

COMMUNITY DETECTIVES PROJECT

Current and emerging pests and diseases constitute major biosecurity risks to agricultural and other landscapes in Australia. Once in Australia, early and widespread detection helps minimise spread and advance control efforts. Enlisting the support of 'community detectives' with experience in the diversity of Australian landscapes will greatly assist meeting these goals. Having many eyes and ears working together on this will complement existing biosecurity detection measures and foster local stewardship. Getting the attention of experienced community detectives is at the core of this project.

The National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health (NCEPH) at The Australian National University will conduct the Community Detectives research project with support from the Bureau of Rural Sciences and funding from the Australian Centre for Excellence in Risk Analysis.

Key goals

Ultimate goal: increased community detection, monitoring and surveillance of biosecurity

Intermediate goal: network of community detectives for biosecurity

Project goal: explore the use of 'biosecurity forums' to engage community detectives

Some starting questions

- In what ways might community detectives work towards biosecurity?
- What kind of people might act as community detectives? What expertise is needed to detect threats to biosecurity?
- How and to whom will community detectives report biosecurity issues? How can they support existing biosecurity reporting processes?
- How do we best proceed with biosecurity detection at different scales, across different landscapes, cultures and industries?

Researchers will answer these questions based on an innovative public engagement approach termed 'science cafés' in combination with focus groups and tailored surveys. Science cafés (biosecurity forums) are informal friendly meetings, typically held in a bar or café, featuring expert short talks followed by open-floor questions, discussion and debate. We hope to interest a wide range of potential community detectives such as rural producers, retirees, scientists and volunteers in selected locations around Australia. We envisage that many potential community detectives will also belong to naturalist, gardening, Landcare and wildlife groups.

For further information:

Dr Jacqueline de Chazal T: 02 6125 5008
Dr Anna Carr T: 02 6272 4929

E: jacqueline.dechazal@anu.edu.au
E: Anna.Carr@brs.gov.au