Policy

Specimens accepted for testing at the Biosecurity Sciences Laboratory and exemptions from charges

Version: [2.0]

1 Policy statement

The Biosecurity Sciences Laboratory (BSL) is the veterinary laboratory of the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF). The laboratory is accredited by the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) and meets the requirements of ISO/IEC 17025 (2017) in the field of Animal Health. The role of BSL is to provide quality assured laboratory testing services to support surveillance, accreditation, export, diagnostic and emergency activities for animal diseases in Queensland. It provides the Queensland Government with surveillance data on disease occurrence in commercial livestock, aquatic animals and wildlife. The State offers financial support for this task as the data is used to support Queensland's participation in the national and international trade of animal products.

2 Background and context

This policy has been developed to direct resources to areas that offer the most efficient means of gathering animal health surveillance data. Accordingly, preference will be given to investigating herd, flock or group disease problems affecting cattle, sheep, goats, camelids, horses, pigs, poultry, deer, finfish, crustaceans and molluscs. Subject to the conditions outlined below this will be undertaken free of charge to the producer.

3 Scope

Testing of specimens from animals outside Queensland will attract charges. Specimens from recreation or performance animals (e.g. greyhound and thoroughbred horses), companion animals (e.g. suburban dogs and cats) and non-commercial hobby farms are regarded as low priority and will only be accepted to exclude reportable diseases.

Specimens from any animal species will be accepted regardless of background if a disease incident is deemed to present an unacceptable biosecurity risk and may impact on human health, social amenity, the economy, and the environment. Subject to the conditions outlined below, specimens accepted under these circumstances will be exempt from charges.

3.1 Specimens accepted for processing

Acceptance of specimens and exemption from charges will be based on meeting the following criteria:

1. their public benefit component
2. the extent to which clinical history, epidemiological and other relevant information is provided
3. the appropriateness of specimens to the clinical history and disease(s) suspected
4. the duration of laboratory involvement in a long running investigation
5. the depth of laboratory investigation required in solving complex multifactorial diseases
6. the association of the specimens with a disease incident.

Specimens for health and export testing, for certain accreditation schemes or referred from other laboratories for testing will incur charges.

4 Human rights consideration

Please note, when implementing this policy you must consider whether any human rights are engaged under the Human Rights Act 2019 and whether any limitations on human rights are reasonable and justifiable. If you engage a human right, you should apply the procedure under the Human Rights Policy and conduct a proportionality assessment under the *Human Rights Act 2019*.

5 Abbreviations, acronyms and definitions

Term/acronym	Definition
Act	*Biosecurity Act 2014*
BSL	Biosecurity Sciences Laboratory
DAF	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
NATA	National Association of Testing Authorities

6 Key principles

6.1 Public benefit component

A submission will be regarded as having substantial public benefit and thus exempt from charges if there is clinical disease in one or more animals under the following categories:

1. exotic or zoonotic disease
2. prohibited or restricted matter listed under the Biosecurity Act 2014 (previously 'notifiable disease')
3. specified diseases and approved government programs:
    a. quarantine specimens (including those from zoos)
    b. high morbidity and/or high mortality outbreaks of disease
    c. diseases suspected of having public health significance (e.g. Hendra virus)
    d. progressive neurological disease in sheep and cattle (e.g. the National Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies Surveillance Program)
4. new or emerging diseases, including investigations considered likely to provide new information or an improved understanding of animal health in Queensland.
5. other targeted endemic disease surveillance programs under annual review.

Clients will be promptly advised if a submission under these categories falls outside DAF requirements and is subject to charges.

6.2 Incomplete information

Submissions with incomplete information will not be processed or results withheld until relevant information is provided. Clients will be advised to this effect in compliance with NATA requirements.

A submission will be regarded as having incomplete information under the following circumstances:

- the information provided was insufficient to determine the public benefit component as described above
- the information provided was insufficient to determine whether the specimens supplied were consistent with the clinical history and disease(s) suspected
- essential epidemiological data was not supplied. Essential information includes animal details, history and clinical signs of the animals and current outbreak data.
- if the property identification code is not provided for a designated animal (as defined in the Biosecurity Act 2014).

6.3 Inappropriate specimens

Submissions with inappropriate specimens **will not** be processed. Clients will be advised to this effect in compliance with NATA requirements.

A submission will be regarded as having inappropriate specimens under the following circumstances:

- specimens are not consistent with the clinical history or disease(s) suspected
- specimens are sufficiently compromised, e.g. by autolysis (either directly by hours after death at collection or indirectly through poor preservation in transit), as to render them of no relevant diagnostic use
- specimen presentation is hazardous by way of specimen containment, inclusion of sharps or external contamination as to render them unsuitable for processing.

7 Responsibilities and accountabilities

7.1 The duration of laboratory involvement

When the laboratory is involved in the investigation of a major outbreak of endemic disease, service fees will apply after the diagnosis has been established. The details of these charges and their application would be negotiated on a case by case basis.

7.2 The depth of laboratory investigation required

The laboratory may become involved in the investigation of complex disease syndromes that are either multifactorial in nature or require special expertise or an experimental approach. Depending on the consequences for the industry, these investigations could be given special project status. Alternate funding may be required under these circumstances to ensure proper design and costing for the project.

7.3 Specimens are not associated with disease

Testing will incur charges where specimens are not associated with disease, e.g. health and export testing and accreditation scheme testing.

For an up-to-date schedule of test charges, contact the laboratory or visit business.qld.gov.au.

7.3.1 Testing for export or interstate movement of animals

It is the responsibility of the submitter to establish precisely what testing is required. Specific tests may be required and these may not always be available at BSL. Contacting the relevant authority in the state or country to which the animals are going is essential prior to submitting samples. Contact with the laboratory is recommended before sample dispatch and essential if there are a large number of samples. It is also important to allow sufficient time for testing to be completed prior to movement of the stock.

Charges for specific tests are available at business.qld.gov.au or by contacting the laboratory.

8 Source documentation

Nil

9 Related and reference documents

Biosecurity Act 2014	http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/LEGISLTN/CURRENT/B/BiosecurityA14.pdf
BSL webpage	https://www.business.qld.gov.au/industry/agriculture/land-management/health-pests-weeds-diseases/sample-testing

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Revision history

Version no.	Approval date	Comments
1.0	15/08/2005	Approved by Kevin Dunn, ADG
2.0	04/09/2020	This policy has been reviewed on 04/09/2020 to ensure actions and decisions under this policy can be made in a way that is compatible with human rights. This policy has also been reviewed to improve readability and clarity.

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