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MEDIA RELEASE

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Japan's FMD experience sends a warning for Australia

Cattle Council of Australia and Sheepmeat Council of Australia are urging State and Federal Governments to maintain investment in biosecurity and quarantine following the devastating impacts of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) to Japan's cattle sector.

Greg Brown, President of the Cattle Council of Australia said industry is willing to make their contribution, however, the wider benefits in protecting Australia's livestock industries and food security must continue to have the support of Government funding.

"The recent FMD outbreak in Japan is a timely reminder of the devastating nature of the disease and how critical it is to be on the front-foot with emergency animal disease response plans," said Mr Brown.

Australia estimates the cost of an FMD incursion in the vicinity of \$8 -16 billion and having significant socio-economic impacts.

"Cattle and sheepmeat industries have robust response plans in place to manage an emergency disease incursion, but we must continue to strengthen our preparedness and ensure border controls, and this means continued Government funding into biosecurity and quarantine," said Mr Brown.

At a recent FMD Symposium in Melbourne, scientists, industry and policy makers came together to discuss the most significant animal disease affecting cloven-hoofed animals.

The Symposium reinforced that there was a lot of research on FMD in cattle but less understanding about the disease in sheep.

"People associate FMD with cattle, but sheep are at equal risk," said Kate Joseph, President of Sheepmeat Council of Australia.

"We need a strong commitment from Government to work with industry to grow our understanding of the management implications of trade debilitating diseases such as FMD," said Ms Joseph.

The Australian red meat industry has grown its total value to \$15.8 billion and has become the world's largest exporter of red meat and livestock. Today, half of Australia's lamb and mutton production, and two thirds of total beef and veal production is exported making it critically important to retain competitive advantages in overseas markets.

Both Sheepmeat Council and Cattle Council are closely engaged in planning and preparing for any future emergency animal disease response and say the responsibility to protect Australia's reputable red meat 'clean' and 'green' image not only lies with Government but with every beef and sheepmeat producer.

"We encourage every producer to adopt simple on-farm biosecurity principles and practices to help avoid an emergency animal disease incident and risk destroying Australia's sheep flocks, cattle herds and export markets," concluded Ms Joseph.

Further information on biosecurity measures that sheep and cattle producers can adopt on-farm is available at: www.farmbiosecurity.com.au

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