

Meat Industry Consultative Council - Summary of meeting outcomes 9 March 2022

The Meat Industry Consultative Council met via video conference on Wednesday 9 March 2022. Specific issues considered at the meeting are outlined below.

Attendees

Meat Industry Consultative Council: Peta Easey (NSW Farmers Association), John Houston (Pepe's Ducks Pty Ltd), Susy Klein (Inghams Enterprises Pty Ltd), Vivien Kite (Australian Chicken Meat Federation), Olivia Pineau (NSW Farmers' Association), Craig Wright (Australian Meat Industry Council).

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Andrew Davies (Manager Local Government Unit (Acting Chair), Eric Davis (Manager Food Policy & Partnerships), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Peter Gray (Senior Veterinary Policy and Project Officer), Alison Imlay (Manager, Food Science), Helen Schaefer (Team Leader, Animal Welfare Policy & Programs), Mark Mackie (Manager Regulatory Operations Unit), Melisa Norris (Senior Policy and Programs Officer), Kate Wingett (Senior Veterinary Policy and Project Officer, Animal Biosecurity).

Apologies:

Ben Antenucci, (NSW Farmers' Association), Geneveive Bonello, (Manager, Communications Strategic Programs & Partnerships), Sarah Britton, (NSW Chief Veterinary Officer and Group Director Animal Biosecurity), David Cusack (Manager, Food Standards and Programs), Anthony Pavic (Baiada Poultry Pty Ltd), Lisa Szabo, (Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Petrea Wait, (Veterinary Officer, Animal Welfare Unit), Vaibhav Gole, (Australian Pork Limited), Greg Vakaci (Acting Director Compliance & Integrity Systems).

Industry updates

Nil

Food Safety Compliance Report

Mark Mackie updated the Committee on the meat industry compliance activities for the 2021-22 financial year to date (July to December period). 95% of licensed meat industry businesses recorded an acceptable audit and/or inspection result, an increase of 1% on the previous year's comparable period. 672 audits & inspections were conducted in total, 524 audits were compliant, 31 with some non-compliance, 115 inspections compliant and 2 with some non-compliance. All businesses that failed an initial inspection subsequently demonstrated compliance.

COVID-19 again has had a major impact on audit/inspection statistics.

Overall meat industry compliance is stable. Between July and December 2021, 28 sanctions were issued including 26 improvement notices and 3 penalty notices. 338 kilograms of processed meat products were seized from an unlicensed meat processor in inner Sydney.

Animal Welfare update

Helen Schaefer provided updates on the following matters:

NSW Animal Welfare Reform process

NSW Government released the Draft Animal Welfare Bill in January 2022. This aligns with NSW Government's commitments under the NSW Animal Welfare Action Plan to streamline and modernise NSW's animal welfare legislative framework. The Draft Bill provided a third opportunity for stakeholders and the community to have their say on NSW animal welfare

laws. Submissions closed 28 February 2022.

The Draft Animal Welfare Bill is being reviewed by the Select Committee on Animal Cruelty Laws in NSW. The Committee's interim report is due for release by 30 May 2022 and more information is available on the [NSW Parliament website](#). The NSW Government will consider all feedback before introducing the Animal Welfare Bill into Parliament.

Development of Australian Animal Welfare Standard & Guidelines (S&Gs)

Australian Animal Welfare S&Gs are developed under the direction of an Animal Welfare Task Group, which reports to the Agriculture Senior Officials' Committee. The task group includes representatives from each of the state and territory government departments responsible for animal welfare, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and the New Zealand Ministry of Primary Industries.

A stakeholder advisory group (SAG) is formed to provide advice on the development of S&Gs for each industry or species. The SAG includes veterinarians, animal welfare groups and industry representatives. The draft S&Gs are also released for public consultation, and community views are incorporated in the development of the final S&Gs.

S&Gs are provided to agriculture ministers for noting or endorsement. It is then up to each state and territory government to implement the S&Gs, as appropriate for their jurisdiction.

Review of National Animal Welfare (S&Gs) Poultry

The draft S&Gs and associated regulation impact statement were presented to the national Agriculture Senior Officials Committee (AGSOC) in August 2021. The Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment (DAWE) subsequently invited jurisdictions to provide feedback which will be considered before the S&Gs are finalised and provided to Ministers. The S&Gs and supporting regulatory impact statement (RIS) will be published at www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au once this has occurred.

It will then be up to each jurisdiction to consider how these are implemented. In NSW, this will need to include consideration of the NSW legislative and policy framework and processes.

Poultry (S&Gs) and AGSOC

The feedback given by jurisdictions to DAWE, regarding the Draft Poultry S&Gs and the RIS, is still being considered.

There has been no feedback provided to Departments or AGSOC for consideration as yet.

Processing Establishments

The scientific literature review of processing establishment practices for livestock welfare referred to at the last meeting is being finalised. The first meeting of the stakeholder advisory group for the development of the new S&Gs was held Wednesday 23 February 2022.

More information on national animal welfare policy and regulatory matters, can be found at [Animal Welfare Task Group \(AWTG\)](#)

NSW Response to Japanese Encephalitis Virus (JEV) affecting piggeries

Kate Wingett provided an update on the potentially fatal Japanese encephalitis virus (JEV) outbreak detected in piggeries across NSW, QLD and VIC. Affected piggeries had shown signs of reproductive losses, mainly mummified and stillborn fetuses.

JEV is spread by mosquitoes which have bitten an infected animal. Pigs and some waterbirds are the animals most likely to infect mosquitoes. People and other animals such as horses can be infected by mosquitoes but there is very little evidence of pig-to-pig transfer and no JEV risk associated with consumption of pork products.

Most animals are susceptible to JEV and most do not develop serious disease. A small proportion of infected people and horses will develop clinical signs which can include inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) in people. A national One Health surveillance plan is being developed to identify where JEV is located. Mosquito control is being developed for piggeries and will also include abattoirs and potentially sale yards where pigs go. A NSW control order has been issued for JEV infected and suspect properties, to introduce some movement and mosquito control requirements. More information on mosquito control and JEV surveillance will be provided by health and agriculture agencies.

Human health and safety of people working in higher risk occupations is paramount. NSW Health is currently liaising with Safe Work - mosquito management is set to be a high priority. Piggery workers are also being considered as a high priority group for JEV vaccination. The process of getting vaccination logistics in place for those higher risk groups has started.

https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1391360/Biosecurity-JEV-Control-Order-2022.pdf

How future MICC meetings should be conducted

Eric Davis informed members that a COVID-19 exposure risk assessment has been conducted in relation to future Committee meetings, with both online and face to face meetings considered. The risk assessment for online meetings is low but the only way to ensure a low risk for face-to-face meetings is to implement a vaccination mandate for all Committee members. The Committee agreed that at present meetings will continue online.

Biosecurity update

Mark Mackie provided a verbal update on the February floods situation and the impacts on industry with the expectations that the impacts will be significant for both stock and crop losses. Further updates will be provided at the next meeting, as there will be a better understanding at what impacts have been realised and what is predicted for the future. A return to normal for industry will take some time.

The date for the next meeting of the Meat Industry Consultative Council is 13 July 2022.