

New Forbes Saleyards Display Sound Biosecurity Planning

Saleyard operators continue their commitment to improved management of livestock health and welfare with the new Forbes Livestock Exchange showing significant livestock welfare and biosecurity protection measures.

An inspection of the new cattle yards as they near completion attracted compliments from participants at a recent saleyards workshop in Forbes, Animal Health Australia's Director Programs, Dr Rob Keogh was particularly impressed at attention paid to biosecurity preparedness.

"The Forbes saleyard's biosecurity measures have been developed during the planning and construction process and not as an afterthought," said Dr Keogh.

"The Forbes Shire Council has shown significant foresight to create saleyards that meet the biosecurity needs of both domestic and international markets," he said.

The initiatives contributing to the 'clean and green' image are in the areas of technology, waste management, animal welfare and transport.

"The international market relies on Australia to manage livestock biosecurity and want assurance not only of the processes to manage an emergency disease outbreak, but more importantly that we have all the precautionary measures in place to prevent it occurring in the first place.

"All the tools are on the blueprint for Forbes and this shows a genuine commitment to minimising the risks associated with this important step in the livestock value-chain," said Dr Keogh.

Mr Ron Penny, NSW Saleyard Operators Association, Chief Executive Officer and a Forbes Shire Councillor overseeing the saleyard development, said the innovations being introduced included a 'soft stand' floor.

Unlike most modern saleyards, which have concrete floors, the new Forbes facility will have floors made of compacted sawdust, rice hulls and sand. Sore feet are an early sign of foot-and-mouth disease, one of the most feared of the emergency diseases with the potential to enter Australia.

"The soft stand floor will mean that if we see foot problems in an animal, it won't be associated with standing on a concrete floor - as is often the case in saleyards - and needs to be investigated," Mr Penny said.

In addition to the flooring, the technology to trace livestock movements forwards and backwards with the integrated National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) software has saleyard operators around the country interested in pursuing similar technology.

"The hard work has gone in at the planning end, with needs identified up front and carried out during construction to make sure the yards will operate efficiently from day one," said Mr Penny.

"The fibre optic cabling was installed as part of the fit-out to manage the flow of technology and we are pleased at the efficiencies this will bring for sellers, buyers, agents, government and industry bodies," he said.

Animal Health Australia was impressed with the waste disposal plan and truck wash areas that will also contribute to the best practice initiatives to be implemented at Forbes.

“We have worked with many industry groups to ensure that everyone’s needs were identified to create a blueprint for yards into the future and we are looking forward to opening for business in the upcoming months,” said Mr Penny.

Animal Health Australia participated in the planning workshop held in Forbes at the invitation of the Saleyard Operators Association. The workshop provided an opportunity for a range of stakeholders in the livestock industry to focus on the challenges and opportunities saleyard operators will face over the next five to ten years.

Animal Health Australia’s Protect Australian Livestock Campaign is the most comprehensive livestock producer awareness program in the country. Working with government and industry members, the Protect Australian Livestock Campaign encourages livestock producers who see any suspicious signs in their animals to ‘Look. Check. Ask a Vet’, or to telephone the Emergency Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888.