

Summary of meeting outcomes

Egg Industry Consultative Committee

7 August 2019

The Egg Industry Consultative Committee (EICC) held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday 7 August 2019. Specific issues considered by the Committee at its meeting are detailed below.

Attendees

Egg Industry Consultative Committee: Raymond Chia (Australian Eggs), Melinda Hashimoto (Egg Farmers of Australia), Annabel Johnson (NSW Farmers' Association), Peter Matuszny (Free range egg producers' representative, Manning Valley Free Range Eggs), Rowan McMonnies (Australian Eggs), Paul Pace (large egg processors' representative, Pace Farm), Franko Pirovic (large egg producers' representative, Pirovic Enterprises).

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Lisa Szabo - Chair (Group Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Peter Day (Director Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance), Mark Mackie (Manager, Audit Systems & Verification), Myles Parker (Program Leader, Salmonella Enteritidis), Sus Perkins (A/Manager, Stakeholder Engagement & Communications), Craig Shadbolt (Manager Food Incident Response & Complaints), David Cusack (Manager, Food Standards & Programs), Ryoko Uchida (Senior Industry Analyst, International Engagement), Jenine Ryle (Secretariat).

Apologies: Sarah Britton (NSW Chief Veterinary Officer and Group Director Animal Biosecurity), Bruce Christie (Deputy Director General, Biosecurity & Food Safety), Kim Filmer (Chief Animal Welfare Officer), Ian Sanders (Director International Engagement Unit).

Industry updates

Members provided updates on key and emerging issues in their respective industry sectors with *Salmonella* Enteritidis (SE) being the focus of discussion.

Update on egg-associated Salmonella management

Members were provided with an overview of *Salmonella* statistics in NSW. For the years 2017, 2018 and so far in 2019, *Salmonella* Typhimurium numbers are below the five-year average, which is an encouraging trend.

Members were advised that since the introduction of the current locally acquired *Salmonella* Enteritidis outbreak in May 2018, there have been approximately 240 confirmed human cases, nationally. The majority of these have been in NSW, with confirmed cases have slowed since June 2019. To date, there have been seven point-source human disease clusters and seven separate food recalls as a result of the outbreak.

SE has been found on twelve poultry layer farms in NSW. The properties are interconnected in that people, eggs or equipment were moving between the properties.

Control Order - Biosecurity Act 2015

Myles Parker provided a verbal update on the Biosecurity (*Salmonella* Enteritidis) Control Order. The Control Order was issued on 1 August 2019 and will be in place for two years.

The Control Order applies to all persons in NSW that are in an area where eggs are produced, graded or packed, or poultry are bred, raised or kept for meat or egg production, on premises required to be licensed under the *Food Act 2003* and Food Regulation 2015. It also applies to pullet rearing facilities. The Control Order will help ensure consistency in the biosecurity practices applied at poultry and egg production premises to prevent the further spread of SE.

Consultation on the draft Control Order occurred with peak industry groups including Australian Eggs Limited, NSW Farmers and the Australian Chicken Meat Federation. Prior to

implementation, the Department had undertaken mock audits on multiple properties to test the Control Order from an implementation and outcome perspective.

Compliance with the Control Order – Updated Egg Food Safety Program and State-wide Inspection Program.

Mark Mackie advised members that the Department's investigations have shown that all properties confirmed to have been infected are interconnected in that people, eggs or equipment were moving between them.

Basic biosecurity measures required by the order include that all affected facilities implement a vermin control strategy, display biosecurity signage and provide shed boots or foot baths at the entrance to production areas.

Other measures to reduce the possible spread of SE include provisions for the handling and storage of dead birds to prevent access by vermin and other animals, and for hand washing facilities or hand sanitiser to be provided at entrances to production areas.

The new rules will also require minimum levels of record keeping, including records of all persons entering poultry production facilities and written records of all deliveries to and from a property.

Members were advised that compliance officers will visit every licensed egg and poultry production facility in NSW to assist licensees to meet their property's licensing requirements and to implement the new Control Order. There will be a stronger biosecurity focus to ensure that licensees have one system in operation at their facility. Licensees will be provided with a printed egg program document and biosecurity signage along with detailed guidance on how they are to be implemented and used.

The inspection program will initially focus on the Sydney metropolitan licensed farms and those facilities impacted by SE. Project has been designed to ensure that licensees with increased requirements relating to education are provided the assistance they require.

Food safety program compliance report

The Committee noted a report on egg industry compliance activities for the 2018-19 financial year. During this reporting period 135 audits and 193 inspections were carried out with three failed audits and 36 failed inspections.

The 8% drop in the compliance rate from the previous financial year is directly linked to the increased surveillance and monitoring to manage SE. Increased enforcement actions saw the issuing of 17 improvement notices, one penalty notice and 31 biosecurity directions, issued to farms during the SE outbreak to cease movement of eggs and birds or to dispose of manure.

Members noted the detailed compliance information in the report which showed the top three audit items that had higher observed levels of critical issues for the current reporting period (FY 18/19) were within Hygiene & sanitation (50%), process control (25%) and construction & maintenance (25%).

Biosecurity Management Plan

Peter Day provided an overview of the changes to the Biosecurity Regulation 2019 which came into effect on 1 August 2019. Members were advised that producers are being urged to adopt a Biosecurity Management Plan (BMP) to reduce biosecurity risks and increase protection against trespasses.

A BMP provides an effective tool to help producers document all the biosecurity risks to their property and includes a wide range of activities and plans to prevent and help manage various pests and diseases. Arrangements in BMPs aim to prevent and minimise the biosecurity risks posed by people entering any property where commercial agricultural or horticultural activity, including processing and education, occurs.

Under the changes, it will become mandatory for site visitors to comply with the measures outlined in the plan or face tougher penalties. Tougher penalties have also been introduced for trespassers who illegally enter farmers' properties.

A new offence has been created under the State's Biosecurity Act that will see trespassers on farms, creating biosecurity risks, handed an immediate on-the-spot fine of \$1,000 and further court-ordered fines of up to \$220,000 per person and \$440,000 for corporations.

Anyone who enters a designated biosecurity area without permission and without complying with the plan's requirements, may be subject to the new, harsher penalties.

National PIC (Property Identification Code) project update

David Cusack presented an update of the PIC project *Property Identification Reforms: enhancing agricultural traceability*. This work arose from the review of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity (IGAB) led by panel Chair Dr Craik in 2017.

Australian agriculture ministers responded to the independent panel's final IGAB report, *Priorities for Australia's biosecurity system* in late 2018 and made a specific commitment to examine property identification codes nationally in animal and plant products industries; to develop a set of consistent business rules by the end of 2019 and to harmonise legislation to give effect to national PICs across animal and plant products industries by the end of 2022.

The presentation also outlined other current traceability reviews including the National traceability project (<http://www.agriculture.gov.au/market-access-trade/traceability-project>), SAFEMEAT reforms to Australia's livestock traceability and the Food Exports Review (<http://www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/food/regulation-safety/food-export-review>).

Members were advised that they can provide their views on the project principles and recommended changes to their respective industry representative group or in writing to the Australian Government Department of Agriculture's *Have Your Say* webpage shortly. The Secretariat will circulate the weblink to members once the consultation phase commences.

Egg export statistics

Ryoko Uchida presented a quick summary of egg export figures for Australia and NSW for the FY 2018-19. It was agreed that the data, which provides a breakdown of the Australian egg export values by country, would be circulated out of session to members for their information.

The date for the next meeting of the Egg Industry Consultative Committee in 2020 is to be advised.