



**Wildlife Health  
Australia**

Wildlife Health Australia is the peak body for wildlife health in Australia.

[wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au](http://wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au)

Phone +61 2 9960 6333  
during business hours  
Monday to Friday

If you see any suspicious signs of disease or deaths in wildlife you can report it to the Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on **freecall 1800 675 888**

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## Annual general meeting

Wildlife Health Australia's second annual general meeting was held on December 8 in Sydney.

The Chair of WHA, Mark Schipp, thanked members and staff for their support. There was also a special vote of thanks for WHA's management committee, and in particular for long time committee member Ian Roth, who is retiring as NSW Chief Veterinary Officer and the Animal Health Committee member of the committee.

The CEO, Rupert Woods, gave an overview of the major achievements of WHA for the year. The 2014/15 audited financial statement and the auditor's report were provided to WHA members, and demonstrated that the financial controls and business processes in place at WHA are appropriate for managing the financial responsibilities of the organisation, and that WHA is in a strong position moving forward.

A special resolution to make changes to the WHA constitution was passed. The key changes were the removal of redundant clauses, amendments to allow WHA to establish a gift fund and apply for deductible

gift recipient status, amendments to enable the management committee to govern more effectively, and some amendments to areas requiring clarification. A special resolution requires approval of three quarters of the members present, which was achieved on the day.

The event finished with a presentation by Michelle Power from Macquarie University, on antimicrobial resistance in wildlife.

“Antibiotic resistance is one of the world’s most pressing health issues. The spread of antibiotic resistance is commonly attributed to overuse of antibiotics in both human health and animal production.

"It is worrying that we are seeing antibiotic resistance in bacteria of wild animals that have never been treated with antibiotics. Resistance genes from bacteria in humans and domestic animals are being spread through the environment to the naturally occurring bacteria of those wild animals,” said Michelle.



*Pictured: Ian Roth and Michelle Power at the WHA AGM.*

## **Investigating deformities in spectacled flying fox pups**

Wildlife Health Australia member Lee McMichael, PhD student with the University of Queensland, is investigating a syndrome of cleft palate and other

deformities in newborn spectacled flying fox pups in Queensland.

This syndrome has been described over a number of years but the cause is not known. Lee is conducting the work as part of her PhD research looking at physiological drivers of disease in Australian flying foxes.

Lee has been working with her colleague Daniel Edson and is supported by her principal supervisor Hume Field and academic supervisors Joanne Meers and Steven Kopp. Following the reports of cases in September 2014, WHA made a small contribution to the investigation to assist with the diagnostic testing of wild adult spectacled flying-foxes at the time of early gestation.

Lee has published two papers on her earlier research: McMichael LA et al (2014) [Measuring physiological stress in Australian flying-fox populations](#), EcoHealth, 11(3), 400-408 and McMichael L et al (2015) [Haematology and plasma biochemistry of wild black flying-foxes, \(Pteropus alecto\) in Queensland, Australia](#). PLoS One, 10(5): e0125741.

Look out for future publications with the results of the disease investigation.



*Pictured: Lee McMichael (right) and Dan Edson take a swab from a spectacled flying-fox.*

## **Introducing Tim Sloan-**

# Gardner



Tim Sloan-Gardner (pictured) is the epidemiologist for zoonotic diseases within the Australian Government Department of Health. Tim represents the department on Wildlife Health Australia's National Avian Influenza Wild Bird (NAIWB) surveillance program and the Bat Health Focus Group.

Tim has a background in parasitology and research, and has a keen interest in One Health.

WHA CEO Rupert Woods said that wildlife are the most common source of emerging diseases that affect people. The provision of information and support to the Australian Government Department of Health is an important function of WHA.

"Wildlife is an important component of our country's One Health approach, and means that the potential public health implications of diseases with wildlife as part of their ecology are considered, along with their impacts on biodiversity, agriculture and trade," he said.

## What goes into the Digest?

Members of Wildlife Health Australia receive an email Digest full of wildlife health news and resources every week.

WHA's Tiggy Grillo says the Digest aims to keep

members up to date with the latest news, research, publications, job opportunities and events relating to wildlife health.

“An informed and engaged network of members is very much in the national interest. By circulating the Digest, we aim to keep our members aware of wildlife health issues so they can be on the look-out and know what to report,” she said.

Tiggy explained that in order to select the best news and information for the Digest she scans articles from around 300 sources each month. Information is either sent directly to us by our members, or gathered using Google Alerts and subscriptions to over 25 newsletters and list serves.

“We also use an RSS feed aggregator called Feedly which helps us monitor hundreds of sources in one place; including 85 scientific journals, 72 Australian specific sources (university, non-government and government websites), 31 science specific news feeds, plus 44 international wildlife/disease sources,” she said.

Production of the Digest also helps WHA staff identify current and emerging wildlife health issues, or ‘hot topics’, many of which are then circulated directly to key stakeholders, including Australian governments and other WHA partners.

Tiggy said, “I find the PhD and job postings the most interesting sources of information on new and developing areas of interest – this is the cutting edge of research – and you can learn quite a bit from a PhD project summary.”

WHA’s Keren Cox-Witton uses a similar approach to prepare ‘WHA Bat News’, another email newsletter that is sent out monthly to anyone interested in bat health.

If you know somebody who would be interested in receiving the Digest or Bat News, please ask them to email [admin@wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au](mailto:admin@wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au)

## Meet Iain East



Epidemiologist Iain East (pictured) is the primary contact for Wildlife Health Australia within the Australian Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, a role he has held since April this year.

Iain facilitates interactions between Wildlife Health Australia and the department, representing and advocating for each agency.

In his sixteen years with the department, Iain has been involved in many projects, including the surveillance of Norfolk Island animals to assess the possible risks if the island was included in Australia's quarantine zone. Iain was also involved in assessing the likelihood of virulent strains of avian influenza entering the country via migratory birds.

Prior to joining the department, Iain worked with the CSIRO.

“WHA are a small, but very passionate and hardworking group, incredibly committed to what they do. They need to be, as they are working to raise the profile of wildlife health in government circles and more widely, which is quite a challenge,” Iain said.

Iain brings with him a wealth of experience and depth in critical thinking and decision making at a national

level.

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Contact us on [admin@wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au](mailto:admin@wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au)

MailChimp.