Biosecurity: A foundational pillar of sector resilience

Since responding to the long-awaited arrival of high pathogen avian influenza in December 2024, industry and government have continued to actively and collaboratively respond to a range of incursions over the last year. The highest profile of these has been the Yellow Legged Hornet, first detected in Auckland in October 2025.

The successful eradication of the H7N6 strain of avian influenza, alongside confirmation in December that the sector has completed two calving seasons without the detection of Mycoplasma bovis, highlights the success that collaborative response can have when incursions occur. As one contributor noted, alignment across the industry and government it critical when managing existential risks like biosecurity.

At the same time, contributors expressed concern against over confidence in our ability to respond to whatever comes next. It was highlighted that many of our most important export sectors are built on monocultures, making biosecurity a more significant risk to economic resilience than is often acknowledged. Leaders noted that threat profiles are evolving, partly due to climate change, yet our approach to identification and response remains largely based on historic successes. Contributors stressed the need to ensure that we are actively preparing for the next threat, rather than continuing to defend against past incursions.

A specific example raised was concern over whether resources are being appropriately targeted towards the highest-risk border entry points.

It was noted that traditional efforts have been uniform across most border crossing points, on the assumption that the risk of incursion is largely homogeneous. However, the use of data and analytics tools has enabled better assessment of the true risk at each entry point and the ability direct resources, new technology and intensive surveillance as appropriate. This requires a mindset shift from a one size fits all style approach, towards a system informed by real time data which evolves based on current and future risks.

Contributors also highlighted the sector's biosecurity incursion crisis response capabilities as a (thankfully) underutilised resource. With the increasing incidence of extreme weather events requiring emergency response, recognising and resourcing this capability could support faster and more targeted delivery of critical support into regional communities during future disruptions.