



NSW Government response to the Independent Biosecurity Commissioner's advice on opportunities to improve the NSW Cattle Tick Program





Acknowledgement of Country

The NSW Government acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live. We pay respect to Ancestors and Elders past and present. We recognise and learn from the strengths of the Aboriginal peoples of New South Wales and their continuing connection to, and unique cultural and spiritual relationship with, Country. We are dedicated to building and sustaining relationships with Aboriginal people and communities across New South Wales.

NSW Government Cattle Tick Program

The Independent Biosecurity Commissioner's report, 'Opportunities to Improve the NSW Cattle Tick Program', examines the status of cattle tick in NSW, identifies key challenges for the Cattle Tick Program, and presents future program options. It includes 14 recommendations that focus on:

- Feasibility of eradication
- Governance and administration
- Communications and engagement
- National collaboration and coordination
- Funding and delivery models
- Resourcing
- Compliance and enforcement
- Cattle tick dip sites
- Research and development

Cattle tick presents an ongoing biosecurity risk to livestock health and the NSW cattle industry. The NSW Government is committed to a long-term program that halts the spread of cattle tick and reduces its impacts on producers.

The Cattle Tick Program will continue to work towards the eradication of cattle tick in NSW, noting the Commissioner's advice that ongoing efforts will be required to identify and manage cases where cattle tick is transported across the QLD border.

Current management focuses on surveillance, early detection and coordinated responses led by government to manage infestations and limit further spread. With cattle tick infestations now at a record high, the Department has implemented the following measures over the past 6 months to support the Cattle Tick Program:

- Coordinated border surveillance comprising 9 cameras and 10 border surveillance operations ('Operation Victa') to identify potential carriers of cattle tick and investigate/audit compliance with movement requirements,
- Increased the frequency of engagement and raised awareness of the NSW Cattle Tick Consultative Committee to provide greater transparency of the program and discuss opportunities to improve education, awareness and compliance initiatives,
- Increased the Cattle Tick Program resourcing to an additional 15 staff.

While these arrangements continue to support the management of infestations, cattle tick management now occurs within an increasingly complex biosecurity environment. The NSW Government is responding to a growing number of pests, weeds, and diseases across

the state, requiring risk-based management across the biosecurity system. Contemporary biosecurity policy has consequently evolved towards approaches that emphasise collaboration between government, industry and the community. These principles are reflected in the *Biosecurity Act 2015*, which places shared responsibility on all parties to manage biosecurity risks as far as reasonably practicable.

Within this framework, cattle tick is recognised as a strategic biosecurity risk requiring coordinated management. Government will continue to provide technical leadership and oversight, while over time supporting greater industry participation in the management of infestations. Regulatory powers will remain an important mechanism to ensure obligations are met and biosecurity risks are effectively managed.

Through this approach, the NSW Government will continue to protect livestock health and the NSW cattle industry whilst supporting sustainable progress toward the long-term objective of cattle tick eradication.

Response to Recommendations

Recommendations	NSW Government Response
Governance and Administration	
1. DPIRD should continue to lead the NSW Cattle Tick Program and realign responsibility for program activities within areas of DPIRD and LLS that best support effective delivery. This includes policy, technical expertise, extension and education, on-farm surveillance and treatment activities relating to cattle tick and tick fever, activities at saleyards and abattoirs, compliance and enforcement functions, and management of cattle tick dip sites. Overall program accountability should be transferred to Animal Biosecurity under the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO), consistent with the Program's core objective relating to cattle health.	Support. DPIRD and LLS will review the NSW Cattle Tick Program to realign program activities where necessary. Where program realignment is proposed, transitional arrangements will be considered to ensure service continuity to landholders, maintain compliance outcomes, and minimise the transitional costs of change. DPIRD and LLS will implement new governance arrangements to support improved collaboration across teams with functions and expertise critical to the program, with oversight and overall accountability transferred to the Chief Veterinary Officer. The cattle tick program team responsible for on-farm treatment and surveillance will shift into the Animal Biosecurity team in line with the recommendations.

Recommendations	NSW Government Response
Governance and Administration	
2. DPIRD should by 30 June 2026 establish a technical advisory committee drawing on relevant expertise from within the organisation, including LLS and, where required, external specialists, to provide independent technical advice and direction to the Program. The committee should be responsible for supporting development of the NSW Cattle Tick Plan and its ongoing review.	Support. A technical advisory working group with representatives from relevant teams across DPIRD and LLS will be established by 29 May 2026. Where required, the advisory working group may seek input and advice from experts outside the Department and/or government.
3. In collaboration with the Cattle Tick Consultative Committee (CTCC) and key stakeholders, DPIRD and LLS should by 30 September 2026 develop and publish a NSW Cattle Tick Program Plan (the Plan). The Plan should be aligned with existing biosecurity response frameworks and clearly articulate program objectives, outcomes, strategies, performance measures and escalation thresholds.	Support. With input by the technical advisory working group and in collaboration with the Cattle Tick Consultative Committee and key stakeholders, DPIRD and LLS will commence development of a NSW Cattle Tick Program Plan to make public by 30 September 2026.
4. DPIRD with input from LLS establish a coherent, interoperable information management framework to ensure quality, consistency and accessibility for decision-making, reporting, monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement of the NSW Cattle Tick Program. This should include formal integration with key external sources of information (e.g. NLIS), accelerated transition to a single data capture and management method (e.g. MAX), and integration of software platforms to deliver a single source of truth for analytics and reporting.	Support in principle. The Department is investigating systems-based options to fulfil this recommendation. Delivery of systems uplift is subject to a future funding decision by government.
Compliance and Enforcement	
5. DPIRD consider the most appropriate regulatory tools (including use of General Biosecurity Directions, Control Orders and Biosecurity Zones) that are appropriately aligned with the NSW Cattle Tick Program Plan, including the associated compliance measures required.	Support. A new regulatory approach will continue to be reviewed with regard to any further regulatory tools as the NSW Cattle Tick Program Plan is developed.

Recommendations	NSW Government Response
Communications and Engagement	
6. DPIRD with input from LLS review and update NSW Cattle Tick Program stakeholder management and Communication and Engagement Plans by 30 November 2026 to support effective delivery of the NSW Cattle Tick Plan. This should include refreshing the purpose and membership of the Cattle Tick Consultative Committee and establishing local partnerships in the Northern Rivers region with key stakeholders, including the cattle and equine industries, veterinarians, local councils and small-scale landholders.	Support. DPIRD and LLS will review and update existing communication and engagement plans by 30 November 2026 and produce a new, consolidated Communication and Engagement Plan for the Cattle Tick Program by 30 November 2026. As part of this process, membership and Terms of Reference for the Cattle Tick Consultative Committee will be reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose to meet current and future Program outcomes.
7. DPIRD with input from LLS improve transparency of biosecurity risk information by making information on cattle tick infested and tick fever infected property status publicly available by 30 June 2026, to better inform producers, neighbouring landholders and other relevant stakeholders.	Support. This information will be made publicly available on the Department's Bio Response App and on the DPIRD website at the cattle tick web pages.
Resourcing	
8. NSW Government ensure an appropriate level of resources for the NSW Cattle Tick Program to fulfill the program objectives and outcomes, including additional resourcing when required due to seasonal peaks or other significant increases in activities.	Support in principle. The Department has funded an additional 15 positions to the program over the past 6 months and is currently examining opportunities for relevant teams across the Department to contribute to relevant components of program delivery, consistent with recommendation 1. Long term additional resourcing is subject to a future funding decision by government.

Recommendations	NSW Government Response
Cattle Tick Dip Sites	
9. DPIRD establish formal interagency arrangements with Crown Lands and the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) to support coordinated management of legacy cattle dip sites associated with the NSW Cattle Tick Program.	Support. DPIRD will collaborate with Crown Lands and the EPA to develop a risk assessment and prioritisation framework for the management of historic cattle dip sites associated with the NSW Cattle Tick Program.
Research and Development	
10. DPIRD and LLS identify and prioritise research needs for the NSW Cattle Tick Program aligned with the DPIRD Research, Development and Extension Strategy and pursue partnerships with industry and other jurisdictions to advance research, particularly control and methods.	Support in principle. DPIRD will work with appropriate research institutions and Research Development Corporations (such as MLA) to identify areas of key research to support the NSW Cattle Tick Program, with the aim of promoting new research in this area.
Feasibility of Eradication	
11. NSW Government continue to pursue eradication of cattle tick in NSW as a feasible long-term objective, noting that a low level of infestations will continue to occur in the Northern Rivers region. Ongoing border controls will be required to prevent the spread of cattle tick from cattle tick infested areas into NSW, alongside sustained effort within NSW to detect and eradicate infestations and prevent further spread.	Support. The report acknowledges that achieving zero infestations is unrealistic and the program intent should be to reduce the number of infested properties to 100-200 and prevent infestations from occurring elsewhere in NSW. With these as measures, the Cattle Tick Program will continue an eradication approach targeting the reduction of spread across neighbouring properties and incorporating regulatory tools consistent with recommendation 5 – noting this will also require significant participation and engagement from landholders across North-East NSW.

Recommendations	NSW Government Response
Feasibility of Eradication	
12. The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and Local Land Service (LLS) conduct an interim review of the NSW Cattle Tick Program after 3 years, followed by a comprehensive review after 6 years, to assess progress toward eradication, determine whether eradication remains feasible and identify any further changes required.	Support. DPIRD will lead an interim review of the NSW Cattle Tick Program in 2029, followed by a comprehensive review in 2032.
Funding and Delivery Models	
13. DPIRD and LLS investigate new funding and delivery models for application within the NSW Cattle Tick Program, including the use of a broad-based levy across NSW cattle producers and introduction of cost recovery for selected program activities, factoring in risk-creators, beneficiaries and third party-arrangements for activities as appropriate.	Support. DPIRD and LLS will investigate new funding and delivery models, including adoption of rates or levies, as part of a future Program state. However, the Department notes the Commissioner's report which advises that levies and/or increased cost recovery mechanisms should be part of a phased approach, once the Program has established a new governance and delivery framework.
National Collaboration and Coordination	
14. DPIRD directly engage national biosecurity frameworks and other jurisdictions to advocate for a national approach to cattle tick management, including establishing and funding research priorities, management of chemical resistance, alignment of strategies and to address emerging issues.	Support. The Department will raise this as a matter for discussion through the National Biosecurity Committee, and will be engaging directly with Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia on a coordinated approach.

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