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MEDIA RELEASE

CSIRO Opens Rapid Response Animal Disease Centre

The Federal Minister for Industry, Innovation, Science and Research, Senator the Hon Kim Carr, recently opened CSIRO Livestock Industries' Diagnostic Emergency Response Laboratory (DERL) at the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) in Geelong.

"The new 'state of the art' laboratory will be able to process more samples, faster, in the event of an emergency animal disease outbreak, and will be located within the AAHL's advanced high biocontainment facility", Senator Carr said.

"AAHL's core responsibility is to respond to outbreaks of emergency animal diseases such as foot and mouth disease or equine influenza. The emergency response laboratory gives the Government further confidence that AAHL and the nation will be ready to detect and quickly respond to even the worst such outbreaks.

"Australia's outbreak of equine influenza in August 2007 demonstrated the need for a high throughput laboratory in Australia," Senator Carr said. "Last year Australia faced the major challenge of eradicating equine influenza. Following comprehensive national and state disease control and surveillance programs Australia is provisionally free from equine influenza. "Although the focus in recent months has been on equine influenza, foot-and-mouth disease is still considered the greatest threat to Australia's livestock industries."

AAHL is a world leading research facility and since its establishment has been involved in a number of significant discoveries, including the identification of the paramyxovirus Hendra in 1994.

In the last five years more than A\$55 million has been invested into AAHL from the Australian Government and external revenue to ensure the facility continues to operate as one of the world's leading high biocontainment laboratories.