



Australian Biosecurity CRC for Emerging Infectious Disease

MARCH
2006

AUTUMN
EDITION

FROM THE CEO

Dr Stephen Prowse

Looking to the future... [MORE >>](#)

EDUCATION & TRAINING

REPORTS:

- Iraqi vet training [MORE >>](#)
- Summer School [MORE >>](#)

TRAVEL REPORTS:

- Henipavirus ecology research group meeting [MORE >>](#)
- Gibbs laboratory [MORE >>](#)
- Research in Hong Kong [MORE >>](#)

ISVEE:

- Pre-ISVEE workshop [MORE >>](#)
- ISVEE conference [MORE >>](#)

PRIZES:

- Chris Baldock Prize for Early Career Researcher [MORE >>](#)
- 2006 Eureka prizes [MORE >>](#)
- 2006 Prime Minister's Prizes for Science [MORE >>](#)
- Masters-by-coursework and honours scholarships available [MORE >>](#)

WEBSITES:

- AANRO [MORE >>](#)
- Science Alert [MORE >>](#)

PROMOTIONS:

- E&T postcard [MORE >>](#)
- Australian Science Media Centre [MORE >>](#)

PERSONAL PROFILE:

- Rupert Woods [MORE >>](#)

CONFERENCES

[MORE >>](#)

FROM THE CEO*Dr Stephen Prowse***Looking to the future**

The AB-CRC Board met in Geelong on 20 & 21 February 2006. Board members were joined by the Program Leaders and Deputy CEOs for a strategic planning workshop, which occupied the first part of the meeting. This was followed by a Board meeting.

A number of key decisions were made that guide the future of the AB-CRC. The primary decision is to start developing a new CRC that can capitalise on the activities of the AB-CRC and further enhance our national biosecurity capability. We have started to map out the activities that will be involved over the next two years, culminating in the submission of the proposal in March 2008. It is important to note that the scope of a new CRC will need to differ from the current CRC.

A number of issues around research adoption were also discussed. The Board asked AB-CRC management to develop a process for increased focus on adoption to optimise the returns from the AB-CRC's research.

Evaluation of CRC research

The CRC Association recently contracted the Allen Consulting Group to undertake an evaluation of the economic returns from research undertaken in CRCs. The study took a hard-nosed approach, only examining 25 projects that have delivered a quantifiable, verified economic benefit. The key finding from the study was that over the 1992 to 2010 period the Australian economy's overall performance has been considerably enhanced by the returns from the projects. A large number of projects were excluded from the analysis due to the difficulty in quantification and attribution. The CRCA is considering the development of a process for the evaluation of CRC outcomes for CRCs operating in the national benefit arena. This will be of value to the AB-CRC since the Board agreed that an evaluation of the AB-CRC's outcomes will be undertaken in 2007, prior to the submission of a proposal for a new CRC. A further finding of note was that the average time for a project to deliver a measurable return was 9 years.

Third Year Review

The Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) requires that the AB-CRC undergo a review at the end of our third year of funding. The review is to assess the extent to which to AB-CRC is end user driven, and provides an opportunity for the

AB-CRC to assess its direction and activities and realign those activities if required. The review incorporates a survey of end user perspectives of the CRC's activities and a comprehensive assessment by an independent panel. The review is overseen by a Board subcommittee. The panel reports to the Board and then the Board reports to DEST.

New Associate Member

The Australian Wildlife Health Network (AWHN) has joined the AB-CRC as an Associate Member. Given that around 75% of emerging infectious diseases have their origins in wildlife, links to the AWHN are vital. The AWHN is a national initiative of the Commonwealth Government and is managed under the Wildlife Exotic Disease Preparedness Program (Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry). Its mission is to promote and facilitate collaborative links across Australia in the investigation and management of wildlife health in support of human and animal health, biodiversity and trade. Its vision is for a nationally integrated wildlife health system for Australia. As a framework for the operation of the AWHN, wildlife is defined as managed and unmanaged populations of native and feral animals, including amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. More information on the AWHN can be found at www.wildlifehealth.org.au/AWHN/home.aspx Rupert Woods is the AWHN's National Coordinator and is profiled later in this newsletter.

EPIDEMIOLOGY TRAINING FOR IRAQI VETERINARIANS

Marion Macnish, Senior Project Officer and Consultancy Coordinator

The AB-CRC, in collaboration with its partner organisations AusVet Animal Health Services, Murdoch University and the Department of Agriculture Western Australia, recently hosted five senior veterinarians from the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture. The group visited Australia to participate in a seven week training program entitled *Focused Technical Training Program in Epidemiology*, which took place in Perth, the south-west region of Western Australia, Orange, Canberra and Toowoomba, during November and December 2005.

This training program, culminating from successful negotiations between Lisa Adams, Chris Baldock and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), was part of a two year, US\$10.5 million project entitled *Restoration of Veterinary Services in Iraq*, funded by the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund and implemented by FAO together with the Ministry of Agriculture of Iraq.

As part of the formal training program the group also visited a wide range of relevant organisations, including diagnostic veterinary laboratories, livestock sale yards,

the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Australian Quarantine & Inspection Service (AQIS), Biosecurity Australia, Animal Health Australia, CSIRO Entomology, the Australian Veterinary Association, the University of Queensland's (Gatton) dairy farm and poultry research centre, Alpaca farms, field stations, regional veterinary offices, and private veterinary practices. Much to the delight of the group, Jenny Hutchison also arranged for the group to visit the Iraqi Ambassador to Australia at the Iraqi Embassy in Canberra.

When not in training mode, the group also enjoyed several visits to tourist attractions in the four different states, including wildlife sanctuaries (kangaroos and koalas a 'must-see') beaches and parks. They experienced a real Aussie BBQ in Orange, and sampled the local halal food at many different restaurants in each state. The field trip in the south-west of Western Australia also took in many of the local tourist attractions, including climbing the Gloucester karri tree near Permberton, all 61 metres of it!

The visit by the Iraqi veterinarians was a valuable and enjoyable experience for all involved. The group were a delight to work with, both professionally and personally, which was largely due to their very good English language skills and excellent senses of humour (yes, they did momentarily hoodwink this

author into thinking Iraqi men are considered single if they only have one wife!).

Finally, thanks must now go to all the trainers and supporting staff who helped ensure the training was a great success and that the group came away with really good memories of their time in Australia. Thanks go to John Edwards, Ian Robertson, Trevor Ellis, Stan Fenwick, Simon Reid (Murdoch University); Chris Mayberry, Tony Martin (DAWA); and Evan Sergeant, Jenny Hutchison and Nigel Perkins (AusVet) for their keen participation in the training and many of the out-of-hours activities. Thanks also go to Cindy Liew from the Perth office for managing the finances of this consultancy, and our FAO colleagues in Rome. We look forward to ongoing contact with our Iraqi colleagues.



Enjoying a visit to AHA during the epidemiology training period. From left to right: Dr Mohammed K Thamer, Dr Ali Jafar Mahdi, Dr Basem N Al-Adhath, Dr Iman A Alawi, Dr Jenny Hutchison (AusVet Animal Health Services), Dr Abdul Sattar H Al-Kubaisi and Mr Ralph Hood (AHA). Photo courtesy of Animal Health Australia.

AB-CRC SUMMER SCHOOL

Sydney Quarantine Station
13 – 17 February 2006

*Lisa Adams, Education & Training Program
Coordinator*

The inaugural AB-CRC Summer School brought together 62 trainees and 13 trainers for an historic residential short course. Historic because it is the first time to my knowledge that professionals in animal health, public health, plant health and aquatic animal health from government, industry and academic sectors have undertaken joint training in biosecurity and emerging infectious diseases in Australia (and perhaps the world?). The trainees came from far and wide, including from every state and territory in Australia, as well as from New Zealand, China and Fiji.

Course One *Emerging infectious disease preparedness and response: cross disciplinary training in disease surveillance and the role of the laboratory in disease control* was piloted at the Summer School. The initial idea for the course was suggested by Bryan Eaton (virologist at CSIRO Australian Animal Health Laboratory), Chris Baldock (consultant epidemiologist at AusVet Animal

Health Services) and Aileen Plant (Professor of International Health at Curtin University of Technology). The training objective was to provide cross disciplinary training whereby over two days participants were instructed in either the basic principles and methods of disease surveillance or the application of laboratory science in disease surveillance and control. This learning was then applied to the theory and practice of emerging infectious disease preparedness and response through a two-day, scenario-based training exercise. Trainees worked through the scenario in multidisciplinary teams and were required to adopt roles outside their traditional area of expertise.



Course One – Most of the trainees and trainers

Course Two *Evaluation of surveillance systems: the use of non-survey data sources to demonstrate freedom from disease* was targeted to professionals with epidemiological expertise with an

interest in being able to apply methods for analysing the (negative) results of all types of surveillance processes. The methods are applicable to analysing surveillance data for demonstrating freedom from disease, for comparing the efficiencies of different surveillance processes in detecting disease, for designing surveillance for disease control programs, and for economic assessment of surveillance activities. The course was based on methods originally developed in projects of the Danish International EpiLab in the Danish Institute for Food and Veterinary Research, and further developed through an AB-CRC collaborative research project. Early feedback indicates that the methods are going to be adopted in a variety of ways across Australia and internationally (the course was also delivered in Switzerland the week following the Summer School). The AB-CRC will be taking a close interest in monitoring the adoption of the methods.

A particular challenge was to make the Summer School as relevant as possible to a diverse training group. Considering these challenges, trainee satisfaction was high, with an average score of 8.2 and 8.1 out of 10 for courses one and two, respectively, as a measure of the extent to which trainees thought the desired course outcome had been achieved.



Course Two - Trainees and trainers

The Sydney Quarantine Station proved to be a popular training venue. It took a while to adapt to not locking our bedroom doors (I had the only master key and delighted in this), dealing with the mosquitos at night, and having no television, air conditioning or ready access to email. It was interesting to watch how everyone relaxed into the venue over the course of the week. There were great opportunities for networking and also for exercising; all sorts of people took early morning, evening and late night walks, runs and swims. We all appreciated the significance of the quarantine site, which has experienced the likes of measles, scarlet fever, influenza and small pox over 100 years since 1832. Most of us signed up to a late night ghost tour. The tour guides quickly adapted their approach to deal with

all the sceptics, although I am sure there were a number of closet believers. Hume Field had the dubious honour of sleeping in the most notoriously haunted bedroom.

All the trainers are to be commended for their commitment to the Summer School. In my extensive experience as an R&D Management Consultant I have not come across a group with such demonstrated dedication to the spirit of cross-sectoral cooperation. The enthusiasm of the trainers was picked up by the trainees, who had a high level of engagement throughout the week. The collaboration involved no less than eight AB-CRC partners, including trainers from two universities (Aileen Plant and Angela Merianos from Curtin University; and John Edwards and Trevor Ellis from Murdoch University), CSIRO (Peter Daniels from the Australian Animal Health Laboratory), three state government agencies (Tony Martin from the Department of Agriculture Western Australia; Hume Field from the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries; and David Smith from PathWest), a Commonwealth government agency (Ian Peebles from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry), and a company (Evan Sergeant, Nigel Perkins and Jenny Hutchison from AusVet Animal Health Services).



PhD students from Course One. Back row, from left: Brendan Cowled, Tze Hoong Chua, Jonathan Lee, Sanjeev Gumber, Sam Hamilton. Front row from left: Lisa Adams (Summer School Coordinator), Nicole Schembri, Elena Virtue, Carmel Hancock. Horizontal: Kris Murray

Thanks to Deb Gendle, Cindy Liew and Sue Campbell from the Perth and Brisbane AB-CRC offices for stellar administrative support. Thanks also to Hilary Tims for providing some media training as part of the Course One scenario. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge David Banks and Chris Baldock who were enthusiastic supporters of the Summer School and had offered their time as trainers before their untimely deaths last year.

HENIPAVIRUS ECOLOGY RESEARCH GROUP MEETING

Sheraton Langkawi Beach Resort
Langkawi Island, Malaysia
28 November – 1 December 2005

Dr Kim Halpin, CSIRO Australian Animal Health Laboratory

The Henipavirus Ecology Research Group, now into their fourth and final year of their National Institutes of Health-funded project, held their annual meeting late last year. The organisers of the meeting took the opportunity to invite similarly interested scientists who had knowledge and expertise in the ecology of henipaviruses. Collectively this made for a very interactive and productive meeting.

Project coordinator, Dr Jon Epstein of the Consortium for Conservation Medicine (CCM), put together the dynamic program and oversaw the proceedings. The CCM is one of the AB-CRC's international partners, and is a unique collaborative institution that strives to understand the link between anthropogenic environmental change, the health of all species, and the conservation of biodiversity. Topics discussed included an update on Nipah virus epidemiology by Dr Sohayati Abdul Raman of the Veterinary Research Institute in Ipoh, Malaysia, and Nipah virus modelling by PhD student Juliet Pulliam. Results of experimental studies with Hendra virus were presented by staff from AAHL.



Meeting participants, courtesy of Dr Jon Epstein.
Back row, left to right: Craig Smith (QDPI&F), Tom Hughes (CCM, Malaysia), Jon Epstein (CCM, USA), Bryan Eaton (AAHL), Rhys Fogarty (AAHL), Stephen Luby (ICDDR, Bangladesh), Alex Hyatt (AAHL), Kaw Bing Chua (International Medical University, Malaysia), Hume Field (QDPI&F), Stephen Prowse (AB-CRC), Andy Dobson (Princeton University, USA), Dr Zubaid (University Kebangsaan, Malaysia), Linfa Wang (AAHL), Andrew Breed (AB-CRC)

Front row, left to right: Mr Haidar (Perhilitan, Malaysia), Greer Meehan (AAHL), Dr Siti Suri Arshad (University Putra Malaysia), Jahangir Hossain (ICDDR, Bangladesh), Kim Halpin (AAHL), Deborah Middleton (AAHL), Adb Aziz Jamaluddin (Department of Veterinary Services, Malaysia), Peter Daszak (CCM, USA), Raina Plowright (UC Davis, USA), Juliet Pulliam (Princeton University, USA), Sohayati Abdul Rahman (VRI, Malaysia), Jeffrine Rive (Perhilitan, Malaysia), Kevin Olival (Columbia University, USA), Dr Latifah Hassan (University Putra Malaysia).

Craig Smith of the Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries presented an update on satellite telemetry studies, which include collared bats in Australia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and East Timor. Results are showing that pteropus bats can fly large distances over short periods of time.

Kevin Olival, PhD student, presented his work into *Pteropus vampyrus* population genetics. Following the presentation on *Pteropus vampyrus* population data and hunting there was discussion with Malaysia's Perhilitan (the Department of Wildlife and National Parks) on possible changes to the Wildlife Protection Act with respect to pteropus bats.

Dr Stephen Luby and Dr Johangir Hossein, both representing the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research in Bangladesh, gave an update on the Nipah virus outbreaks which have been occurring on an annual basis in their country.

The AB-CRC was well represented, with Dr Stephen Prowse, Dr Hume Field, Andrew Breed and Dr Bryan Eaton attending.

ACRONYMS

AAHL	CSIRO Australian Animal Health Laboratory
AB-CRC	Australian Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre for Emerging Infectious Disease
CCM	Consortium for Conservation Medicine
ICDDR	International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research
UC	University of California
QDPI&F	Queensland Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries
VRI	Veterinary Research Institute

TRAVEL REPORT: GIBBS LABORATORY

Australian National University
1-28 October 2005

Sheryl Maher, PhD Student (UQ)

I am attempting to design a set of universal primers capable of amplifying all flaviviruses. The end point of my project is the development of a diagnostic test for these viruses.

I was in Canberra during spring, so was fortunate enough to be able to spend a weekend at Floriade. You've got to be amazed at the sheer number of tulips, even if you don't appreciate the different designs.

The real reason I was in Canberra was to work with Mark Gibbs and his research group, using a software program they are currently developing. The program identifies regions of the genome (in this case the Flavivirus genome) unique to each species or group of species.

I was able to identify 11 different regions which could be used to distinguish 28 different groups of viruses. The probes generate a pattern which is specific for each group, and each group has a different binding pattern on these 11 probes.

My trip to Canberra has greatly assisted me both in this very focused goal of designing probes and improving my bioinformatics study, but on a much more basic level has given me an opportunity to extend my network of contacts. Through these contacts I now have an opportunity to undertake a placement internationally.



Floriade 2005

TRAVEL REPORT: RESEARCH IN HONG KONG

Tze-Hoong Chua, PhD student

Highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza is spreading westerly across Asia, Europe and Africa, with many reported outbreaks in domestic poultry and migratory birds. In December 2005, Dr Trevor Ellis (Murdoch University) and I travelled to

Hong Kong to study the performance characteristics of several influenza A antigen detection kits. The trip was made possible through the support of the AB-CRC, for which we are thankful especially when the trip had to be arranged at short notice. We met researchers in Hong Kong who provided us with their unstinted support. It took the team two weeks, working late and weekends, to complete the sensitivity testing. Results are currently being analysed.

The study has made me realise an essential lesson: that with transboundary diseases like the current avian influenza pandemic we cannot afford a closed-door only research policy. The kits were made in several different countries, the testing was carried out at another location, and the team came from Perth. It is now a race between human and virus and hopefully, with multi-disciplinary collaboration, human health will prevail.

Tze-Hoong Chua is a Professional Development Scholarship student with the AB-CRC, doing his doctoral research on epidemiology of avian influenza at the School of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences, Murdoch University.

THE ROLE OF VETERINARY EPIDEMIOLOGISTS IN ECOSYSTEM HEALTH

AB-CRC Sponsored Training Workshop
2 – 4 August 2006
Cairns Convention Centre
Queensland, Australia

Veterinarians and/or epidemiologists with an interest in ecosystem health are invited to register for a three day training workshop being held to coincide with the International Symposium on Veterinary Epidemiology and Economics.

This workshop will offer a range of perspectives on the role of epidemiology in ecosystem health. An ecosystem health approach recognises the critical linkages between human activity, ecological change, human and animal health and sustainability. This workshop will assist participants understand these links and explore the role of epidemiology in ecosystem health. Participants will be exposed to a range of new tools and methods, and will learn to recognise where and when they are appropriate. This will equip participants with the capacity to take 'a more measured, deliberate, directed approach' to real-world problems.

Presenters: Sohail Inayatullah, David Waltner-Toews, Peter Daszak and Tony McMichael

Cost: \$650 per person
Includes: course materials, morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea
Course participants: 15-30 maximum
For information contact: Peter Black (Peter.Black@affa.gov.au)
Register on line at: www.isveexi.org



The AB-CRC is proud to be a Major Sponsor of the
INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON VETERINARY EPIDEMIOLOGY AND ECONOMICS

6-11 August 2006
Cairns Convention Centre
Queensland, Australia

Registrations now open.
Register online at www.isveexi.org

Important Dates - 2006

31 May	Early Bird Registration Deadline
2-4 Aug	Pre-Symposium Workshops
13-15 Aug	Post-Symposium Workshops

INAUGURAL CHRIS BALDOCK PRIZE FOR EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER

Applications close 4.00pm AEST Monday 29 May 2006

The AB-CRC has established the *Chris Baldock Prize for Early Career Researcher* to recognise the significant contribution of Dr Chris Baldock to the AB-CRC prior to his untimely death on 6 July 2005.

Specifically, Chris was pivotal in designing and establishing the Advanced Surveillance Systems Research Program, mentoring many AB-CRC staff and students, and establishing a strong culture of collaboration and innovation within the AB-CRC. Further, Chris made an outstanding contribution to a number of AB-CRC partner organisations over many years. He will be remembered for his passion for epidemiology by all who knew him.

The Chris Baldock Prize for Early Career Researcher recognises and honours Chris's extraordinary attributes as a scientist, innovator and mentor. The prize is open to early career researchers working in an area relevant to the mission and objectives of the AB-CRC. The prize includes funding of up to \$4,000 for conference travel, and an enduring glass award. Selection criteria include demonstrated authorship and evidence of peer recognition.

The prize is open to residents of Australia, and the South-East Asia and Pacific regions, consistent with the objectives and geographic focus of the AB-CRC and Chris's profile across these regions. Candidates for the prize should be nominated by a third party and can include early career researchers from both within and outside the AB-CRC partnership.



Further information about the *Chris Baldock Prize for Early Career Researcher* and an application form can be downloaded at www.abcrc.org.au/pages/AboutUs.aspx?MenuID=29

2006 AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM EUREKA PRIZES

Entries close Friday 5 May 2006

The 2006 Australian Museum Eureka Prizes offer 20 awards across 4 categories:

- Research

- Leadership and Innovation
- Education
- Science Communication

Be part of the Australian Museum Eureka Prizes by entering yourself or nominating someone for one of these prestigious prizes. Winners will be announced at a gala award dinner at Sydney's celebrated Royal Hall of Industries on 22 August 2006.

For more information and online entry forms go to www.amonline.net.au/eureka/

2006 PRIME MINISTER'S PRIZES FOR SCIENCE

Nominations close Friday 19 May 2006

Nominations are being sought for any of the following five prestigious awards:

- Prime Minister's Prize for Science
- Science Minister's Prize for Life Scientist of the Year
- Malcolm McIntosh Prize for Physical Scientist of the Year
- Prime Minister's Prize for Excellence in Science Teaching in Primary Schools
- Prime Minister's Prize for Excellence in Science Teaching in Secondary Schools

Information about the Prizes and the online

nomination is available at <https://science-grants.dest.gov.au/scienceprize/pages/home.aspx>

AB-CRC SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES MASTERS-BY-COURSEWORK AND HONOURS SCHOLARSHIPS

Applications close Wednesday 31 May 2006

We are currently accepting applications for Masters-by-Coursework and Honours scholarships for mid-year commencement in 2006. For information about eligibility, application forms and relevant policies, please visit the Education & Training section of our website www.abcrc.org.au. Please contact Debra Gendle (debra.gendle@abcrc.org.au) or Lisa Adams (lisa.adams@abcrc.org.au) for more information.

USEFUL WEB SITES

Australian Agriculture and Natural Resources Online

AANRO is an integrated database of agriculture and natural resources information, funded by Australian Commonwealth and State Governments.

You can search the database using a keyword or phrase to discover and view summaries of publications and research, electronic full text, as well as relevant information resources on other web sites.

You can browse by organisation for the current research project descriptions and recent publications of AANRO contributors (including the AB-CRC) through a single point of access to an organisation's past and present research and development.

It also contains links to special data collections - custom-built products that have been developed to suit AANRO's client needs. These data collections have an industry focus and represent a comprehensive overview of a target topic.

For more visit www.aanro.net/

SCIENCEALERT

ScienceAlert carries topical news items and feature articles from leading scientific research organisations as an information service to science, industry, the media, government and the community.

ScienceAlert is provided on a not-for-profit basis by Julian Cribb & Associates,

consultants in science communication. There is no charge for its use, reproduction or linking, and they do not accept paid advertising. It includes a calendar of local and international science events. Several scientific disciplines are now using ScienceAlert Events as their own calendar. It is very extensive and it is searchable. It is also free to use – either to search or to add you own event.

For more see www.sciencealert.com.au

BECOME A SCIENCE SUPERHERO!

And get a pretty sweet deal on your education, too.

Natalie Paul, Information & Administration Officer

What's this all about?!

The AB-CRC recently developed its latest marketing tool – a postcard to promote scholarship opportunities (tenable at Curtin University of Technology, James Cook University, Murdoch University, The University of Queensland and the University of Sydney) and to woo potential Honours, Masters and PhD students to our Education & Training Program.



The back of the postcard features photos of students who are attached to the AB-CRC projects in their 'study' environments, and feedback from two students of their experiences with the AB-CRC.

Twenty postcards are being sent to each AB-CRC Program Leader, as well as postgraduate coordinators, communication managers and industry stakeholders for further dissemination.

If you know someone who may benefit from studying with the AB-CRC and/or would like to receive some postcards for passing onto potential students please email Natalie Paul at the Brisbane office (natalie.paul@abcrc.org.au) or Debra Gendle at the Perth office (debra.gendle@abcrc.org.au).

SCIENCE MEDIA CENTRE OPEN FOR BUSINESS

The Australian Science Media Centre (AusSMC) opened for business on Monday 28 November 2005.

The AusSMC is an independent, not-for-profit, national organisation based in Adelaide. It aims to inform public debate by promoting accurate, evidence-based science to the media, especially to news reporters when science is in the headlines. The centre is based on the successful UK Science Media Centre (SMC), an initiative of Baroness Susan Greenfield, Director of the Royal Institution in London.

To ensure the independence of the centre, sponsorship is capped at 10% of total operating costs. Foundation sponsors include Fairfax Holdings Limited, ABC, PBL, News Limited, APN, Macquarie Bank, CSIRO, Shell Australia, Royal Australian Chemical Institute, ResMed and Ernst and Young. Gold sponsors include Johnson Winter and Slattery, and the University of Adelaide. The Government of South Australia has provided financial support for infrastructure set-up costs in the 2004/2005 year and considerable in-kind assistance.

The AusSMC will be both reactive and proactive, responding to the day-to-day needs of reporters as well as holding briefings on hot topics and providing comments from scientists on major developments. The centre will keep an updated database of Australian scientific experts who are also good communicators and are prepared to give interviews in the timeframe required.

The AusSMC needs the support of Australian science experts in all fields of science and has formed a Science Advisory Panel to provide advice when needed. Members of the Science Advisory Panel and the Board are listed on the web site at www.aus-smc.org/

The AusSMC web site also contains media tips for scientists:

Peer Review in a Nutshell is a guide for scientists preparing for a news interview about the trustworthiness of a piece of scientific research. This sort of question will often prompt an answer that refers to peer review, but this wrongly assumes that the general public fully understand the process of peer review in scientific research. We urge scientists to use the opportunity provided by a news interview to explain exactly what peer review is. This leaflet

offers some effective ways to explain peer review in a brief news interview: what it is, how it works, and why scientists rely on it so much. The content of this guide was compiled by a working group of leading scientists, journal editors and journalists.

Communicating Risk in a Soundbite is a guide for scientists, doctors and engineers preparing for a broadcast interview, and is the result of a meeting between top scientists and journalists in the UK in 2002. They assessed the best ways to explain risks via the broadcast media, and suggested a whole host of examples. It is not meant to be a definitive 'best practice' guide, but offers a choice of effective ways of answering questions about safety and risk. Note that the guide is intended for use in situations where risks are perceived to be much higher than they actually are. It is not intended to help cover up significant risks or threats to public health.

When Animal Research Hits the Headlines is a guide for scientists and doctors preparing for a news interview where questions may be asked about the use of animals in medical research. It resulted from a meeting between top scientists and journalists in the UK which explored effective ways of answering the most commonly asked questions about

animal research in the context of a short news interview. (NB: This leaflet was written in a European context for UK scientists.)

For more information visit www.aussmc.org/

PERSONAL PROFILE

Rupert Woods
Australian Wildlife Health Network

Rupert coordinates the Australian Wildlife Health Network (AWHN), which is a national initiative of the Commonwealth Government and is managed under the Wildlife Exotic Disease Preparedness Program (Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry). Its mission is to promote and facilitate collaborative links in the investigation and management of wildlife health in support of human and animal health, biodiversity and trade. Most of his time is spent trying not to upset the many interested stakeholder groups involved in issues associated with diseases with wildlife as part of their ecology whilst simultaneously seeking outcomes that are

good for Australia. He has biology and vet degrees, sits on a number of wildlife working groups, is a member of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists, and received his PhD whilst working with the Australian Antarctic Division. He is married and has a little girl, Jade (who is three), and a little boy, Kaelen (who is nearly 7). He is interested in information management and epidemiology, but has little time for either, his current priority being preventing Jade from feeding her new hermit crabs to the cats.



Rupert attempting to find the ear plugs of a Bryde's whale whilst working with the University of Tasmania. (You can work out the age of baleen whales from their ear plugs.)

CONFERENCES

A conference database is available at www.abcrc.org.au > News & Events

International Symposium on Emerging Zoonoses: medical and veterinary partnerships to address global challenges

22-24 March 2006
Atlanta, Georgia, USA

For more information visit www.isezconference.org/

Infectious Disease Research Network Courses in Methods in Molecular Microbiology

24 March-3 April 2006
London, United Kingdom

For more information visit www.idrn.org/researchworkshops.php

Crossroads in Global Health: The Double Burden of Infectious and Chronic Diseases

15th Annual Global Health Education Consortium Conference

19-21 April 2006
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

For more information visit www.globalhealth-ec.org/default.htm

2nd Annual General Meeting on Zoonoses Research in Europe

3-6 May 2006

Malta

For more information visit www.medvetnet.org/mvn_conf06/

Third International Conference on Antimicrobial Agents in Veterinary Medicine

16-20 May 2006

Orlando, Florida, USA

For more information visit www.aavm2006.com

106th General Meeting of the American Society for Microbiology

21-25 May 2006

Orlando, Florida, USA

For more information visit www.gm.asm.org/7200.shtm

Living together: Polymicrobial Communities**Society for Applied Microbiology 75th Anniversary Summer Conference**

3-6 July 2006

Edinburgh, Scotland

For more information visit www.sfam.org.uk/sumconf.php

Veterinary Virology Conference**A Festschrift to recognise the lifetime achievements of Professor Michael Studdert**

27-29 September 2006

Melbourne, Australia

For more information visit <http://conferences.vu.edu.au/VetViro/Default.html>

23rd National Reference Laboratory Workshop on Serology

16-19 October 2006

Melbourne

For more information visit www.nrl.gov.au/dir185/nrl-pub.nsf/Structure/Events-NRLA-6LL3F9