

World bovine tuberculosis experts gather

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Bovine tuberculosis experts from around the world are gathering in Wellington this week to attend the M.bovis 5th International Conference at Te Papa.

M.bovis is held every five years in different locations around the world and aims to share world best-practice applied knowledge in tuberculosis control. The 2009 event from 25-28 August is being hosted by the Animal Health Board.

Animal Health Board Chief Executive, William McCook, said the event offers a unique opportunity for science and policy experts to share their knowledge and experience in the management and control of bovine tuberculosis.

“Every continent is represented among the delegates, demonstrating the growing recognition of the impact the disease can have on trade and economies globally,” he said.

New Zealand has a long history of Mycobacterium bovis (tuberculosis) infection in cattle and more recently in deer herds. This has been largely driven by wild animal infection, primarily in possums.

Over the past 15 years the Animal Health Board has been successful in reducing the number of infected cattle and deer herds from more than 1700 to around 130.

“The targeted control of infected wild animal populations has been a crucial element in the success of our control programme,” Mr McCook said.

“But equally vital has been the science and research behind the control work and the active involvement and support of the farming sector and wider rural community.”

Mr McCook said the conference gives New Zealand an important opportunity to showcase its expertise in bovine tuberculosis control.

“Post conference field trips have been organised to give visitors to New Zealand an insight into our farming industry, the tuberculosis research being undertaken here and how our TB control programme is implemented on the ground,” he said.

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