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Understanding the drivers of pregnancy loss management and prevention in Australian Thoroughbred broodmares

Participant Information

Invitation

You are invited to participate in research which aims to understand the drivers that underpin the management and prevention of pregnancy loss in Australian Thoroughbred broodmares. This study is being conducted by researchers at Charles Sturt University on behalf of AgriFutures, Australia.

This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study.

Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Who is running the study?
This study is being conducted by the following researchers from the School of Animal, Environmental and Veterinary Sciences at Charles Sturt University. The research team includes:

- Dr Victoria Brookes (Adjunct Senior Lecturer Population Health and Production, Charles Sturt University)
- Dr Joan Carrick (Equine medicine specialist)
- Dr Cara Wilson (Postdoctoral Researcher, Charles Sturt University)
- A/Prof Patrick Shearer (Adjunct Associate Professor Pathology, Charles Sturt University)
- Miss Caitlin Brown, (Masters of Agricultural Business Management student, Charles Sturt University)

What is the purpose of this research?
The purpose of this research is to:

1. Assess the current levels of knowledge and concern about pregnancy loss (the loss of a fetus between 45 days and full term) in Australian Thoroughbred broodmares and its impacts; and
2. Identify current farm management practices that might influence pregnancy loss and its impacts.

Why have I been invited to participate in this study?
The study population is people who currently work, or have worked in the previous 12 months, on a property on which mares used for breeding Thoroughbred racehorses are kept. You have been identified as an individual who is involved in the breeding of Thoroughbreds in Australia.

Should you choose to participate in this study it is important that you complete answers based on your *current knowledge* and *do not Google answers*. This is so we can accurately gauge what information the industry requires and how best to educate the industry on this topic in the future.

What does the study involve?
If you agree to participate you should read all of this information, then proceed to the questions. The topics in this survey include background information about the property you currently work on, or have worked on in the previous 12 months, and management practices used, your current knowledge of pregnancy loss in thoroughbreds, and your opinions about pregnancy loss. It is expected that the time required to complete the questions will be approximately 30 minutes.

The survey is voluntary and completed anonymously. More than one person from a property can respond to the survey because we are interested in individuals' responses. Specific written consent will not be requested because consent is implied if you answer the consent question at the beginning of the survey and enter responses.

Study Participation
You are eligible to participate in this study if you:

- Are over 18 years of age
- Currently, or in the previous 12 months, have worked on a property on which mares used for breeding thoroughbred racehorses are kept
- Give consent to be part of the study

Participation is voluntary
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Because the survey is anonymous it will not be possible to remove individual responses once submitted.

If you start the survey and wish to withdraw part-way through, please close the internet browser and your responses will not be used in the analyses.

Use of your information
The information collected in this study is related to pregnancy loss in Thoroughbred broodmares. We do not require the mare's name or ownership. No personal information will be used or published in this study. Study findings will be disseminated to industry stakeholders by AgriFutures Australia. The results are also expected to be published as peer-reviewed scientific articles and presented at scientific conferences. You will not be individually identifiable in these publications. Your data will be stored securely and separately from any personal information that may identify you, and your privacy will be protected within the limits of the law.

Data management
The confidentiality of your records is of the utmost importance to us. To maintain privacy and confidentiality, this survey has been distributed by various organisations on the research team's behalf. The survey is anonymous, and it will not be possible to identify you from your answers. Any information collected by the researchers will be stored securely and only accessed by the researchers unless you consent otherwise, except as required by law. The SurveyMonkey platform is being used for this survey and the privacy policy and security statement relating to online survey data are available by clicking on these word links.

Information will be stored electronically and be kept secure by password. Access to the data will only be granted to the investigators listed on the project. Results from the study will not contain any identifiable information. Strict confidentiality will be maintained. Any information collected will not be passed onto a third party. A copy of the research data management plan will be made available to you on your request.

Data will be retained for 5 years following final publication to ensure adequate time for analysis and completion of the investigation. It is unlikely that any of the data collected will be used for future research, and following this period, the data will be destroyed.

Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?
We do not expect that there will be any risks or costs associated with taking part in this study, aside from giving up your time as a participant. We assure you that participation in this research is anonymous and voluntary.

Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?
There are no direct benefits of being involved in the study. Indirectly, improved understanding of the knowledge, attitudes and practices of horse breeders, owners, managers and stud farms will allow for management practices and strategies to be developed and targeted to reduce the risks associated with equine pregnancy loss, improve mare welfare and reduce the negative economic impacts of pregnancy loss.

Will I be told the results of the study?
Yes, participants will be able to access results of the study via AgriFutures Australia.

Funding
This study is being funded by AgriFutures Australia (www.agrifutures.com.au) as part of a five-year RD&E plan for the AgriFutures Thoroughbred Horses Program. All research is being overseen by Charles Sturt University.
If you would like to know more about the study at any stage, please contact the researchers (contact details below).

Who should I contact if I want to discuss this study further before I decide?
If you would like to know more about the study at any stage, please contact:
Dr Cara Wilson
School of Agricultural, Environmental and Veterinary Sciences,
Faculty of Science and Health,
Charles Sturt University
Email: cwilson@csu.edu.au
Phone: 0457 041 192

Who should I contact if I have concerns about the conduct of the study?
Charles Sturt University's Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this project [Protocol number: H22081]. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Committee on (02) 6933 4213 or ethics@csu.edu.au.

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Support services
Being involved in Thoroughbred breeding can be both rewarding and difficult. If you are experiencing distress, need support or know of someone who does there are support services available to call:

- AVA Telephone counselling service - 1300 687 327
- SANDS (Support for stillbirth and newborn death) -1300 072 637
- Lifeline - 13 11 14
- Suicide Call Back Service - 1300 659 467
- Beyond Blue - 1300 22 46 36

You can print screen (screen shot) this Participant Information to retain a copy for your records.

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Qualifier questions

* 1. Do you give your consent to participate in this study?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

* 2. Are you 18 years of age or older?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

* 3. Do you currently work, or within the last 12 months have you worked, with mares that are used for breeding Thoroughbred horses?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

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Demographics

* 4. In which age group are you?

* 5. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-Binary
- Prefer not to say

* 6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Year 10 or below
- Year 11
- Year 12 (HSC or equivalent)
- Certificate III or IV
- Diploma / Advanced Diploma
- Bachelor degree
- Graduate Certificate / Graduate Diploma
- Post Graduate degree
- Prefer not to say

7. How many years have you worked in the equine industry?

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Information sources

8. From where do you currently obtain information about mare reproductive health? (Please select all that apply)

- [ ] Veterinarian
- [ ] Stud manager
- [ ] Participation in training courses
- [ ] Equine magazines
- [ ] Thoroughbred Breeders Australia
- [ ] Colleagues
- [ ] Other mare owners
- [ ] Other (please specify)

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Your role

* 9. Please indicate your role/s with mares in the Thoroughbred industry:
(Please select all that apply)

- [ ] Thoroughbred mare owner (but don't manage them personally)
- [ ] Thoroughbred mare owner (managed myself)
- [ ] Stud manager
- [ ] Pregnant, foaling or wet mares manager
- [ ] Dry mare manager
- [ ] Night watch
- [ ] Stud worker (other than manager or night watch)
- [ ] Veterinarian
- [ ] Other (please specify)

* 10. How many studs / properties do you currently work on?

- ◯ 1
- ◯ 2
- ◯ 3 or more

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Property / Stud information

If you work on more than one property / stud, please answer ALL the following questions based on the property / stud you WORK ON MOST.

* 11. In which state is the stud you work most on located?

- ◯ QLD
- ◯ NSW
- ◯ ACT
- ◯ VIC
- ◯ TAS
- ◯ SA
- ◯ WA
- ◯ NT

* 12. How many mares are bred each season on this property?

- ◯ 1 - 20
- ◯ 21 - 50
- ◯ 51 - 100
- ◯ 101 - 200
- ◯ More than 200

* 13. Are any other farming operations carried out on this property?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

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Other farming operations

* 14. What other farming operations are carried out on this property?
(Please select all that apply)

- [ ] Cropping
- [ ] Beef cattle
- [ ] Sheep
- [ ] Other (please specify)

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Stallions

* 15. Are stallions stood at this property?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

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Stallions

* 16. Are any of the stallions stood at this property shuttle stallions (travel between northern and southern hemispheres for breeding seasons)?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

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Mares

* 17. Does this property have walk-on mares?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

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Mares

* 18. Does this property have seasonal mares (mares that are only resident on the stud during the breeding season)?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

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Biosecurity

* 19. What biosecurity measures are in place on this property?
(Please select all that apply)

- [ ] Horses arriving for an extended period are quarantined
- [ ] Boot wash for visitors to the property
- [ ] Boot wash for staff moving between sections of the property (e.g. dry to wet mare yards)
- [ ] Regular vaccination of mares for infectious diseases
- [ ] Designated parking areas for visitors and contractors away from horse traffic areas
- [ ] Dedicated on-site work boots (i.e. staff do not wear the same boots home)
- [ ] Dedicated on-site clothing (i.e. staff do not wear the same clothes home)
- [ ] Faeces are removed from paddocks at least weekly
- [ ] Stables are cleaned out completely between horses
- [ ] Breezeways are swept and washed down so that no faeces or feed lays around from day to day
- [ ] Hand washing facilities in all sections of the property
- [ ] Walk-on mares are isolated from all resident mares
- [ ] Boundary of property is double fenced
- [ ] Internal fences are double fenced
- [ ] Isolation area for sick horses
- [ ] Showering facilities
- [ ] Full Personal Protective Equipment (Overalls, gloves, masks, boot covers) are available if required
- [ ] Other (please specify)

- [ ] No biosecurity measures are in place

* 20. For which of the following pests are control measures in place on the property?

- [ ] Vermin (e.g. mice and rats)
- [ ] Flies
- [ ] Mosquitoes
- [ ] Birds
- [ ] Other (please specify)

- [ ] None of the above

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Pest control

21. Please describe the type/s of vermin control used and where it is used:

22. Please describe the type/s of fly control used and where it is used:

23. Please describe the type/s of mosquito control used and where it is used:

24. Please describe the type/s of bird control used and where it is used:

25. Please describe the type/s of other pest control used and where it is used:

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Pregnancy

* 26. Please describe the features of the paddock/s that your mares are in during pregnancy:
(Select all that apply)

- [ ] Double fenced to road
- [ ] Double fenced between paddocks
- [ ] Single fenced to road
- [ ] Single fenced between paddocks
- [ ] Non-native tree lines
- [ ] Native tree lines
- [ ] Native trees in paddock (fenced)
- [ ] Native trees in paddock (unfenced)
- [ ] Non-native trees in paddock (fenced)
- [ ] Non-native trees in paddock (unfenced)
- [ ] Native pasture
- [ ] Improved pasture
- [ ] Irrigated
- [ ] Flat terrain that could flood with heavy rain
- [ ] None of the above
- [ ] Adjacent to other horse paddocks
- [ ] Adjacent to paddocks with other livestock
- [ ] Adjacent to bushland
- [ ] Adjacent to highway / main road
- [ ] Adjacent to public dirt road
- [ ] Shade structure / shelter
- [ ] Access to dam
- [ ] Access to creek, river or other natural water source
- [ ] Water trough shared with adjacent paddock / yard
- [ ] Stand alone water trough
- [ ] Feed buckets / water troughs under trees
- [ ] Birds such as galahs and cockatoos congregate
- [ ] Bats roost in trees

27. Please add any other features that might not have been listed, and/or provide more detail about any of the above:

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Scanning

* 28. Are pregnant mares ever scanned after 45 days gestation and up to the foaling season?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Don't know

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Scanning

29. Please explain when the mares are scanned and the reasons for the scans:

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Pregnancy loss

Pregnancy loss is the loss of a fetus between 45 days and full term.

* 30. Over the past 5 years, have any mares on this property experienced *early* fetal loss (46-150 days gestation)?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Don't know

* 31. Over the past 5 years, have any mares on this property experienced *mid-term* pregnancy loss (151-270 days gestation)?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Don't know

* 32. Over the past 5 years, have any mares on this property experienced *late-term* pregnancy loss (> 270 days gestation)?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Don't know

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Training

* 33. Have you done any specific training around prevention of pregnancy loss in mares?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

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Training

34. What training have you done and/or are you doing?

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No training

35. What are the reasons for this?

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Procedures

* 36. Are all staff required to be vaccinated against Q-Fever?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No, but waiver must be signed
- ◯ No

* 37. Does this property have any specific procedures in place to prevent pregnancy loss?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

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Procedures

38. What are the reasons for this?

39. Please list the top two procedures that you think are most effective for preventing pregnancy loss in mares (even if not used on this property):

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Procedures

* 40. What procedures does this property have in place for preventing pregnancy loss? (Please select all that apply)

- [ ] On advice from a vet, give regumate / altrenogest
- [ ] Give regumate / altrenogest if the mare had it in a previous pregnancy
- [ ] Speak to specialist vets
- [ ] Regular vet check-ups for mares
- [ ] Regular scans
- [ ] Put mares in paddocks that are considered less likely to be associated with pregnancy loss
- [ ] Put high risk mares in easier to check paddocks
- [ ] Regularly check paddocks for caterpillars and remove them if required
- [ ] Check mares daily from a distance (e.g. drive by paddock)
- [ ] Check mares daily closely (i.e. physically in paddock)
- [ ] EHV vaccination
- [ ] Other (please specify)

41. Please list the top two procedures that you think are most effective for preventing pregnancy loss in mares (even if not used on this property):

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Other diseases

* 42. Are precautions taken for any specific diseases in mares, other than for pregnancy loss?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

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No precautions

43. Why not?

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Precautions

44. What specific diseases are precautions taken for?

45. Why are precautions taken on this property for these specific diseases?

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Identification

* 46. What are the most common ways you would identify a mare that could be experiencing, or has just experienced, a pregnancy loss on this property? (Please select all that apply)

- [ ] Pregnancy loss was seen
- [ ] Dead fetus or fetal material material found in paddock, yard or stall
- [ ] Mare scanned empty after previously confirmed pregnant
- [ ] Mare seen in distress
- [ ] Vaginal discharge
- [ ] Early udder development
- [ ] Symptoms of colic
- [ ] Change of behaviour
- [ ] Other (please specify)

- [ ] Don't know

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Pregnancy loss

47. What happens when a pregnancy loss is identified at the time it occurs (i.e. NOT a mare that is found empty when scanned) on this property?
(Please select all that apply)

- [ ] Mare is isolated
- [ ] PPE must be worn around affected mare(s)
- [ ] If it can be found, fetal material is collected
- [ ] Other (please specify)

* 48. If found, are fetal membranes (placenta) always inspected AFTER FOALING?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ No

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Pregnancy loss

49. Please list reasons why membranes, if found, are not inspected after foaling?

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Pregnancy loss

* 50. If found, are fetal membranes (placenta) always inspected after ABORTION?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ No

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Pregnancy loss

51. Please list the reasons why membranes, if found, are not inspected after an abortion?

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Pregnancy loss

* 52. Are mares with pregnancy losses examined by a vet at this property?

- ◯ Always
- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ Never
- ◯ Not sure

* 53. If found, are fetuses and membranes submitted for post-mortem examination?

- ◯ Always
- ◯ Sometimes
- ◯ Never
- ◯ Not sure

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Post-mortem

54. Why are the fetuses and membranes not submitted for post-mortem?

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Post-mortem

* 55. If aborted fetus and membranes are found, what factors influence whether a fetal post-mortem is conducted?
(Please select all that apply)

- [ ] Stage of pregnancy
- [ ] Wellness of mare
- [ ] Client ability to pay for the investigation
- [ ] Dependent on suspected cause
- [ ] Concern about an outbreak occurring
- [ ] Value of mare
- [ ] Other (please specify)
- [ ] Don't know

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Disposal

* 56. If placental and/or fetal material are found, but the abortion is not going to be investigated further, how is the material disposed of?

- ◯ Left in paddock
- ◯ Disposed of at burial site on property
- ◯ Disposed of in council waste bin
- ◯ Burned
- ◯ Collected by external service
- ◯ Other (please specify)

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Burial site

* 57. When placental and fetal material is disposed of at a burial site on this property, is the site covered or uncovered most of the time?

- ◯ Covered
- ◯ Uncovered

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Burial site

58. How often is the burial site covered back over?

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Area alerts

* 59. How often are other properties, studs or mare owners in the area alerted to a pregnancy loss in a mare(s) on this property?

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Every time	Not sure
○	○	○	○	○

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Area alerts

60. What influences whether or not other properties, studs or mare owners in the area are alerted to a pregnancy loss on this property?

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Your opinion

61. What do you believe are the most common causes of *early fetal* loss (46-150 days gestation)?

62. What do you believe are the most common causes of *mid-term pregnancy* loss (151-270 days gestation)?

63. What do you believe are the most common causes of *late-term pregnancy* loss (> 270 days gestation)?

64. What factors about the individual mare do you think influence pregnancy loss?

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Your opinion

* 65. In what age group of mares is pregnancy loss more common?

- ◯ < 5 years
- ◯ 5-10 years
- ◯ 11-15 years
- ◯ >15 years
- ◯ No difference between age groups
- ◯ Don't know

66. What factors about the environment (including nutrition, weather, housing, and the paddock) do you think influence pregnancy loss?

* 67. Do infectious diseases have an influence on pregnancy loss on this property?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Don't know

* 68. Do you know of any causes of pregnancy loss in horses that could be harmful to humans?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

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Harmful diseases

69. To your knowledge, what causes of pregnancy loss in horses can be harmful to humans?

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Seriousness of pregnancy loss

* 70. In your opinion, how serious is equine pregnancy loss *for this property* in each of the following categories?

	Not serious	Somewhat serious	Quite serious	Very serious
Financial	◯	◯	◯	◯
Animal welfare	◯	◯	◯	◯
Further spread to other mares	◯	◯	◯	◯
Human health risk	◯	◯	◯	◯

* 71. In your opinion, how serious is equine pregnancy loss *for the Australian Thoroughbred industry* in each of the following categories?

	Not serious	Somewhat serious	Quite serious	Very serious
Financial	◯	◯	◯	◯
Animal welfare	◯	◯	◯	◯
Further spread to other mares	◯	◯	◯	◯
Human health risk	◯	◯	◯	◯

72. Please add any factors not listed above that make pregnancy loss concerning for this property and/or the industry:

* 73. Do you think investigating the causes of pregnancy loss and abortion in mares is beneficial?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

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Investigation benefits

74. Why do think investigation is beneficial?

75. Why do think investigation is not beneficial?

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Preventative measures

* 76. Do you believe there is a need for better preventative measures against pregnancy loss in Thoroughbred mares?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

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Need for preventative measures

77. Why?

78. Why not?

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Surveillance system support

An industry-wide surveillance system for pregnancy loss in Thoroughbred mares could provide early warning of an outbreak of pregnancy loss, so that industry impacts could be limited.

* 79. On the scale below, how supportive would you be of an industry-wide system for recording mare pregnancy loss (make the assumption that it is affordable)?

Not at all supportive	Somewhat supportive	Quite supportive	Fully supportive
○	○	○	○

80. Please explain why you gave that score:

81. What features of a surveillance system do you believe would make it MORE supported (you may include your thoughts on cost)?

82. What features of a surveillance system do you believe would make it LESS supported (you may include your thoughts on cost)?

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Thank you

Thank you for completing this survey. Your time and input are appreciated.

Please click on the '**Done**' button below to finalise your survey.