

Factsheet on aquatic animal health services (AAHS)

Aquatic animal health services (AAHS) help improve the survival and growth of aquatic animals by providing diagnoses to help aquaculture farms prevent and control diseases that can affect the survival and growth rate of aquatic animals and impact harvests. To help farms strengthen biosecurity to prevent and control diseases, SFA will provide **aquatic animal health services (AAHS)** from early 2023 for farms to consult veterinarians or aquatic animal health professionals on disease management and support their testing needs.

2 AAHS will help farms obtain diagnoses that are scientifically verified and translate into improvements in farm biosecurity management. Farmers can save resources by administering accurate treatments to manage and prevent disease outbreaks as advised by the aquatic animal health vet/professional. With the provision of AAHS, SFA encourages farms to seek professional advice on animal health and biosecurity and apply them to their routine practices, or when unusual disease signs or deaths occur in farmed stock, so as to prevent future recurrences.

Provision of professional consultations and disease investigations to assist aquaculture farms

3 To kick start this, SFA will provide farms with professional consultations and disease investigations at no charge, over the next 4 years. This will allow farms to experience and understand the benefits of professional support for their farm biosecurity and management, and to assist farmers to better manage their farms going forward. SFA also expect farms to progressively incorporate professional services into their routine practices.

4 SFA has launched a tender on 14 September 2022 to procure services for aquatic animal health vets/professionals to provide consultations that will help farmers develop, refine, and implement a biosecurity and management plan for their farms, and will include advice on preventive medicine and mentoring of farm staff. The tender will close on 18 October 2022 and the service is expected to be launched from early 2023.

5 Under the AAHS, farms that encounter health issues or suspect a disease, such as abnormal mortality or morbidity observed in their stock, can seek the assistance of the professionals to carry out investigation and advise the farm on management options, such as preventive and control measures. As part of the consultations, the AAHS will include the associated laboratory diagnostic analyses for health screening or to identify cause(s) during a disease investigation, as well as interpretation of the results and advice to farmers on how to improve their farm management.

6 SFA will fund each farm two consultations annually in Years 1 and 2, followed by one consultation per year in Years 3 and 4, as well as one disease investigation per year throughout the four years. The consultations and disease investigations are limited to a maximum of 3 hours per investigation, with the associated lab analyses provided to the farmers. Farmers will bear the costs of prescribed veterinary drugs and chemicals, vaccines, transport and miscellaneous expenses, as well as additional veterinary consultations and disease investigations if required.

Feedback on AAHS

7 The AAHS will also enable SFA to gather aggregate information on the disease situation and areas for improvement on biosecurity practices in each farming region, which will be beneficial in the overall planning and resourcing to better support the local aquaculture industry.

8 SFA has shared about the AAHS during our regular engagements with farmers, and more than 20 farms have expressed interest in this service. SFA will continue to seek feedback from farms on the AAHS to ensure it remains beneficial and relevant to the industry.