

# Situation report: Abalone viral ganglioneuritis (AVG) 2021

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

<b>From</b>	Steve Campbell, Incident Controller
<b>To</b>	Graeme Cooke, Chief Veterinary Officer
<b>Situation report number</b>	10 (Updates in blue text)
<b>Operational period</b>	07 July 2021 — 18 July 2021
<b>Issued at</b>	19 July 2021, 1200 hrs
<b>Response to</b>	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

- On 10 July 2021, 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.
- A single abalone found on the beach adjacent to Minerva Reef on 4 July 2021 has tested negative for AVG.
- Test results are positive for suspected AVG in abalone observed on 8 July 2021 in Bully Cove / South Bridgewater reef code.
- There was a single abalone found at Cape Grant on 13 July 2021 (outside and adjacent to Control Area boundary) by a commercial abalone diver. This sample was not suitable for testing and as such no result could be obtained.
- Results for a detached abalone found at Peterborough in south west Victoria by a recreational diver on 10 July 2021 have been confirmed as negative for AVG.
- 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.
- Biosecurity protocols have now been established with the rock lobster industry regarding the leaving/moving equipment from the zone adjacent to the Control Area.

### 3. Background

- A diver observed dead blacklip abalone (*Haliotis rubra*) with signs indicating possible a 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.
- On 10 July 2021, 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. Restrictions within the new Control Area remain unchanged.
- 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 21 days. Fishing volumes at Portland remain low.
- Surveillance and monitoring activity are being used to determine the extent of spread of disease.
  - Samples have been collected from 104 dive sites since early May 2021.
  - A single abalone found on the beach adjacent to Minerva Reef on 4 July 2021 has tested negative for AVG.
  - Test results are positive for suspected AVG in abalone observed on 8 July 2021 in Bully Cove / South Bridgewater reef code.
  - There was a single abalone found at Cape Grant on 13 July 2021 (outside and adjacent to Control Area boundary) by a commercial abalone diver. This sample was not suitable for testing and as such no result could be obtained.
  - Results for a detached abalone found at Peterborough in south west Victoria by a recreational diver on 10 July 2021 have been confirmed as negative for AVG.
- Of twenty-one (21) reef codes sampled to date across the Control Areas, seven (7) have been identified as infected, namely 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 7 July 2021 – 18 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
08/07/2021	1.06 South Bridgewater/Bully Cove	1	0	0	2	4	0	0	4	4
10/07/2021	Public submissions of wild abalone from outside the Control Area	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
13/07/2021	2.08 Cape Grant	1	1500	1	15	0	0	0	1	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 18 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
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>24908</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>1558</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>2887</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>544</b>	<b>100</b>

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

- 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.](#)
- 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.](#)
- Ag Vic provided an update to the national Aquatic Consultative Committee for Exotic Animal Disease (AqCCEAD) on [13 July 2021](#).

## 5. Media and communications

- Small update to promote minor Control Area changes (9 July 2021) including media lines to the [Portland Observer](#), website updates, social media, VicEmergency, factsheet, media talking points.
- Websites regularly 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>

- Products profiling industry contributions are being progressed and will be assessed for channels such as Victorian Connection, social media and traditional media.
- A VicEmergency alert is live on EMV website and [updated to reflect 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 12 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



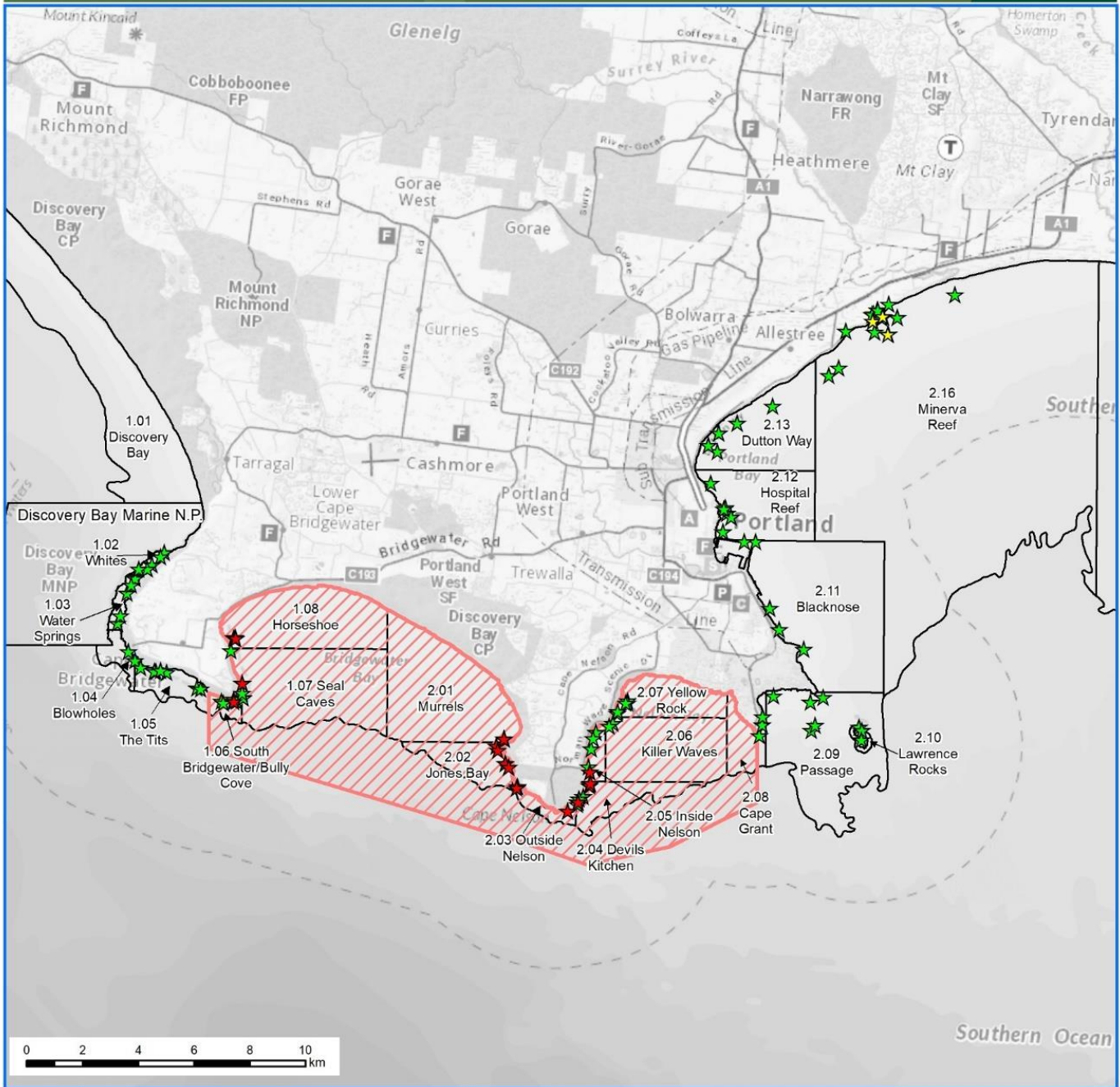
Steve Campbell

Incident Controller

15/07/2021

# Abalone viral ganglioneuritis Situational Overview

19/07/2021 1300hrs



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

Author: tc29  
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 Agriculture Victoria  
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Figure 1 Abalone viral ganglioneuritis situational overview