

Summary of meeting outcomes

Egg Industry Consultative Committee

7 March 2018

The Egg Industry Consultative Committee (EICC) held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday 7 March 2018. Specific issues considered by the Committee at its meeting are detailed below.

Attendees

Egg Industry Consultative Committee: Bede Burke (NSW Farmers' Association), Raymond Chia (Australian Eggs), Peter Matuszny (Free range egg producers' representative, Manning Valley Free Range Eggs), Franko Pirovic (large egg producers' representative, Pirovic Enterprises).

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Peter Day (Director Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance) - Chair, Craig Shadbolt (Manager Food Incident Response & Complaints), Julia Harvey (Director Stakeholder Engagement & Customer Service), Darren Waterson (Team Leader, Audit Systems Support), David Cusack (Manager, Strategic Policy & Projects), Margaret Figueroa (Secretariat).

Apologies: Kiara Drinan (NSW Farmers' Association), John Dunn (Egg Farmers Australia), Rowan McMonnies (Australian Eggs), Paul Pace (large egg processors' representative, Pace Farm), Bruce Christie (Deputy Director General, Biosecurity & Food Safety), Lisa Szabo, (Group Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Samantha Allan (A/Group Director, Animal Biosecurity & Welfare and Chief Veterinary Officer, NSW DPI), Mark Mackie (Manager, Audit Systems & Verification), Geneveive Bonello (Manager, Stakeholder Engagement & Communications), Ian Sanders (Director, International Engagement Unit, NSW DPI), Ryoko Uchida (Senior Industry Analyst, International Engagement).

Food safety program compliance report

The Committee received a report on egg industry compliance activities between 1 July 2017 to 31 December 2017. During this reporting period 127 audits and 49 inspections were conducted with only 8 failed audits and 3 failed inspections. The compliance rate for the sector is currently 94%. There were 11 enforcement actions, including the issue of one warning letter, seven improvement notices and three penalty notices. No foodborne illness investigations were conducted in the egg sector during this time.

Audit data analysis indicated that the major audit items with high observed levels of critical issues continue to be within construction and maintenance, process control, hygiene and sanitation, and failures relating to maintenance of a food safety program. Overall the compliance rate is steady and whilst there is always room for improvement, this is a pleasing result for the sector.

Anti-Microbial Resistance Strategy update

Members were advised that the Department is in the process of finalising a draft report and is doing a survey of dairy farmers' knowledge of antibiotic use which will finish in six months' time. Depending on the results of this survey, a similar one may be conducted with egg industry producers, particularly focusing on smaller operators. Members will be kept updated on this process. A question was raised as to whether there would be a move towards a Salmonella monitoring program for small producers. The committee was advised that the Department will continue to work closely with industry through producer workshops and that there will be on-going focus on these programs and education on other practical aspects in the future.

National Foodborne Illness Reduction Strategy 2018-2021

Members noted an information paper on a draft strategy for reducing foodborne illness in Australia which was endorsed by the Australia and New Zealand Ministerial Forum in November 2017. Subsequently, the Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC) was requested to consult with stakeholders to further the strategy and its implementation plan. The strategy aims to reduce the number of food-related human cases of campylobacteriosis and salmonellosis in Australia by 2021. The Consultation document (which was previously circulated to committee members) was also tabled.

A presentation was given on the Australia and New Zealand food regulation system to provide a more detailed background to members on this issue. This included a brief overview of the regulatory system, an outline of priorities for 2018-2021, strategies for moving towards success and ways in which the Forum hopes to achieve this together by working closely with industry. Areas focussed on in NSW since the introduction of the *NSW Government's Food Safety Strategy 2015-2021* to reduce foodborne illness caused by Salmonella, Campylobacter and Listeria by 30% were also outlined. This work has contributed to a reduction in notification rates of salmonellosis in NSW.

Members discussed questions in relation to identification of risk and other initiatives that they believed could contribute to the strategy. They were encouraged to provide feedback on the strategy before the close of the consultation period on 29 March 2018 via the Food Regulation website: <http://foodregulation.gov.au/internet/fr/publishing.nsf/Content/Home>

NSW foodborne illness status associated with eggs

The Committee received a brief snapshot on where NSW currently stands in relation to notification rates for Salmonella. Figures recorded during the period January 2014 to March 2018 showed that there has been a 54% decrease in Salmonella Typhimurium in NSW since 2014 (which is the most common foodborne serotype). There has been a 17% decrease across all Salmonella in NSW (not just foodborne). The last outbreak linked to raw egg foods was in December 2016 which is down from 10-15 in 2014). The Department has been spending more time with small egg farmers in educating them on improved handling, sanitation and management of their farms and this has had an impact on these figures. Members agreed that the 54% reduction is a great outcome but there is still need for increased vigilance.

Draft Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry

An update was tabled on the project to draft national standards and guidelines for poultry which has been underway since mid-2015. The draft standards and guidelines and supporting Regulatory Impact Statement were released for public consultation in November 2017 and submissions closed in February 2018. The draft standards were subjected to intensive media interest and campaigns from animal welfare groups. The NSW DPI commissioned independent community consultation in a number of regional centres which gave people an opportunity to respond. A report on the issues raised in these sessions informed the DPI's submission to the public consultation. An independent consultant is reviewing the public consultation submissions and will provide a report to Animal Health Australia. The submissions and report will be considered by the drafting group and the national Animal Welfare Task Group. The standards will then be revised, if appropriate, for consideration by the Stakeholder Advisory Group. The document will then progress to the Animal Welfare Task Group for finalisation before it goes to the Ministers.

Communications update

The Committee was advised that since its last meeting two issues of *Foodwise* have been published and disseminated. In this month's *Foodwise* there is a run-down of customer connections by phone or on line with the NSW Food Authority and NSW DPI Biosecurity during

2017. The Helpline, which has recently been expanded to include biosecurity helplines for domestic quarantine and exotic plant pest and disease related enquiries, received 23.4 thousand contacts. This month's edition also includes an article on the National Foodborne Illness Reduction Strategy and gives links for stakeholders to engage with the consultation.

The Department is also currently preparing for major engagement with the public through its Biosecurity and Food Safety stand at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. This year's areas of focus will be food handling at home and on identifying biosecurity risks from weeds and invasive pests.

Biosecurity update

Members were updated on work on-going in relation to implementation of the new Biosecurity Act. A lot of information and advice has been provided to industry, and animal welfare issues are taking a lot of the Department's time. This week the Department is conducting a major emergency exercise to test its systems and assess how NSW and Queensland can respond to a biosecurity incident occurring across both jurisdictions. There is also a planning project underway to determine appropriate action and response to a welfare issue in the event of the financial collapse of a major industry and its effects on the food supply and work force supply.

The next meeting of the Egg Industry Consultative Committee will be held on Wednesday 8 August 2018.