

Summary of meeting outcomes

Meat Industry Consultative Council

22 July 2020

The Meat Industry Consultative Council held a meeting via video conference on Wednesday 22 July 2020. Specific issues considered at the meeting are detailed below.

Attendees

Meat Industry Consultative Council: Brian Calderwood (Pepe's Ducks Pty Ltd), Vivien Kite (Australian Chicken Meat Federation), Collin Naidu (Baiada Poultry Pty Ltd), Vaibhav Gole (Australian Pork Limited), Susy Klein (Inghams Enterprises Pty Ltd), Jodie Dean (NSW Famers' Association).

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Lisa Szabo – Chair (Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Peter Day (Director Compliance & Integrity Systems), Mark Mackie (Manager, Regulatory Operations Unit), Suzanne Robinson (Director Animal Welfare), Ian Sanders (Director, International Engagement Unit), Sarah Britton (NSW Chief Veterinary Officer & Group Director Animal Biosecurity), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat).

Apologies: Will Barton (Australian Meat Industry Council), Stephen Bignell (NSW Farmers' Association), Peta Easey (NSW Farmers' Association), Peter Talbot (Australian Meat Industry Council), David Cusack (Manager, Food Standards & Programs, NSW DPI),

Industry updates

Members provided updates on key and emerging issues in their respective industry sectors with COVID-19 continuing to be the focus of discussion. Members agreed that the biggest risk was still at the processing level and the potential impacts should an employee contract COVID-19. Members discussed the COVID-19 cluster associated with a Melbourne based meat processing plant and noted data that 115 meat and poultry processing facilities in the US have reported COVID-19 cases across 19 states.

Members indicated that site visits by NSW Health and SafeWork NSW are welcomed and have supported industry to prepare an [Incident Action Plan for a Confirmed Case of COVID-19 in a Meat Processing Facility](#). This document provides guidance to manage an outbreak of COVID-19 and prevent further transmission in meat processing facilities. It has been developed by NSW Health in consultation with SafeWork NSW and the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

Members were provided with a Resource Paper with key links to published COVID-19 information to support the NSW food industry including advice for businesses on food safety aspects of COVID-19, workforce management and regulatory obligations.

- The COVID-19 Primary Industries Liaison Team can be contacted by emailing covidinfo@dpi.nsw.gov.au
- Online resources and COVID-19 advice can be accessed at dpi.nsw.gov.au/home/covid-19

Food Safety Compliance Report

The Committee noted a report on meat industry compliance activities for the 2019-20 financial year. Members noted that 93% of the licensed meat businesses recorded an acceptable audit and/or inspection result. In comparison, the compliance

rate in the meat sector for the previous financial year was 95%. This 2% compliance drop for this period was largely attributable to an increase in failures in red meat abattoirs and meat processing plants. Of the businesses that failed their compliance audit and/or inspection during the reporting period, all subsequent follow up audits and/or inspections demonstrated compliance, indicating that licensees are implementing effective corrective actions in response to audit failures.

Animal Welfare update

Suzanne Robinson updated the Committee on animal welfare issues including:

- The Department is analysing feedback in response to the [Animal Welfare Reform Issues Paper](#). The Paper identifies areas of reform to modernise the policy and legislative framework for animal welfare in NSW.
- A [NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Animal Cruelty Laws in NSW](#) was established in August 2019 to inquire into and report on the effectiveness of the arrangements for the administration and enforcement of *Protection Of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*. The final report was released on 4 June 2020. The NSW Government is considering the recommendations and will provide a response by 4 December 2020.
- On 17 June 2020, the NSW Legislative Council's Portfolio Committee No. 4 - Industry commenced an [inquiry into the provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment \(Restrictions on Stock Animal Procedures\) Bill 2019](#). The Bill proposes banning mulesing and mandating pain relief for certain livestock procedures. Submissions closed 31 July 2020.
- Queensland will lead the national development of the [Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Livestock at Processing Establishments](#) (including horses);
- Development of the [Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry](#).

Animal welfare and Business Continuity Plans for abattoirs in response to a human health pandemic

Pater Day updated members on work done by SafeWork NSW, NSW Health and NSW DPI to develop the [Animal Welfare and Business Continuity Self-Assessment Checklist](#). This tool is to assist the meat processing industry prepare for and manage the impacts of a disruption on the business and its processing operations due to an emergency or major event which is out of the control of the business, such as a human health pandemic.

Members discussed the benefits of forward planning to adequately mitigate risks and initiate contingency plans associated with an emergency event. It would allow for a more organised and rapid response leading to a shortened period of reduced capacity and in turn a faster return to normal business production and operations. Members noted that each plant needs to establish and adopt its own contingency arrangements for processing in the event of an unforeseen production anomaly such as a diminished workforce capacity.

Biosecurity Plans and Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) preparedness at abattoirs and knackeries

Peter Day presented a paper on Biosecurity Plans and EAD preparedness outlining that abattoirs are instrumental in the detection of notifiable endemic and EAD events, playing a key role in frontline disease response.

As EAD planning forms a component of a complete Biosecurity Management Plan (BMP) NSW DPI has developed and distributed a generic BMP that is a baseline of activities

needed to maintain compliance with the *Biosecurity Act 2015* in domestic registered abattoirs and knackeries.

To date, red-meat processing plants and knackeries have been targeted for BMP and EAD preparedness planning and implementation. Plants that process pigs have been prioritised considering African Swine Fever biosecurity risks. With the recent *Salmonella* Enteritidis (SE) outbreaks, the poultry industry has already been active in boosting biosecurity more broadly, including in processing facilities.

Poultry Primary Production Verification

Mark Mackie presented a paper on proposed changes to the poultry primary production verification program. Members noted that due to high compliance rates and the low number of enforcement sanctions issued to the poultry primary production sector, alternative food safety compliance arrangements are being considered which would seek to verify compliance of the parent company farm food safety program to monitor compliance at the farm level.

Members noted that the poultry primary production facilities would continue to be licensed to ensure that tracing can be conducted in the event of an emergency. Members also noted that once draft arrangements are finalised, consultation will take place with all stakeholders to ensure they are fit for purpose and that food safety outcomes on farms are adequately managed through this alternate process.

Biosecurity update

Peter Day verbally updated members on the amendments to the Biosecurity (*Salmonella* Enteritidis) Control which requires every licensed egg business in NSW to undertake mandatory testing for SE. Testing will need to be conducted by 1 October 2020.

International Engagement update

Ian Sanders gave a verbal update to members regarding the recent Wagyu webinar with China designed to help promote Australian capabilities to Chinese importers. With approximately 300 participants the webinar generated many interests in Australian suppliers. Members also noted the recently opened trade pathway to China via the Hainan Island, which recently took its first shipment of Australian live cattle. Members were advised that JBS Australia recently voluntarily suspended its exports to China from its Brooklyn (Melbourne) plant. It is unclear if this means their export licence will be quickly reinstated as opposed to China suspending the licence which can take months to re-instate.

The next meeting of the Meat Industry Consultative Council is to be advised.