

Summary of meeting outcomes

Meat Industry Consultative Council

13 March 2019

The Meat Industry Consultative Council (MICC) held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday 13 March 2019. Specific issues considered at the meeting are detailed below.

Attendees

Meat Industry Consultative Council: Sarah Britton (NSW Chief Veterinary Officer & Group Director Animal Biosecurity, NSW DPI), Brian Calderwood (Pepe's Ducks Pty Ltd), Peta Easey (NSW Farmers' Association), Vivien Kite (Australian Chicken Meat Federation), Collin Naidu (Baiada Poultry Pty Ltd), Andrew Robertson (Australian Pork Limited), Peter Talbot (Australian Meat Industry Council).

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Lisa Szabo – Chair (Group Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Greg Vakaci (Acting Director Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance), David Cusack (Manager, Food Standards & Programs), Matthew Campbell (Team Leader Metro Region, Regulatory Operations Unit), Geneveive Bonello (Manager, Stakeholder Engagement & Communications), Jenine Ryle (Senior Policy & Programs Officer).

Apologies: Katherine Balding & Suzy Klein (Inghams Enterprises Pty Ltd), Will Barton (Australian Meat Industry Council), Heather Channon (Australian Pork Limited), Annabel Johnson (NSW Farmers' Association), Ian Sanders (Director, International Engagement Unit, NSW DPI), Ryoko Uchida (Senior Industry Analyst, International Engagement Unit, NSW DPI), Bruce Christie (Deputy Director General, Biosecurity & Food Safety, NSW DPI), Emily Rucker (Director Customer Service & Engagement), Mark Mackie (Manager, Regulatory Operations Unit), Craig Shadbolt (Manager, Food Incident Response & Complaints).

Industry updates

Members provided updates on key and emerging issues in their respective industry sectors.

A common issue of concern raised by members is the increasing level of disruptive activities by animal activists. This is happening across all sectors of the industry with vigils outside plants, drone surveillance, multiple break-ins and theft of animals, and privacy breaches. This type of activity has ramifications for biosecurity as well as food safety with unauthorised entry into these facilities being a potential vector for the introduction of diseases.

Members were advised that the NSW DPI has a project targeted for this year to look into these issues and will work together with industry on this. Industry members expressed their appreciation for the Department's responsiveness to these issues.

Food safety compliance report

A report was presented on meat industry compliance activities during the period 1 July 2018 to 31 December 2018. It was noted there has been a 1% increase in compliance over the past six months with a compliance rate of 96% for the meat industry sector during this reporting period. 787 audits and 368 inspections were conducted with 17 failed audits and 24 failed inspections. There were 100 enforcement actions including 30 warning letters, 57 Improvement Notices, 12 Penalty Notices and one prosecution of a butchery for offences

relating to breaching the Food Standards Code by adding preservative (SO₂) to minced meat. One foodborne illness investigation was carried out in August 2018 due to a number of people falling ill following the consumption of lamb cutlets which were undercooked and/or affected by cross-contamination.

Process control, failure to maintain monitoring records, and analytical testing issues continue to be the main areas of non-compliance in the meat sector where critical Corrective Action Requests (CARs) are being raised. Critical issues with construction and maintenance are also on the rise, which is reflective of some of the older premises that are still in operation.

Overall, the Department is pleased with the high compliance rate for the meat industry sector over this period.

Compliance activity around illegal slaughter

Members received an update on the broadened remit of the Department's compliance officers involved in the conduct of illegal slaughter investigations now that they are authorised under both the Food Act 2003 and the Biosecurity Act 2015. This has given compliance officers greater flexibility, scope and powers to comprehensively investigate reports of illegal slaughter and enforce biosecurity as well as food safety requirements. Illegal slaughter investigations can be complex and compliance officers have developed strong links with NSW Police Rural Crime Investigators, Local Land Services and the RSPCA which has seen greater co-operation in responding to reports of illegal slaughter activities.

Members were asked to encourage people in their industry sectors to report any information on illegal slaughter activities to the Department in either of the following ways:

- Online: <http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/gp/complaints-about-food>
- Contact the Helpline: 1300 552 406

Members were also advised of a page on the Department's website called 'Starting a food business'. This uses a decision tree to assist people starting up a food business to understand what their food safety requirements and obligations are. This page may be found at the following link:

<http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/ip/starting-a-food-business>

Update on development of NSW DPI Antimicrobial Resistance Policy

A paper was tabled to advise members that the NSW Government (NSW Department of Primary Industries and Local Land Services) has finalised development of a NSW antimicrobial stewardship and resistance policy which outlines its role in antimicrobial stewardship and resistance in accordance with the Australian Government's national antimicrobial resistance (AMR) strategy. This is available at:

https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/847040/Antimicrobial-stewardship-and-resistance.PDF

It was advised that the Australian Chicken Meat Federation (ACMF) undertook a survey of AMR in chickens in October 2018 and the report was published on their website. There was an overall very good outcome except in one area where there was some fluoroquinolone *Campylobacter* resistance identified.

Salmonella Enteritidis update

Council members were updated following a steady increase in the number of cases of *Salmonella* Enteritidis in humans in NSW since May 2018. It was indicated that usually illness is linked to people who have travelled overseas and come in contact with the organism; however, there are now around 145 cases in Australia with no history of overseas travel.

NSW government agencies have worked collaboratively to identify the source of this *Salmonella*. As a consequence, *Salmonella* Enteritidis has been found on four poultry layer farms in NSW. The properties are interconnected in that people, eggs or equipment were moving between the properties.

Steps taken to minimise consumer exposure to *Salmonella* Enteritidis risks from these infected premises include movement restrictions, farm depopulation, decontamination and disinfection, consumer level and trade level recalls, product withdrawals, consumer advisories and media.

The Department is continuing to be very proactive within a 20-kilometre radius of these four properties with increased surveillance and a biosecurity direction in place.

Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) preparedness at domestic abattoirs and knackeries in NSW

Members received an update on a project currently underway to look at utilising small domestic abattoirs as a resource for providing feedback on animal health, particularly notifiable and emergency animal diseases. As part of this project, a preliminary investigation, funded by DAWR, was undertaken by the DPI's Peri Urban Program (PUP) in 2018 to determine the current state of biosecurity preparedness in abattoirs and knackeries across NSW. It discovered that most small abattoirs did not have programs in place to provide feedback on emergency animal disease and that symptoms of an emergency disease are not so well known. A full report of this PUP preliminary investigation was tabled for members' information. The NSW DPI has created a webpage containing training tools and materials developed by government and industry organisations as a resource for workers.

Following from this the Commonwealth have funded a broader national program with the National Meat Industry Training Advisory Council (MINTRAC), and the NSW DPI will be working with them to upskill abattoir and knackery workers on emergency animal diseases to build their capacity to identify and report risks early. MINTRAC is gathering training materials from across the States to assist with the development of training packages for abattoirs and knackeries. It is proposed that EAD preparedness plans will be an auditing requirement of domestic abattoirs and knackeries and BFS Compliance auditors will also be required to up-skill and will undergo the same disease recognition training as plant staff. It is expected this training will be rolled out within the next 3-4 months in NSW and next 6-9 months across Australia.

Australian Meat Regulators Working Group (AMRG) update

The meeting received an update on activities of the Australian Meat Regulators Working Group (AMRG).

Significant progress has been made in the reform of Australian Standard 4696:2007 (Standard for the hygienic production and transportation of meat and meat products for human consumption). The AMRG has been reviewing procedures for post mortem inspection and disposition in schedules 2 and 3 of the Standard. Applications for determination of alternative techniques in these schedules which were submitted by peak industry bodies have been assessed and approved and States agreed to implement all

Schedule 2 alternative techniques (except *C.Bovis*) by 1 January 2019. Other issues are still being progressed to align post mortem inspection procedures between domestic and export premises. The timeline targeted for completion of the amendments is 1 July 2019.

The AMRG is also progressing work in all states on national implementation of the poultry process hygiene criteria provided in the FSANZ compendium of microbiological criteria for food.

National traceability project update

Members received a brief update on a national traceability framework and action plan for Australia's agricultural industries developed by a joint DAWR, state and territory working group formed in 2017 to maintain and establish Australia's trade market access. A draft of this action plan was tabled for members' information and a refreshed version of this will go up on the DAWR website in the next few weeks.

Australian Government Food Export Task Force

Members were advised of work being done by the Australian Government Food Export Task Force working across DAWR, and the Commonwealth Departments of Health and Industry, Innovation & Science. The review is being undertaken to examine the interaction between Australia's food regulation system and the growing demand for Australian food exports. In the first phase of this work they are seeking to build a common view of current and emerging issues.

Further information on the Food Export Task Force can be found at:

Web: <https://haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au/food-export-review>

*The next meeting of the Meat Industry Consultative Council will be held on Wednesday
10 July 2019*