

Situation report: Abalone viral ganglioneuritis (AVG) 2021

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

From	Ryan Cooke, Incident Controller
To	Graeme Cooke, Chief Veterinary Officer
Situation report number	9 (Updates in blue text)
Operational period	30 June 2021 — 06 July 2021
Issued at	08 July 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

- A small extension to the western boundary of the Control Area, taking in Bridgewater/Bully Cove reef code as a new buffer area, came into effect at 12:00 am on 3 July 2021. This followed the detection of AVG in abalone collected during surveillance dives at Seal Caves reef code on 30 June 2021.
- Test results are negative for a single abalone found on the beach adjacent to Minerva Reef on 4 July 2021
- Of twenty-one (21) reef codes sampled to date across the Control Areas, seven (7) have been identified as infected, namely Seal Caves, Horseshoe, Murels, Jones Bay, Inside Nelson, Outside Nelson and Devils Kitchen.

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.
- A small extension to the western boundary of the Control Area, taking in Bridgewater/Bully Cove reef code as a new buffer area, came into effect at 12:00 am on 3 July 2021. Restrictions within the new CA 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 7 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 101 dive sites since early May 2021.
 - AVG was detected in abalone collected during surveillance dives at Seal Caves reef code on 30 June 2021. This follows negative tests for this site on 24 May 2021.
 - Test results are negative for a single abalone found on the beach adjacent to Minerva Reef on 4 July 2021
 - 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 30 June 2021 – 06 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
30/06/2021	1.07 Seal Caves	3	370	0	12	16	155	11	27	11
04/07/2021	2.16 Minerva Reef	1	0	1	0	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 06 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	101	23408	122	1541	65	2887	34	533	96

* 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.
- 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 has inspected over 180 premises to date. Thirty (30) premises with abalone have tested positive for AVG and of these, 8 have been fully decontaminated. 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).
- Ag Vic 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 has commenced work with other jurisdictions to provide the assurances needed for resumption of trade. A further meeting of AqCCEAD is expected during July 2021.

5. Media and communications

- Significant updates to promote Control Area changes (03/07/21) including media release, 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>

- A VicEmergency alert is live on EMV website and updated to reflect to control order changes.
- Flyers have been updated to reflect the new Control Area and now distributed:
 - electronically into the future and through the VFA licencing unit;
 - pop-up event last weekend at Portland;
 - to all agents that sell recreational fishing licences for distribution; and
 - site visits in Portland and feeder towns (Hamilton / Warrnambool) to businesses including Fishing and dive shops, caravan parks and information centres.

Approval



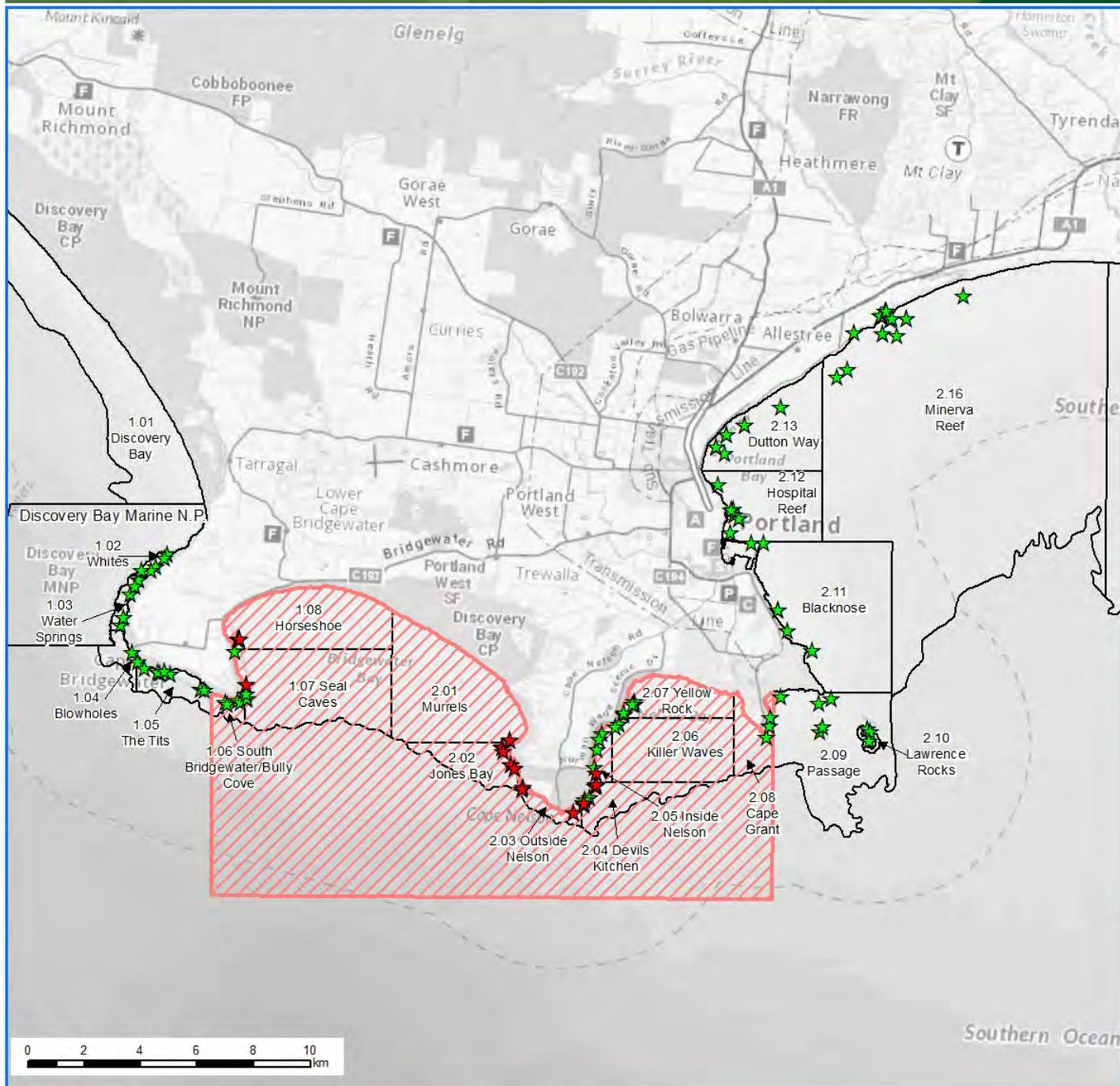
Ryan Cooke

Incident Controller

08/07/2021

Abalone viral ganglioneuritis Situation Overview

8/07/2021 0800hrs



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

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Figure 1 Abalone viral ganglioneuritis situational overview