

Summary of meeting outcomes

Meat Industry Consultative Council

12 April 2017

The Meat Industry Consultative Council (MICC) held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday 12 April 2017. Specific issues considered by the Council at its meeting are detailed below.

Attendees

Meat Industry Consultative Council: Robin Achari (Red Lea Chickens Pty Ltd), Mark Beecham and Kevin Cottrill (Australian Meat Industry Council), Brian Calderwood (Pepe's Ducks Pty Ltd), Heather Channon (Australian Pork Limited), Beth Krushinskie (Inghams Enterprises Pty Ltd), Ray Lee (NSW Farmers' Association). **Apologies:** Vivien Kite (Australian Chicken Meat Federation), Amanda Lee (NSW DPI Biosecurity & Food Safety), Will Barton (Australian Meat Industry Council).

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), Margaret Figueroa (Secretariat). **Apologies:** Bruce Christie (Deputy Director General, Biosecurity & Food Safety), Juliet Corish (A/Group Director Animal Biosecurity & Welfare & Chief Veterinary Officer), Peter Day (Director Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance), Ryoko Uchida (Senior Industry Analyst, International Engagement), Geneveive Bonello (Manager, Stakeholder Engagement & Communications).

Food safety program compliance report

Council members noted a report on food safety compliance in the meat industry sector for the six-month period 1 July 2016 to 31 December 2016. This report has been reformatted with the intent of providing a snapshot and basic overview of compliance during the reporting period. The results are used to determine priority areas for implementing other systems and controls. A full one year report will be provided at the next meeting.

During the period 1,382 audits and 553 inspections were conducted, with 59 failed audits and 27 failed inspections. There were 134 overall enforcement actions, including the issue of 95 Improvement notices, 32 penalty notices, 4 warning letters, 1 Prohibition order and 2 seizures.

Audit data analysis for the period indicated that the top three audit items with higher observed levels of critical issues were within process control (35%), hygiene & sanitation (15%) and analytical testing (13%). However it was noted that there has been an increase in compliance rates across all top four licence permissions (Meat Processing, Meat Processing RTE, Meat Retail and Meat Retail RTE). This improvement has been a result of changes recently implemented in the retail meat audit program. The current overall compliance rate for the meat industry sector is 95.2% which is a significant improvement on the previous reporting period which was 87%. This is very positive and a good result for the sector.

National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy update

Members received an update on the National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy which was released around a year and a half ago by the Australian government. As part of that there is a State strategy and a lot of work is being done with assistance from the DPI. In 2014 there was an MLA study put out on antibiotic resistance in cattle showing low levels of resistance as far as any clinically significant antimicrobials go. The MLA is also about to commence a

study looking at prevalence of antimicrobials in sheep and lambs, and APL have nearly finalised another study looking at prevalence in pigs and studies have been conducted in the poultry industry. Across the board it is anticipated there will be good data about the low prevalence of critical antimicrobial use in the primary industry sector. This can be used to advantage in demonstrating that Australia has lower levels of resistance than other countries.

Added to that the Department is partnering in a three year study looking at prevalence of *Campylobacter* in NSW. These studies will also be used to get a good understanding of antimicrobial resistance levels.

Retail Meat Food Safety Program & Retail Diary

Members were advised that the updated Retail Meat Food Safety Program and Retail Diary has been successfully implemented with licensees since 1 December 2016 with 365 documents being requested by licensees. The updated program focuses on achieving outcomes and as a result there has been a noticeable improvement in audit compliance rates and positive feedback from licensees. This program will be expanded to other industry sectors in the future and will be translated across the main language groups.

The Biosecurity Food Safety Compliance (BFSC) team thanked Council members for their assistance with the development and review of this document.

Retail meat audit compliance rate improvement

Members noted a paper regarding the successful implementation of changes within the retail meat audit program to improve audit compliance rates in this sector. These initiatives included:

- Provision of an audit notification letter to licensees advising that their audit has been scheduled. This is impacting compliance levels as licensees are reviewing their records and ensuring they are audit ready and documenting issues that need to be addressed.
- Provision of updated audit guidance to auditors outlining expectations when identifying corrective actions. This is enabling auditors to make determinations against outcomes and discuss actions required without recording an audit failure.
- The review of all failed audits to ensure they have been completed in line with audit guidance and policies and to reinforce transparency in the process.

The implementation of these initiatives has seen the audit compliance rate reach its 95% target level which continues to be maintained.

NLIS Traceability Project

Members noted a paper on an NLIS project called Operation Cross Check which has commenced following findings of Operation Mary (which was carried out last year) relating to inconsistencies in the flow of consignment information through the supply chain via National Vendor Declarations (NVDs) and saleyard Post Sale Summaries (PSSs). The project will assess the accuracy of PSSs to determine if they can be used as a reliable source of food safety and biosecurity information.

Retail delicatessen and *Listeria monocytogenes* survey

The Council was updated on the findings of a survey of retail delicatessens conducted earlier this year following cases of *Listeria monocytogenes* being found in ham product which was linked to an earlier recall. The survey highlighted a lot of common issues in terms of hygiene and sanitation. The Department will continue to work closely with local councils to increase awareness of these issues.

***Campylobacter* update**

The Council was advised that *Campylobacter* has now been approved by the Department of Health as a notifiable disease. This will assist in providing more data on this pathogen and give a better idea of its prevalence.

National Abattoir & Poultry Standards & Guidelines Projects update

Members were updated on progress in development of the *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Livestock at Processing Establishments* and the *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry*. Work is continuing with other jurisdictions to develop standards that are nationally consistent for the regulation of livestock and poultry welfare and there will be on-going consultation with industry throughout this process.

Communications update

Members noted an update on work the Food Authority's communications team has been doing since the last meeting in relation to the meat industry sector including sponsorships; articles in *Foodwise*, media and social media; and work on retail meat diaries. A *Food Labelling* portal has recently been launched on the Food Authority web-site which is designed to help consumers read and understand labels. They will be looking at a simplified pathway for producers and people in the meat industry sector to understand labelling requirements.

Biosecurity legislation program update

The Council received an update on the current remake of the Biosecurity legislation being conducted by the Department. Public consultation on the Regulatory Impact Statement and draft Regulations was completed on 29 January 2017 and 75 submissions were received. They are now in the process of finalising the Regulation and developing a summary report on the submissions. A significant training program has also commenced for authorised officers to bring them up to speed prior to implementation of the Act and this will include on-line and face to face training in different locations around the State. Work is also underway to develop Fact Sheets to industry groups, regions and priority areas to deconstruct what "general biosecurity duty" means.

It was also advised that a Biosecurity Attitudinal Survey was undertaken last year to gain understanding of the knowledge of primary producers and the general public in NSW around biosecurity.

The next meeting of the Meat Industry Consultative Council will be held on Tuesday 29 August 2017.