

Situation report: Abalone viral ganglioneuritis (AVG) 2021

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

From	Ryan Cooke, Incident Controller
To	Graeme Cooke, Chief Veterinary Officer
Situation report number	7 (Updates in blue text)
Operational period	16 June 2021 — 22 June 2021
Issued at	24 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

- AgVic provided an update to the national Aquatic Consultative Committee for Exotic Animal Disease (AqCCEAD) on 16 June 2021. There was in principle agreement that farms accredited under the nationally agreed Abalone Health Accreditation Program should be exempt from trade restrictions, provided supply chain integrity can be assured. Victoria will work with other jurisdictions to provide the assurances needed for resumption of trade. A further meeting of AqCCEAD is expected.
- Social media published over the last week includes a video of boat decontamination and a Control Area reminder. Social media advertising is also underway including posts of what you 'can do'.
- Products profiling industry contributions are being progressed and will be assessed for channels such as Victorian Connection, social media and traditional media.
- Flyers have been electronically distributed through VRFish and their 51,000 members. Flyers and signs will also be distributed to all recreational licence sales agents for use in their stores.
- Translated flyers have been posted on the Victorian Multicultural Commission's VMconnect site and through relevant stakeholder groups such as the Chinese Angling association.

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.
 - [The only outstanding results are for the re-testing of Dutton Way reef code samples.](#)
 - Of twenty-one (21) reef codes sampled to date across the Control Areas, six (6) have been identified as infected, namely Horseshoe, Murrels, Jones Bay, Inside Nelson, Outside Nelson and Devils Kitchen. Refer to **Figure 1**.
- Abalone at an onshore processing facility have tested positive for AVG [further analysis of historical samples has indicated that infection dates back to December 2020](#). The facility is complying with a Quarantine Notice and Disinfection Notice issued under the LDCA to minimise the risk of further spread. [The operators have been completing the processing of abalone and disinfection in accordance with the imposed conditions.](#)
- 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.
- 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 VFA are working closely with the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries (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 [that is currently in place](#) 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).

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- Surveying abalone populations involves divers videoing and collecting abalone samples. Diving protocols developed by the VFA will be used to ensure the safety of divers/survey team.
- Diving will be conducted as weather conditions permit. As such surveying can only be conducted when weather and oceanographic conditions are appropriate.
- Concerns have been raised by industry and recreational fishers about impacts resulting from the Control Area restrictions. The relaxation of restrictions on line-fishing without sinkers in the Control Area, following a risk assessment, may reduce public and industry concern.

5. MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

- Social media published over the last week includes a video of boat decontamination and a Control Area reminder. Social media advertising is also underway including post of what you 'can do'.
- Websites have been updated to ensure accuracy of content and access to useful information to assist public, including messaging on what people 'can do'. 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>

- Customer Contact Centre knowledge article has been updated, and an updated fact sheet has been supplied to assist in responding to incoming queries.
- Coreflute signage developed to raise awareness of detection, restrictions in place within Control Area and good biosecurity practices. Signage has now been erected at boat ramps and coastal access points throughout the Control area in consultation with land managers (Glenelg Shire and Parks Victoria). Hygiene signs have also been deployed to other major boat ramps between Portland and Apollo Bay. Further signage has been developed on good biosecurity practices and sent to industry and stakeholders for use in other parts of the state.
- A VicEmergency alert is live on EMV website.
- Flyers have been electronically distributed through VRFish and their 51,000 members. Flyers and signs will also be distributed to all recreational licence sales agents for use in their stores.
- Translated flyers have been posted on the Victorian Multicultural Commission's VMconnect site and through relevant stakeholder groups such as the Chinese Angling association.

6. NEXT SITUATION REPORT

- Next situation report will be issued at 1600hrs on 01/07/2021.

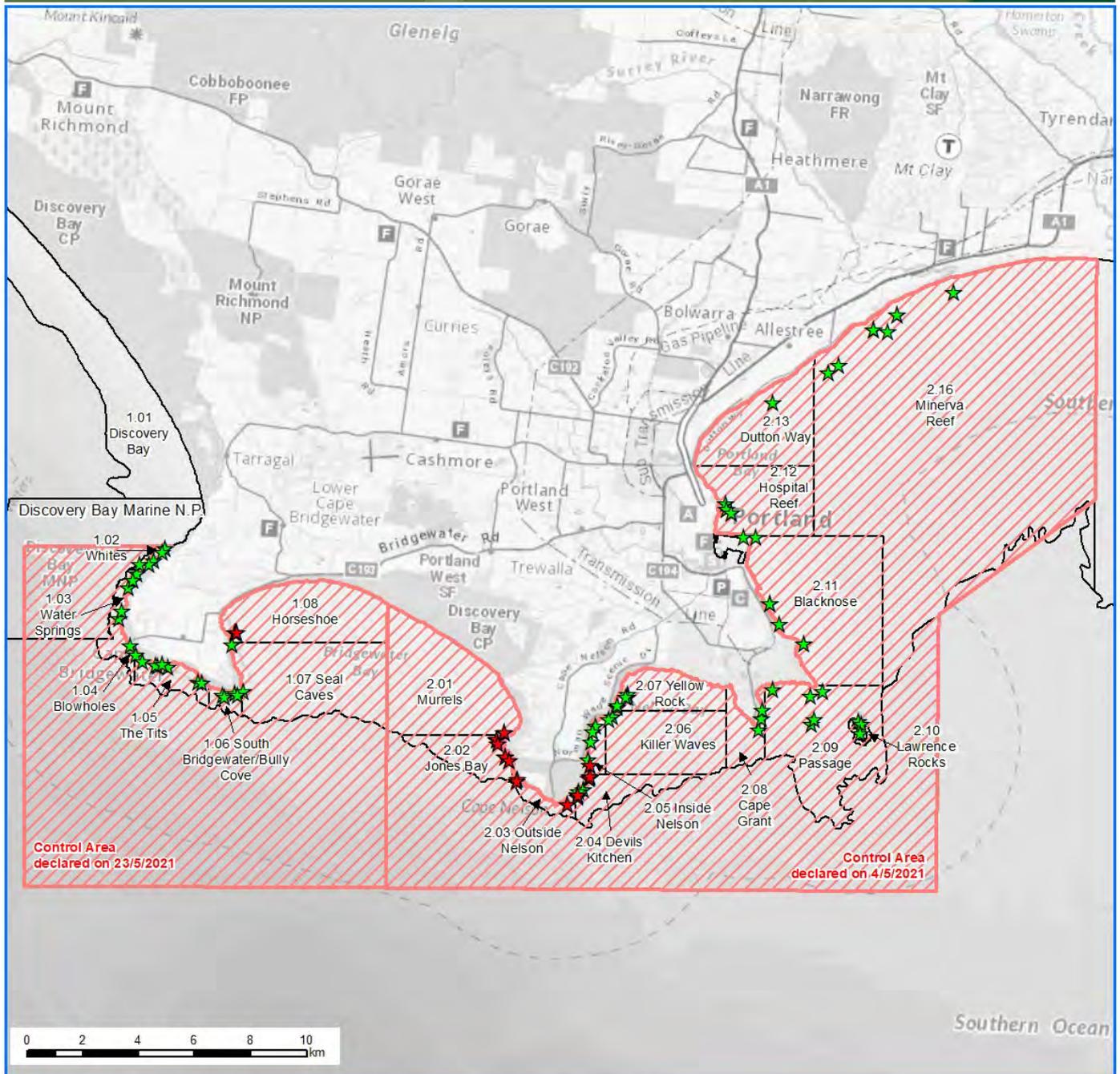
APPROVAL



Ryan Cooke
Incident Controller
24/06/2021

Abalone viral ganglioneuritis Situational Overview

24/06/2021 0800hrs



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

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Figure 1 Abalone viral ganglioneuritis situational overview