

Summary of meeting outcomes

NSW Dairy Industry Consultative Committee

Tuesday 23 May 2017

The NSW Dairy Industry Consultative Committee held a meeting in Sydney on Tuesday 23 May 2017. Specific issues considered by the Committee at its meeting are detailed below.

Attendees

NSW Dairy Industry Consultative Committee: David Bremner (The Riverina Dairy Pty Ltd), Sally Carter (Bega Cheese Ltd), Erika Chesworth (NSW Farmers' Association), Ruth Kydd (Dairy Connect), Michael McNamara (Director, Pecora Dairy), Jane Sherborne (Dairy NSW Chair), Christine Middlemiss (Group Director, Animal Biosecurity & Food Safety and Chief Veterinary Officer, NSW DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety), Ryoko Uchida (Senior Industry Analyst, International Engagement, NSW DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety).

Apologies: Helen Dornom (Dairy Australia), Sarah Mandelson, CEO Serendipity Ice Cream), Diane Riini, (Parmalat Australia Pty Ltd).

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Lisa Szabo, Chair (Group Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Julia Harvey (Director Stakeholder Engagement & Customer Service), Mark Mackie (Manager, Audit Systems & Verification), Craig Shadbolt (Manager, Food Incident Response & Complaints), David Cusack (Manager, Strategic Policy & Projects), Bruce Nelan (Senior Technical Officer), Margaret Figueroa (Secretariat).

Apologies: Bruce Christie (Deputy Director General, Biosecurity & Food Safety), Peter Day (Director Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance), Geneveive Bonello (Manager, Stakeholder Engagement & Communications).

Food safety program compliance report

Committee members noted a report on food safety compliance in the dairy industry sector for the six-month period 1 July 2016 to 31 December 2016 which has been reformatted to give a quick snapshot of the industry by giving an overview of licensee numbers and key compliance statistics for the sector. By 2021 the aim is to achieve 95% compliance rate across all industries. Members were advised that the dairy industry is doing well, with the compliance rate already over this target at 96%.

During the period 441 audits were conducted with 12 audit failures; and 101 inspections were conducted with 10 failures recorded. Detailed compliance information and audit data analysis was presented reflecting the high compliance rate. The top three audit items for the dairy sector with higher observed levels of critical issues for the period were within process control (failure to complete monitoring records and paperwork), food safety programs and analytical and testing.

Members noted key food safety indicators (KFSIs) and industry trends for the last three years for dairy producers and processors which had been developed in association with SafeFood Queensland to harness current practices and monitoring data to provide a more targeted and efficient approach to verification. This included bulk milk cell counts, total plate counts, pickup temperatures, antibiotics and pathogen notifications.

National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy – potential dairy related issues

Members received an update on work underway to develop Australia's first National Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Strategy to increase awareness and understanding of AMR and its implications for both human and animal health. This is being done as part of the World Health Organisation Global Action Plan on antimicrobial resistance.

Papers provided by Dairy Australia on mitigating antibiotic resistance risks in the Australian dairy industry were tabled for information and discussion. It was noted that the Australian dairy industry's use of antibiotics is one of the lowest in the world, and strict regulatory and commercial controls are applied to both the supply and use of antimicrobial drugs in dairy cattle.

Christine Middlemiss, Chief Veterinary Officer of the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), sought feedback from dairy farmer members of the committee on their use of antibiotics and how they are affected, to assist the Department in putting together some strategies. She said survey work of the industry is to be undertaken to help in gaining an understanding about how much people are using and whether it is being used responsibly, to help build an evidence picture and transparency. If the industry can demonstrate these drugs are being used responsibly, this will put them in good stead at a global level and becomes a trade advantage as well.

The following observations were noted by members:

- One of the areas of particular concern for the dairy industry is the use of ceftiofur on farm.
- Discussion regarding Salmonella resistance and prevention measures.
- Concerns were raised regarding farmers' easy access to antibiotic medications through local veterinarians but lack of understanding about their application to avoid overuse. This is an area requiring education.
- There is also need for continued education for vets about prescribing antibiotics and about new products coming into the market; it was suggested a register be kept on this for dairy farmers.
- The Australian Quality Steering Group is doing trials on not using dry cows and on levels of cell counts, trying to be preventative in its approach.

In summary, it was recognised that Australia is in a good position with antibiotic use, and the ones that are used are not a real problem. Ceftiofur is the one that the industry needs to keep under focus. The Department is currently developing a strategy to pass this information to dairy farmers and will seek input from committee members on this as to their likely effectiveness.

Demonstration on the Raw Milk Cheese Food Safety Tool

The Committee received a demonstration on the use of a Raw Milk Cheese Food Safety Tool developed by Dr Tom Ross of the University of Tasmania in conjunction with Dairy Food Safety Victoria and FSANZ. The tool was designed to assist cheese makers to finesse their processes to demonstrate that the food safety requirements in relation to levels of pathogenic microorganisms in raw milk cheese are being met without having to go through costly challenge studies. It is available on the University of Tasmania and Dairy Food Safety Victoria web-sites. A link to this tool will also be put onto the Food Authority's web-site.

Health Star Rating system update

Members noted an update on the Health Star Rating (HSR) initiative which is moving into its last two years of review before it goes back to the Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum on Food Regulation for a decision regarding its future implementation. Over the next two years there will be a call for public submissions for a whole range of products covered by the HSR system. The uptake by industry on this has been excellent. Opportunities will be presented to give submissions and have a series of consultations and members will be made aware of them as they come live.

Evaluation of NSW Dairy Food Safety Scheme

The Committee noted a brief progress report on the evaluation currently underway of the Dairy Food Safety Scheme. A series of emails were sent to stakeholders in the different dairy industry sectors (farmers, factories, processors and transporters) to look at their views on the effectiveness of the scheme and a phone survey of dairy farmers has commenced. Information gathered from this research will be collated and compiled into a report later in the year.

Members commented on some issues encountered with the survey of dairy farmers. It was decided to seek feedback from the dairy industry before further proceeding with the survey work.

Demonstration of the Food Labelling Portal

The Committee received a demonstration on the food labelling portal on the Food Authority website. This portal, which was launched late in 2016, was designed to help people deconstruct the areas of Country of Origin labelling and contains a lot of information. The next phase is to provide a tool that can be used for food packaging labelling which will be product rather than industry based. The portal is a valuable tool to help people go in the right direction with labelling requirements and find other resources. There was positive feedback from members on this initiative by the Food Authority to help industry and consumers understand the new labelling requirements.

Communications update

An update was tabled on work the Food Authority's communications team has been doing since the last meeting in relation to the dairy industry sector, including articles in *Foodwise*, media releases and social media posts, recalls due to undeclared allergens and evaluation of the Dairy Food Safety Scheme emails.

Biosecurity legislation update

Members noted an update on work underway in the Department to implement the Biosecurity legislation which is on track to come into effect on 1 July 2017. Around 560 officers across the State are currently being trained and reauthorised. The web site will pick up and roll out the tools people will need in terms of the new legislation. Regular updates on this process will be sent to members via the Department's *Biosecurity Newsletter*.

The next meeting of the NSW Dairy Industry Consultative Committee will be held on Tuesday 19 September 2017.