

ACERA Project 0802

1. **Project Title:** Biosecurity: improving detection by enlisting community detectives
2. **Theme:** Surveillance & monitoring; communication & decision-making
3. **Rationale:**

Biosecurity threats constitute a major risk to Australian animal, human and plant populations. Primary industry trade protection is central to Australia's sustainability. Foot and mouth disease if it entered Australia has been estimated to cost \$5.8 billion if treated in the same way as the UK (Prowse, personal communication 2007). The cost to human and animal health of newly emerging zoonosis diseases (affecting both humans and animals) is multi-faceted and increasing. Plant health is similarly adversely affected by biosecurity threats both in terms of loss of production and conservation values.

How that risk is perceived varies according to a wide range of social factors and is shaped by multiple interests with competing values and expertise in diverse social and cultural contexts. Increasingly, biosecurity threats can be posed as social issues requiring effective community engagement to gather evidence, communicate across diverse networks, pose critical questions of worth/value and inform scientific thinking on entry and spread of pests and diseases. This study will focus on public engagement forums and focus groups to develop a network of people who will act as community detectives, providing early warning of emerging pests, pathogens and diseases.

4. **Outputs**
 - 1) Up-to-date literature review on risk communication and lay versus professional expertise
 - 2) Summary of public engagement pilots (science forums)
 - 3) Summary of focus groups detailing volunteer motivation & surveillance
 - 4) Australian network of community biosecurity detectives
 - 5) Draft and final reports
 - 6) Paper/s submitted to academic journal
 - 7) Conference papers and presentations as appropriate
5. **Time frame:** Commencing 1 January 2008; finishing 31 December 2008
6. **Project leader(s)**

Dr Anna Carr, Social Sciences Programme, Bureau of Rural Sciences Dr Michael Cole, Office of the Chief Plant Protection Officer, PIAPH Post-doctoral Research Fellow, to be based at UNSW or ANU.

7. Resources

	07/08	08/09	
Project supervision* (Social Science Programme)	12,500	12,500	
Research fellow @ \$60,000 plus \$20,000 salary on-costs	40,000	40,000	
Travel and accommodation costs	10,000	5,000	
Communications, training & focus group fees	3,000	2,000	
Project Total	65,500	59,500	125,000

* The Department of Industry, Tourism & Resources has agreed to contribute an additional \$5,000 to this project in this financial year. The Social Sciences Programme of BRS will co-invest a further \$25,000 of in-kind support for this project through additional supervisory time making a total of 48 days available or one day/week for Anna Carr.

8. End Users

The research could be applied in both government and non-government (community) contexts as well as used to inform theoretical developments within the social and risk sciences. Potential users may include:

- DAFF divisions and agencies responsible for biosecurity (AQIS, PIAPH, BA);
- Other Australian Government agencies wishing to trial the methods (DTRE)
- University personnel interested in risk perception, communication, biosecurity, volunteering, surveillance;
- Community groups interested in forming community detective networks (e.g. Master Gardeners, Birds Australia).