

Situation report: Abalone viral ganglioneuritis (AVG) 2021

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

From	Steve Campbell, Incident Controller
To	Graeme Cooke, Chief Veterinary Officer
Situation report number	6 (Updates in blue text)
Operational period	09 June 2021 — 15 June 2021
Issued at	17 June 2021, 1600 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

- Results are pending from surveillance undertaken over the last week (Whites, Water Springs, Blowholes, The Tits, South Bridgewater/Bully Cove and Passage reef codes). There has been no change to the total number of reef codes (five) identified as infected.

3. Background

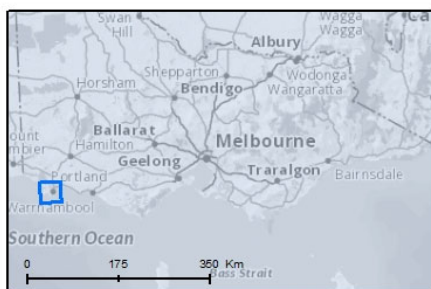
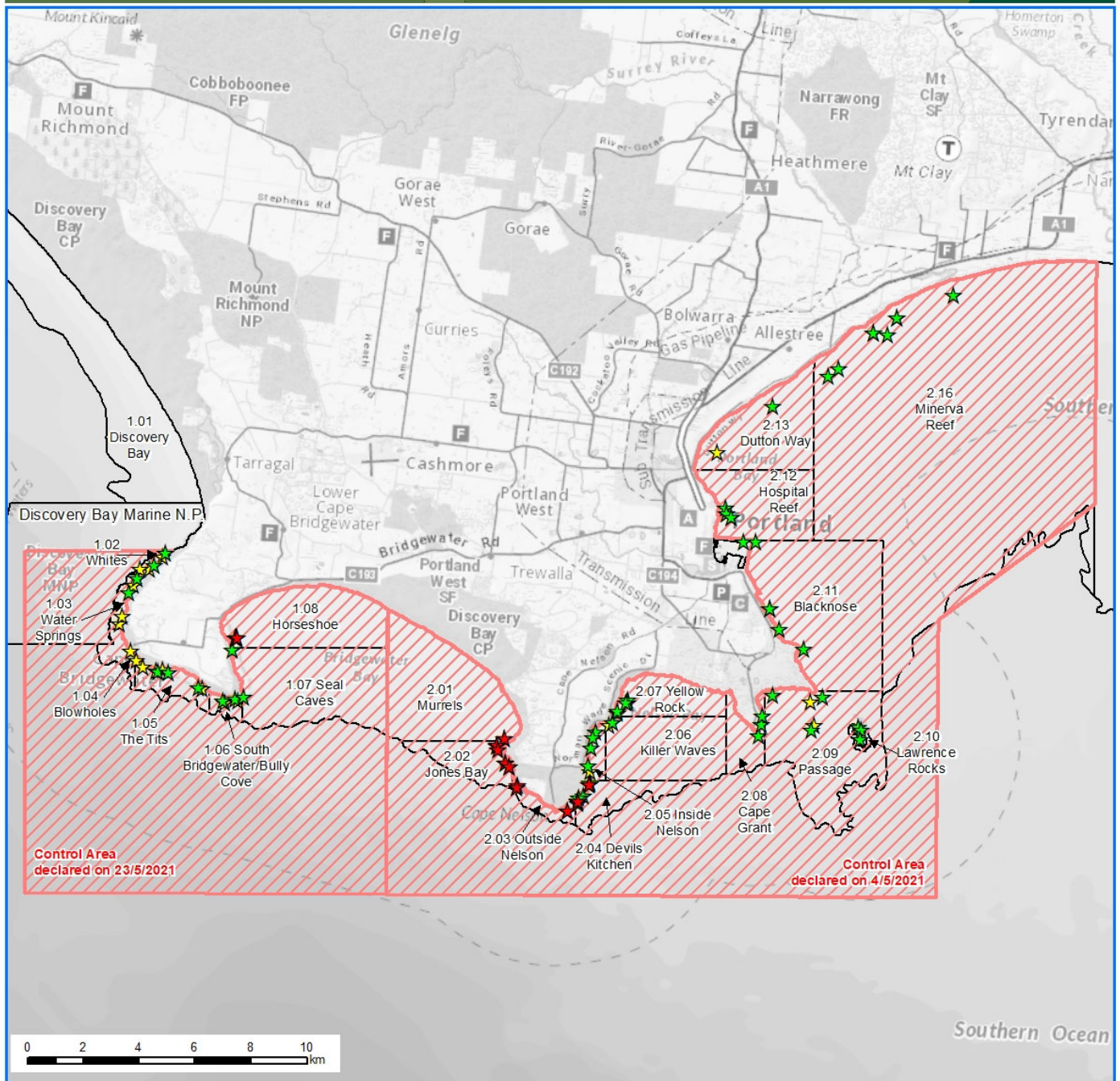
- A diver observed dead blacklip abalone (*Haliotis rubra*) with signs indicating possible abalone viral ganglioneuritis (AVG) on 1 May 2021 off the coast of Cape Nelson, Portland, Victoria. Abalone were collected and Agriculture Victoria (Ag Vic) immediately notified. Both AgriBio and the CSIRO Australian 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

- Ag Vic and the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) are working together to respond to the detection of AVG, with Ag Vic leading the response.
- To mitigate the spread of virus by human activity, the Chief Veterinary Officer has declared two Control Areas under the LDCA that span the coastline from Discovery Bay Marine National Park in the west to past Narrawong in the east, extending to variable distances offshore to include at least 30 m ocean depth (see Figure 1). Discussions are continuing around contracting Control Areas.
- 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 implemented on 28 May 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.
- Surveillance and monitoring activity are being used to determine the extent of spread of disease.
 - Results are pending from surveillance undertaken over the last week (Whites, Water Springs, Blowholes, The Tits, South Bridgewater/Bully Cove and Passage reef codes).
 - Of twenty (20) reef codes sampled to date across the Control Areas, five (5) have been identified as infected, namely Horseshoe, Murrels, Jones Bay, Outside Nelson, and Devils Kitchen. Refer to **Figure 1**.
- Abalone have tested positive for AVG at an onshore processing facility located in south west Victoria. The facility is complying with a Quarantine Notice and Disinfection Notice issued under the LDCA to minimise the risk of further spread. Ag Vic and VFA are working with the operators to plan processing of remaining abalone and then decontamination. Tracing investigations are being undertaken to identify the potential source and further spread of AVG.
- The boundaries of the Control Areas are constantly under review as new surveillance results are received.
- The following activities remain prohibited in the Control Areas: 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.
- Any movement of abalone out of the Control Area must have a permit. Further information is available from the Ag Vic abalone disease [webpage](#).
- VFA officers have been authorised under the LDCA and are undertaking field patrols to ensure the Control Area conditions are being complied with.
- 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.
- Ag Vic and the VFA are working closely with the NSW DPI in response to the detection of AVG in wholesale, processing and retail premises in the Greater Sydney Area. NSW DPI implemented a Biosecurity AVG Control Order, which has this week been extended until 8 December 2021. Under this Control Order, abalone from Victoria are not permitted to be moved into NSW unless originating from the Victorian eastern abalone zone (i.e. wild caught abalone).
- Ag Vic prepared an update on the Victorian response, to the [Aquatic Consultative Committee for Exotic Animal Disease \(AqCCEAD\)](#).

Abalone viral ganglioneuritis Situation Overview

17/06/2021 1100hrs



- ★ Positive Samples
- ★ Negative Samples
- ★ Pending Samples
- ▨ Control Areas
- Reef based surveillance areas

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Figure 1 Abalone viral ganglioneuritis situational overview

5. Media and communications

- Websites have been updated to ensure accuracy of content and access to useful information to assist public. 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>

- Facebook live stream of Portland public meeting on 25 May 2021 attracted 2.6K views.
- Customer Contact Centre knowledge article has been updated, and an updated fact sheet has been supplied to assist in responding to incoming queries. The fact sheet will be translated into Chinese and Vietnamese for our CALD communities.
- Analysis of incoming calls to Customer Contact Centre identified commonly sought questions from the public. New Q&As have been approved to answer these questions and will be made available on the website and Customer Contact Centre.
- Social media plan in development, including new posts to answer commonly asked questions and promote good news/activities people can do around the Control Area. Social media have posted on boat hygiene.
- Coreflute signage development is progressing to raise awareness of detection, restrictions in place within Control Area and good biosecurity practices (50 of each). Signage has been sent to Portland and has now been erected at boat ramps and coastal access points throughout the Control area. Further signage to be developed and sent to Mallacoota and other parts of the state.
- A VicEmergency alert is live on EMV website.
- Proposed follow up pop-up community event in Portland has been postponed in line with COVID-19 circuit breaker restrictions and the event will be rescheduled at a later date.

6. Next situation report

- Next situation report will be issued at **1600hrs on 24/06/2021**.

Approval



Steve Campbell

Incident Controller

17/06/2021