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**BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS IN AUSTRALIA**  
**The Delegate declares his country free from the disease in cattle and buffalo**

*Text of a fax received on 19 November 1997 from Dr G. Murray, Chief Veterinary Officer, Department of Primary Industries and Energy, Canberra:*

A national celebratory dinner was held on 5 November 1997 to mark the occasion of Australia attaining the status of a free area in respect of bovine tuberculosis in cattle and buffalo. The official declaration of Australia's freedom will occur on 31 December 1997.

Australia was declared a free area for bovine brucellosis in July 1989 (see *Disease Information*, 2 [31], 103). Subsequent monitoring programmes have confirmed that brucellosis no longer exists in Australia.

This is a significant milestone in the nation's history, being an undertaking of 27 years for the combined brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication campaign. Some AUD 840 million\* was expended, almost 50% being funded by the Australian cattle industry through a dedicated levy tax.

Since reaching 'impending freedom' from bovine tuberculosis in December 1992 (i.e. all cattle herds tested, all positive reactors removed and no known infected animals remain), a five-year national surveillance and monitoring programme has been conducted.

The agreed national requirements for tuberculosis freedom in Australia include:

- That impending freedom be attained not less than five years previously.
- That the number of detected tuberculosis cases in confirmed free herds since impending freedom be acceptable. These 'breakdowns' have also been dealt with effectively.
- That all bovine tuberculosis be considered to have been eradicated.

These programme requirements go beyond the *International Animal Health Code* requirements as outlined in Article 3.2.3.1.

A national granuloma submission programme from abattoirs is part of the national monitoring programme. All farms have a unique identification number for traceback purposes. A national database records any infected animals detected, the traceback details and subsequent action taken.

Australia will now continue with a new monitoring programme, since attaining tuberculosis freedom, called the 'Tuberculosis Freedom Assurance Program'.

\* AUD: Australian dollar.

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