Today the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries Gary Higgins joined with Biosecurity experts and Departmental Heads to launch the NT’s 10 year strategic plan for Biosecurity.

“The Northern Territory Biosecurity Strategy 2016-2026 maps out the requirements to reach best practice benchmarks. It represents a major step forward in safeguarding the NT’s unique environment and underpins our ‘Developing the North’ vision,” said Minister Gary Higgins.

With the release of the strategy, the NT Government has put the critical building blocks in place to:

1. Support contemporary legislative and policy frameworks implementation to support effective and efficient biosecurity action.
2. Focus on risk mitigation and strategic resource deployment to guide prevention, detection and eradication.
3. Strengthen community engagement and capability around biosecurity threats to the Northern Territory.
4. Focus on safeguarding the Territory’s assets through surveillance and response preparedness, supported by contemporary IT systems.
5. Enhance knowledge systems implemented to support improved risk detection and response processes.
6. Seek to position the Northern Territory at the forefront of best practice biosecurity management through continuous improvement driven by measured performance assessment.

“This plan focuses around the risks of pests and disease. At the same time, we will be innovative leaders nationally in the biosecurity space with this new community-based approach to Biosecurity” said Minister Higgins.

The number of recent pest and disease incursions has highlighted that the Territory needs to enhance preparedness across the whole Biosecurity continuum. A fast-moving animal disease, such as Foot and Mouth would have catastrophic impacts on the Territory’s economy (a moderate scale incursion would shut down exports of livestock product overnight and is estimated to cost up to $50b nationally over ten years).

The partnership model represents a substantial shift away from the tradition of government agencies delivering technical surveillance programs to a new ‘citizen-focused’ program that recognises the capability of the public, farmers and fishers to identify, record and report data; and take action where necessary.
The key objective of the partnership model is to create a culture on the principle that “Biosecurity is everyone’s responsibility”.

Lessons learned from the banana freckle response regarding how effective industry and community engagement can be highlights the value of investing in community and stakeholder education and awareness programs to empower a large biosecurity ‘workforce’ with eyes on the ground throughout the NT.

This changes the role of Government to focus its efforts on critical risks such as Foot and Mouth Disease. With appropriate resourcing it allows government to drive and deliver sophisticated, evidence based biosecurity planning (strategic risk assessments), emergency response planning and incident control training, and community awareness and education programs (such that industry and community monitors and reports on potential incursions).

Nothing is more important to our agriculture and fisheries sectors than a comprehensive insurance package against the impact of pests and diseases. The speed, efficiency and effectiveness with which we respond to incursions, defines the integrity of the NT’s biosecurity status.

For further information on the Northern Territory Biosecurity Strategy 2016-2026 or to obtain a copy please visit https://dpif.nt.gov.au/ (https://dpif.nt.gov.au/).

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