

## Summary of meeting outcomes

### Meat Industry Consultative Council

11 March 2020

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The Meat Industry Consultative Council (MICC) held a meeting in Sydney on Wednesday 11 March 2020. Specific issues considered at the meeting are detailed below.

#### Attendees

**Meat Industry Consultative Council:** Stephen Bignell (NSW Farmers' Association), Brian Calderwood (Pepe's Ducks Pty Ltd), Vivien Kite (Australian Chicken Meat Federation), Collin Naidu (Baiada Poultry Pty Ltd), Vaibhav Gole (Australian Pork Limited)

**NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety:** Lisa Szabo – Chair (Group Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority, NSW DPI), Peter Day (Director Biosecurity & Food Safety Compliance, NSW DPI), David Cusack (Manager, Food Standards & Programs, NSW DPI), Mark Mackie (Manager, Regulatory Operations Unit, NSW DPI), Craig Shadbolt (Manager, Food Incident Response & Complaints, NSW DPI), Paul Freeman (Senior Veterinary Policy & Projects Officer, NSW DPI), Ryoko Uchida (Senior Industry Analyst, International Engagement Unit, NSW DPI), Suzanne Robinson (Director Animal Welfare, NSW DPI), Linda Varrica (Communications Strategy Engagement & Industry Assistance, NSW DPI), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat, NSW DPI).

**Apologies:** Susy 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), Peta Easey (NSW Farmers' Association), Sarah Britton (NSW Chief Veterinary Officer & Group Director Animal Biosecurity, NSW DPI), Peter Talbot (Australian Meat Industry Council), Mark O'Brien (Comms and Stakeholder Engagement NSW DPI).

#### Industry updates

Members provided updates on key and emerging issues in their respective industry sectors with COVID-19 being the focus of discussion.

Members outlined the impact it is having on their industries and discussed planning and contingency measures that they are taking to address issues relating to their operations in line with advice from NSW Health. Members agreed that the biggest risk was at the processing level and the potential impacts should an employee contract COVID-19.

Members noted the huge pressures being put on industry from COVID-19 on the back of drought and the recent bushfires.

BFS staff emphasised that COVID-19 is spread via person-to-person transmission and good hygiene practices and compliance with social distancing requirements remain the best way to prevent the spread of the virus and protect businesses.

[Note: The Department has published [advice for businesses](#) on food safety aspects of COVID-19, workforce management and regulatory obligations.]

#### BFS Compliance Priorities 2020 - 2021

A report was presented on how the Compliance and Integrity Systems (CIS) Team sets its [Regulatory Priorities](#) each year to ensure its compliance and enforcement activities can be adjusted in line with performance of industry sectors, emerging biosecurity and food safety risks and industry intelligence. Peter Day updated the Committee on the 2019/20 priorities

and invited industry input on priorities for the upcoming 2020/21 period with feedback requested by 10 April 2020.

### **Salmonella Enteritidis Outbreak - Update**

Craig Shadbolt gave a verbal update to the Committee on the current status of *Salmonella* Enteritidis (SE) in NSW and the ongoing efforts DPI is making to control the outbreak and to identify potential sources. He advised that human SE cases continue to be tracked and any infected flocks are quarantined. The number of SE cases is low compared with the previous year and control efforts are largely succeeding. NSW DPI is currently checking the status of poultry businesses against the NSW Biosecurity Control Order, with the majority complying. Members were also advised that Food Standards Australia New Zealand is currently reviewing the national egg standards legislation.

### **Food Safety Compliance Report**

A report was presented on meat industry compliance activities during the period 1 July 2019 to December 2020. It was noted there has been a 2% decrease in compliance with a compliance rate of 93% for the meat industry sector during this reporting period. 1491 audits and 402 inspections were conducted with 55 failed audits and 56 failed inspections. There were 87 enforcement actions including four warning letters, 64 Improvement Notices, 15 Penalty Notices, two Seizure Notices and two Prohibition Orders.

Members noted that overall, the Department is pleased with the high compliance rate for the meat industry sector over this period.

### **Animal Welfare update**

Suzanne Robinson updated the Committee on animal welfare issues including:

- advice and resources on animal welfare requirements for transport livestock, including fitness to load, have been developed by DPI and are being shared with industry;
- Animal welfare reform [issues paper](#) has been released for public consultation - Submissions close 21 June 2020;
- Implementation of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Saleyards and Depots is being considered for adoption in NSW legislation;
- Queensland will lead the national development of the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Livestock at Processing Establishments;
- Queensland will lead a review of the suitability for horses of the existing *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for the Transport and Sell of Livestock*. The standards are mandated in NSW under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act;
- A national working group lead by Queensland and Victoria will develop a proposal for a national horse register.

### **Australian Meat Regulators Working Group (AMRG) update**

David Cusack provided an update on AMRG work on amendments to the post-mortem inspection and carcass disposition procedures in Australian Standard 4696:2007: standard for the hygienic production and transportation of meat and meat products.

Members noted that NSW has implemented an alternative techniques guideline provided to NSW domestic meat processors on 13 February 2020. General Circular 02/2020 - Improving equivalence of alternative technique procedures (AS 4696:2007). [[1](#)] [improving-equivalence-alternative-technique-procedures-46962007](#)

Other jurisdictions will implement the guideline for their domestic processing over the next few months.

Members were advised that the Australian Government Department of Agriculture Water and Environment will continue to apply AS 4696:2007 as currently written to export operations.

Members noted that discussions continue with Standards Australia over intellectual property ownership of a future version of AS 4696. The issue of retention of the Standards Australia moniker was to be discussed at an upcoming meeting of the Export Meat Industry Advisory Committee (EMIAC) on 18 March 2020.

### **National implementation of Poultry Process Hygiene criteria**

Craig Shadbolt gave a verbal update regarding the existing Poultry Process Hygiene criteria and its use by regulators. There has been some initial discussion around the use of data generated by industry to develop a national performance metric for poultry meat, which could be a tool to inform the National Foodborne Illnesses Reduction Strategy. This would have to be designed in a way which did not identify specific processing plants or jurisdictions and would need to be developed in partnership with industry. A similar model exists in the red meat industry.

Further discussions are required on the issue of the ownership of the poultry processing monitoring results and the permission required for alternative use.

Members noted that NSW will be expanding Poultry Process Hygiene criteria to small operators as well and recognised that these will need a slightly different monitoring regime in comparison to larger poultry producers.

### **African Swine Fever**

Linda Varrica updated members on initiatives being undertaken to communicate African Swine Fever (ASF) preparedness and prevention information to a variety of potentially impacted stakeholders in NSW. Recent examples include communication with environmental health officers about the responsible disposal of food waste and swill feeding, as well as awareness articles published in the NSW Food Authority Foodwise newsletter and scheduled for publication in the Food Australia magazine

The importance of ensuring ASF is not confused with Swine flu and COVID-19 was emphasised to the Committee. Members were informed that Animal Health Australia has published a 'spot the difference' fact sheet to help distinguish African swine fever from Swine flu. The fact sheet is available on the AHA website: [animalhealthaustralia.com.au/asf/](http://animalhealthaustralia.com.au/asf/)

Members were advised that a national vet guide specific to ASF will be published shortly and distributed via the Chief Veterinary Officer. Maintaining messaging about ASF in the context of COVID-19 is an ongoing challenge. Communications to some stakeholders will need to be revised to suit the current situation, including the approach that universities take to distribute ASF messaging to their international students. Members noted that DPI is working closely with the National Biosecurity Communications and Engagement Network which includes other jurisdictions to ensure that process for recording and response is streamlined or as streamlined as possible.

Maintaining messaging about ASF in the context of COVID-19 is an ongoing challenge. Communications to some stakeholders will need to be revised to suit the current situation, including approaching universities to distribute messaging to their international students.

Members noted that DPI is working closely with the National Biosecurity Communications and Engagement Network which includes other jurisdictions to ensure that process for recording and response is streamlined or as streamlined as possible. Members were advised that some of the top key messages to industry include encouraging reporting of ASF through the emergency and disease watch hotline and reiterating that ASF cannot be transmitted to humans through contact with pigs or consumption of pork, however it is deadly for pigs.

**Biosecurity update**

Peter Day gave a verbal update and advised members that DPI will be sending out a survey to the pig industry, recognising that a lot of pig producers in NSW aren't affiliated with either Australian Pork Limited or through their QA program, the Pig Pass Program. The purpose of the survey is to capture these other piggeries to ensure they are aware of requirements including the need to have a biosecurity plan. Members were advised that another DPI survey will go out next financial year to the broader NSW primary production industry to gain an understanding of the existing biosecurity plans in the different industries.

**International Engagement update**

Ryoko Uchida gave a verbal update on NSW meat exports in 2019 and advised members of the different platforms being utilised by DPI to promote messages regarding trade and investment opportunities for NSW. Members noted a view to utilise DPI's official social media platform Wechat to promote NSW agricultural capabilities in the Chinese market.

*The next meeting of the Meat Industry Consultative Council will be held on Wednesday 22 July 2020.*