMAP and Q-Alpaca. AlpacaMAP, like all the MAPs, related to Johne’s disease only, and has now been “unofficially” disbanded due to minimal participation. Note that Alpaca MAP will not be officially closed until the last few herds can transfer to the replacement of Q-Alpaca.

The Q-Alpaca program has been operating for almost fifteen years, having been developed by the industry, and supported by the Animal Health Committee, to monitor causes of death and co-morbidity, including the bovine strain of JD, in the growing national herd; there are currently no known JD infected alpaca herds in Australia.

Administration of Q-Alpaca is performed by the AAA office. The Q-Alpaca registrar (Allison Lee) is responsible for analysing necropsy data and liaising with the Australian Alpaca Veterinarians as required. An annual report based on analysis of data has previously been provided to all AAA members, though a report has not been circulated since 2014. Whilst the program has been successful, the industry has changed during this time, including the emergence of larger, commercial herds, alongside a continuing prevalence of smaller lifestyle and peri-urban breeders/owners. Participation in Q-Alpaca has declined markedly, with 86 participants out of a total of 1078 AAA member herds in Australia, meaning only 8% of AAA members are Q-Alpaca. Reasons commonly given for leaving the program include:

- the cost of autopsies
- failure to understand the need for an autopsy in cases with a known cause of death
- inconclusive autopsy results
- a perception/misconception that the program is only about JD
- access to veterinarians prepared to manage the Q-Alpaca on-farm requirements
- inability to comply with autopsy requirements due to autolysis (a considerable number of reports indicate that no PM was performed due to the animal being too decomposed. Whilst this is sometimes unavoidable, it is becoming apparent that some alpaca herds are not being checked frequently enough to ensure their health and welfare).



Q-Alpaca has provided a useful tool for the evolving Australian alpaca industry to not only demonstrate freedom from specific diseases but also monitor endemic or emerging diseases and take action in a timely and effective manner.

A review of Q-Alpaca is now required to ensure the program remains relevant, practical and economically viable for current and future participants, regardless of herd size, without jeopardising the integrity of the program. The AAA's concerns about the declining participation in Q-Alpaca and the concept of a review were presented to the National Animal Health Committee in November 2017.

### **Role of the Working Group**

The role of the Working Group is as a consultative group, to provide recommendations to the AAA Board for their approval and implementation.

Review the QAlpaca program and design a replacement program that meets the needs of different types of alpaca breeders/ farmers. This may involve a tiered biosecurity program, with a baseline level and a number of higher levels.

Identify and assess viable options to address biosecurity issues

Identify and assess viable options to address livestock traceability issues, in particular those relating to tags and the NLIS database, as well as fit into the commercial herd.

Provide feedback on issues, opportunities, threats and risks to the alpaca industry and supply chain as they relate to biosecurity and traceability;

Assist in the revision of the industry biosecurity strategy,

Assist AAA in being fully consultative with industry in the development of the replacement biosecurity program.

### **Proposed Working Group Members:**

- 1 Board member
- 2 breeders
- 2 veterinarians
- 1 AHA rep (Rob Barwell)
- 1 traceability specialist (Neil Daniel)
- Q Alpaca (Alison Lee)

### **Time Frames and Resource Commitments**

The first phase of work for the group will be from June to August 2019. During that period, it is envisaged that the work of the group will be managed through telephone conferences of up to 2 hours each and email working documents.

During this time period there will also be up to a total of 2 days required for review and comment on circulated documents.

Optionally the group may be convened to meet or provide specific advice on issues that emerge after the program and strategy document is promulgated on an ad hoc as required basis.