

Summary of meeting outcomes

Egg Industry Consultative Committee

9 August 2017

The Egg Industry Consultative Committee (EICC) held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday 9 August 2017. 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), Kiara Drinan (NSW Farmers' Association), Rowan McMonnies (Australian Eggs), Peter Matuszny (Free range egg producers' representative, Manning Valley Free Range Eggs), Christine Middlemiss (Group Director Animal Biosecurity & Welfare & Chief Veterinary Officer), Paul Pace (large egg processors' representative, Pace Farm), Franko Pirovic (large egg producers' representative, Pirovic Enterprises), Ryoko Uchida (Senior Industry Analyst, International Engagement). **Apologies:** Amanda Black (NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety representative), John Dunn (Egg Farmers Australia).

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Craig Shadbolt, Chair (A/Group Director Food Safety & A/CEO NSW Food Authority), Peter Day (Director Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance), David Cusack (Manager, Strategic Policy & Projects), Geneveive Bonello (Manager, Stakeholder Engagement & Communications), Margaret Figueroa (Secretariat).

Apologies: Bruce Christie (Deputy Director General, Biosecurity & Food Safety), Lisa Szabo, (Group Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Julia Harvey (Director Stakeholder Engagement & Customer Service), Mark Mackie (Manager, Audit Systems & Verification).

Food safety program compliance report

The Committee received a report on food safety compliance in the egg industry sector for the period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017. It was noted that the current egg industry compliance rate is very good with 95.4% compliance which is above the target of 95%. During the 12-month reporting period there were only a small number of enforcement actions with 7 improvement notices, 6 penalty notices and 5 prohibition orders issued. There was a reduction in food-borne illness outbreaks in comparison with previous years with a small number of egg-related *Salmonella* clusters being investigated and contained.

Detailed audit data analysis for the egg sector was presented and it was noted that the top three audit items with higher observed levels of critical issues were within construction and maintenance (25%), process control – unclean fittings, fixtures or equipment (20%) and hygiene and sanitation – inadequate management of temperature controls (10%).

It was noted that since the introduction of the egg stamping program in November 2014, 1,294 free egg stamps had been issued to egg businesses by the Food Authority. During this financial year there were 53 instances of egg stamping machines breaking down. In all cases the Food Authority worked closely with the licensee to ensure traceability systems were in place until required repairs were completed.

Overall the Food Authority is very happy with the outstanding compliance rate in the egg industry sector.

Anti-Microbial Resistance Strategy update

Members received a brief update on work being conducted with DPI in relation to development of an Anti-Microbial Resistance Strategy. A meeting will be held in mid-August to map out activities currently being done, research priorities and proposed stakeholder engagement; it is anticipated that this will provide more of an idea on how to progress this issue. More work is also being done on the National Strategy. In addition, members discussed genome sequencing work currently underway in NSW.

Salmonella Strategy update

Members were advised that delivery of the *Salmonella* Strategy in NSW is on track. The rate of *Salmonella Typhimurium* has halved from 2014 when there were 13 outbreaks; this year there has been only one. This shows that the message is getting out. The publication of *Food Safety guidelines for the preparation of raw egg products*, and ongoing training for local council EHOs and retail food businesses in raw egg guidelines as well as targeted compliance operations on high risk businesses has contributed to the reduction in this pathogen.

Enforcement approach relating to cracked and dirty eggs

Members noted a paper tabled in relation to enforcement actions taken by the Department when notification is received of the sale of cracked and dirty eggs. All complaints received are formally and thoroughly investigated in line with the Department's documented complaints policy. This includes an inspection of the licensed facilities to review operations and ensure all mandated systems are in place. With significant complaints that come from interstate, the Department will look at the egg farm to see whether or not there is a systemic issue involved, however generally speaking one cracked egg does not mean the whole system is broken.

Notification of egg stamping failures

The Committee noted a paper outlining the actions taken by the Department when notification is received of egg stamping machinery failures. The notification program allows licensees to continue to sell eggs until an agreed resumption date through implementation of a traceability system to ensure unstamped eggs can be recalled in the event of a foodborne illness incident. If equipment is not repaired or replaced by the resumption date, an extension must be sought before any further unstamped eggs can be sold. Further information on this may be found on the Egg Stamping page on the Food Authority website.

Egg exports overview

Ryoko Uchida from the DPI's International Engagement Unit gave an "Egg exports overview" presentation to members and outlined ways in which the Unit can support industry in providing opportunities for access to international markets. Issues covered included the NSW government international network, countries where Australia is currently exporting, an update on Korea's egg import status, and an outline of potential opportunities in international markets.

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 egg industry sector including social media posts on egg safety, articles in *Foodwise*, food recalls related to undeclared egg allergens and a media release on the new national standard for free range egg labelling.



Biosecurity legislation program update

The Committee received an update on the *Biosecurity Act 2015* which came into effect on 1 July 2017. The Act will have an impact on egg farmers who will be required to demonstrate that they have taken due steps to implement biosecurity controls. The Department will continue to work closely with industry through education and training to assist them in developing programs to manage and mitigate biosecurity risks.

Members discussed some of the challenges faced by different sectors of the egg industry with biosecurity, particularly with free range production systems, animal welfare, and in the case of disease outbreaks. They were encouraged to bring any matters of concern to this forum as the scope of this committee has now expanded to include biosecurity issues now that the Food Authority is part of NSW DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety.

The next meeting of the Egg Industry Consultative Committee will be held in early 2018 – date to be advised.