

Situation report: Abalone viral ganglioneuritis (AVG) 2021

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

From	Steve Campbell, Incident Controller
To	Graeme Cooke, Chief Veterinary Officer
Situation report number	11 (Updates in blue text)
Operational period	14 July 2021 — 21 July 2021
Issued at	22 July 2021, 1800 hrs
Response to	Abalone viral ganglioneuritis (AVG), Victoria, 2021

1. Current response objectives

The current objectives of the response to this abalone viral ganglioneuritis (AVG) incident are:

- Ensure a safe operating environment.
- Implement controls to minimise the risk of further spread of AVG by non-natural vectors.
- Undertake surveillance to determine the extent of spread of AVG.
- Determine further appropriate response options using an evidence-based approach.
- Provide relevant information to stakeholders on a timely basis.

2. Key updates

- The Control Order was re-signed by the Chief Veterinary Officer on 16 July 2021, with no changes made to the Control Area.
- A routine surveillance dive of Yumbah intake pipes and surrounds was completed on 14 July 2021 by Fisheries Officers. No visual signs of AVG were observed. Five (5) samples were collected and have tested negative.
- AVG was confirmed in suspect abalone collected in Bully Cove / South Bridgewater reef code on 9 July 2021 by commercial divers. This reef code is within the Control Area.

3. Background

- A diver observed dead blacklip abalone (*Haliotis rubra*) with signs indicating possible AVG on 1 May 2021 off the coast of Cape Nelson, Portland, Victoria. Abalone were collected and Ag Vic immediately notified. Both AgriBio and the CSIRO Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP) confirmed the presence of AVG virus on 2 May 2021.
- AVG is a viral disease of wild and farmed abalone which affects the nervous system of abalone and results in curling of the foot, swelling of the mouth, weakness and death of abalone.
- The virus can spread through water from infected abalone or abalone product (offal, shells or mucus), fishing equipment including wetsuits, anchors, rock lobster pots and ropes, and via people who have come into contact with infected abalone or sea bottom habitat.
- Abalone (wild and cultured populations), ecosystems, fisheries and associated stakeholders can be impacted if mortality events occur.
- The AVG virus has no known or predicted effects on human health, including those who come into contact through consuming or touching abalone.
- AVG is considered an exotic disease of molluscs under the *Livestock Disease Control Act 1994* (LDCA) and must be immediately notified.

- The Australian Aquatic Veterinary Emergency Response Plan (AQUAVETPLAN) has a nationally agreed disease strategy for AVG in farmed stock.

4. Current situation

- Agriculture Victoria (Ag Vic) and the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) are working together to respond to the detection of AVG, with Ag Vic leading the response.
- [The Control Order was re-signed by the Chief Veterinary Officer on 16 July 2021, with no changes made to the Control Area. Restrictions within the Control Area remain unchanged.](#)
 - [The last change was made on 10 July 2021 when the southern boundary of the abalone viral ganglioneuritis \(AVG\) Control Area was reduced offshore to approximately 40 metre depth and the eastern boundary adjusted to align with the Cape Grant landmark.](#)
- The Chief Executive Officer of the VFA gazetted a Fisheries Notice under Sections 67, 114 and 152 of the *Fisheries Act 1995*. The Fisheries (Abalone Disease Closure) Notice 2021 was reissued on 28 June 2021 (No S 206). The objectives of this Notice are to protect the abalone fishery and abalone aquaculture activities by reducing the risk of AVG spread due to specified activities.
- Control Order compliance has found [no breaches in the past 7 days. Fishing volumes at Portland remain low, especially since the reinstatement of the COVID-19 lockdown in Victoria.](#)
- Surveillance and monitoring activity are being used to determine the extent of spread of disease.
 - Samples have been collected from [107 dive sites](#) since early May 2021.
 - [A routine surveillance dive of Yumbah intake pipes and surrounds was completed on 14 July 2021 by Fisheries Officers. No visual signs of AVG were observed. Five \(5\) samples were collected and have tested negative.](#)
 - Divers detected further dead and suspect abalone on 13 July 2021 in a region just outside the eastern boundary of the Control Area (Cape Grant reef code). AgriBio attempted to test a submitted sample, however the sample was not suitable for testing.
 - [AVG was confirmed in suspect abalone collected in Bully Cove / South Bridgewater reef code on 9 July 2021 by commercial divers. This reef code is within the Control Area.](#)
 - Of twenty-one (21) reef codes sampled to date across the Control Areas, [eight \(8\)](#) have been identified as infected, namely [South Bridgewater/ Bully Cove](#), Seal Caves, Horseshoe, Murrels, Jones Bay, Inside Nelson, Outside Nelson, and Devils Kitchen. Refer to **Figure 1 and Tables 1 and 2.**

Table 1: Weekly sampling summary 14 July 2021 – 21 July 2021

Dive date	Reef code	Number of sites	Number abalone observed live	Number abalone observed freshly dead	Number of observed empty abalone shells	Number sick abalone	Number abalone tested for attachment	Number of abalone weakly attached	Number of abalone sampled	Number of abalone positive for AVG
14/07/2021	2.16 Minerva Reef	3	25	0	0	0	25	0	5	0

NOTE - Data in all tables is subject to change due to quality assurance checks - ensuring we have the most accurate information available.

Table 2: Cumulative surveillance and sampling data from 01 May 2021 to 21 July 2021

Reef code	Number of sites	Number abalone observed live	Number abalone observed freshly dead	Number of observed empty abalone shells	Number sick abalone	Number abalone tested for attachment	Number of abalone weakly attached	Number of abalone sampled	Number of abalone positive for AVG
Total	107	24933	123	1558	70	2912	34	543	100

* NOTE – Cases marked with an asterisk have lab results still pending.

- The following activities remain prohibited in the Control Area: fishing from shore or boat with a sinker; use of commercial fishing or abalone equipment; and the use of hoop nets, bait traps, hauling nets and abalone levers for recreational fishing. All abalone, rock lobsters, sea urchins and

other aquatic invertebrates cannot be collected, whether live or dead. Boats, vessels and fishing equipment cannot be anchored in the Control Area; however, a vessel can move through the area provided it does not stop. Activities such as swimming, surfing, paddle boarding and walking along the shore/rocks are allowed.

- A *Notice to Mariners* was issued for Bass Strait – Portland by Marine Safety Victoria 10 May 2021, detailing restrictions until further notice.
- There have been no product recalls or bans on abalone, and it is still safe for human consumption.
- Planning is being undertaken for transitioning the emergency response to an Ag Vic and VFA project to develop, in partnership with industry, the long-term approach to managing AVG as an established disease in wild populations.
 - Ag Vic and VFA are currently developing an interim approach and will be seeking industry's input into this.
 - Given evidence of established disease and the inability to eradicate AVG from the wild, a recommendation will be made to remove AVG from the list of exotic diseases under the LDCA.
- There have been positive discussions with the rock lobster industry regarding the voluntary adoption of biosecurity protocols when leaving/moving equipment from the zone adjacent to the Control Area. Biosecurity protocols have now been established.
- Ag Vic provided an update to the national Aquatic Consultative Committee for Exotic Animal Disease (AqCCEAD) on 13 July 2021. A further meeting of AqCCEAD will be determined in mid-August 2021.

5. Media and communications

- Website updated with latest control order and map. Information is available publicly on the Agriculture Victoria and Victorian Fisheries Authority websites:

<https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/biosecurity/animal-diseases/abalone-disease>

<https://vfa.vic.gov.au/operational-policy/pests-and-diseases/abalone-disease>

- A VicEmergency alert is live on EMV website and updated to reflect to control order changes as of 9 July 2021.
- [Updated control order advertisement provided to Victorian Government's ad booking agency, OMD, for publishing in the Portland Observer 23 July 2021.](#)
- Who to contact for questions/issues?
 - Commercial abalone dive industry – Travis Baulch 0400 002 940
 - Farmed abalone industry – Tracey Bradley 0429 429 498

Approval



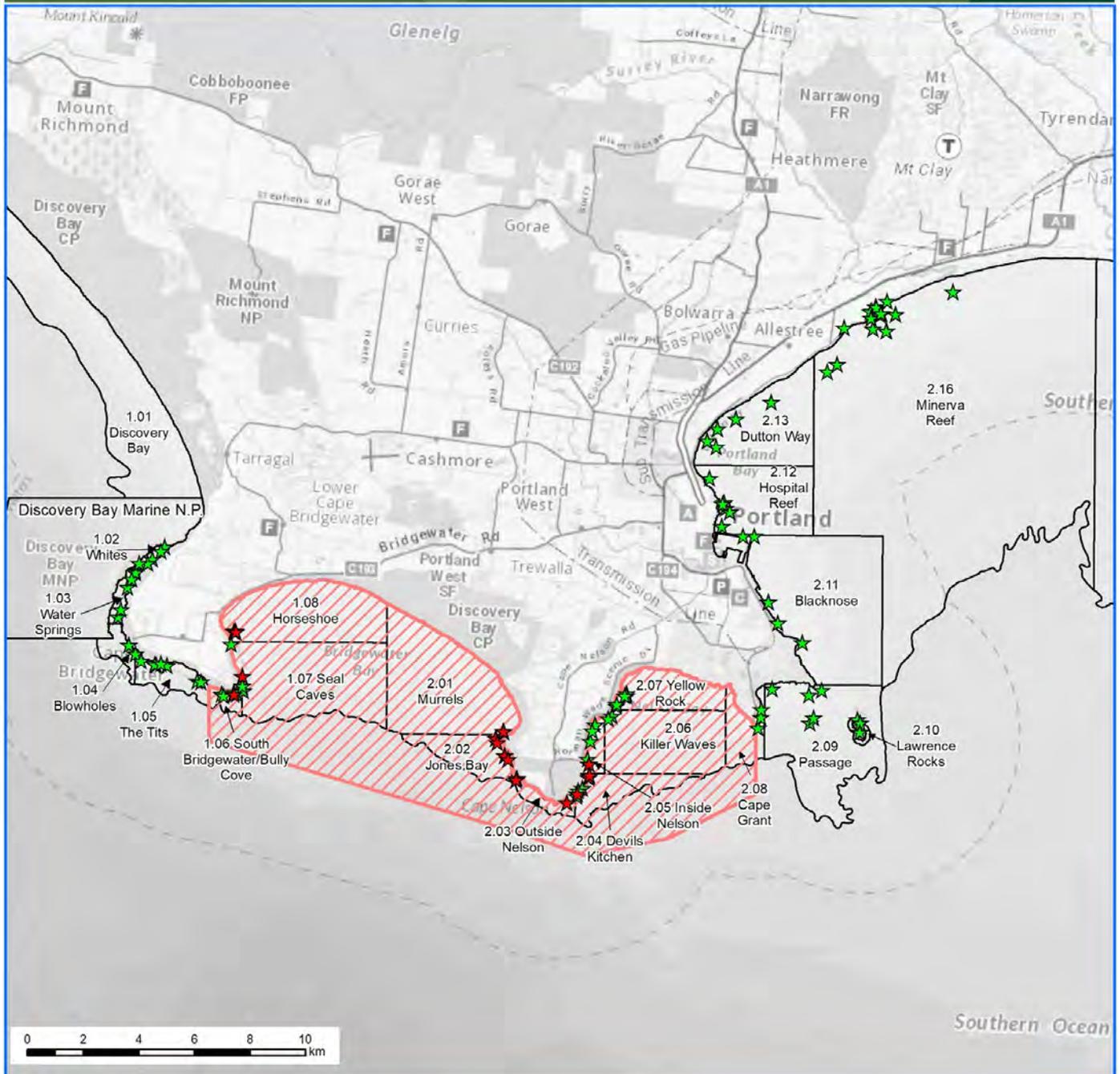
Steve Campbell

Incident Controller

22/07/2021

Abalone viral ganglioneuritis Situation Overview

22/07/2021 0830hrs



- ★ Positive Samples
- ★ Negative Samples
- ▨ Control Area
- Reef based surveillance areas

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Figure 1 Abalone viral ganglioneuritis situational overview