

Summary of meeting outcomes

NSW Seafood Industry Forum

11 May 2022

The NSW Seafood Industry Forum met via video conference on 11 May 2022. There were insufficient members present to form a quorum. Issues considered by the Forum are outlined below.

Attendees

NSW Seafood Industry Forum members: Ross Fidden (Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative Ltd), Michael Kitchener (The Master Fish Merchants' Association of Australia), Christina Wong (Sydney Fish Market Pty Ltd).

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Kelly Collins (Manager Compliance Education & Behaviour Change Compliance and Integrity Systems), David Cusack, Acting Chair (Manager Food Standards & Programs), Eric Davis (Manager, Food Policy & Partnerships), Greg Vakaci (Acting Director Compliance & Integrity Systems), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Jeffrey Go (Senior Veterinary Officer Aquatic Biosecurity), Patrick Phillips (Regulatory Operations Manager), Helen Schaefer (Team Leader, Animal Welfare Policy & Programs).

Apologies: Danielle Adams (Clarence River Co-operative), Tricia Beatty (Professional Fisher's Association Inc), Geneveive Bonello, Manager (Communications Strategic Programs & Partnerships), Mark Boulter (Seafood Importers' Association of Australasia Inc), Sarah Britton (NSW Chief Veterinary Officer and Group Director Animal Biosecurity), Mark Mackie (Manager, Regulatory Operations Unit Compliance and Integrity Systems), Melisa Norris (Senior Policy and Programs Officer), Erik Poole (Sydney Fish Market Pty Ltd), Kerry Strangas (The Master Fish Merchants Association), Russell Sydenham (NSW Aquaculture Association Inc), Lisa Szabo - Chair (Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Greg Vakaci (Director, Compliance & Integrity Systems), Melissa Walker (Team Leader Aquatic Biosecurity Policy & Programs), Matthew Wilkinson (De Costi Seafoods (Holdings) Pty Ltd).

Industry updates

Members provided updates on key and emerging issues in their respective industry sectors with the following issues of concern reported:

- The retail sector reported that Mother's Day trading was excellent, but that a downturn in trading is expected due to future economic pressures.
- Sydney Fish Markets reported that their online trading platform is currently in the testing phase.

Food Safety Compliance Report

Pat Phillips updated the Forum on the seafood industry compliance activities for the 2021-22 financial year to date (July to December period). Compliance of the licensed seafood sector remained high with 94% recording an acceptable audit and/or inspection result (a 1% decrease over the previous reporting period). 70 audits & inspections were conducted in total, 3 receiving warning or improvement letters for non-compliance. Lower than usual inspection numbers are due to field officers focusing on the impacts of COVID-19 and NSW floods.

Food safety resources for fishers

Kelly Collins provided an update on work by the Compliance Education & Behaviour Change team to develop food safety resources to help fishers understand their food safety obligations. It was agreed that members would be provided with a copy of the draft food safety resources that include a wallet sized 5-sided Z-card that fishers can keep handy. This highlights key food safety do's and don'ts when catching, storing and delivering their catch, and a one-page poster to be provided to all fishing co-ops or fish receivers in NSW. Members will be given an opportunity to provide comments and feedback to ensure they are fit for purpose before are provided to the DPI Communications team for preparation of final copies.

Animal welfare update

In January 2022, the NSW Government released the Draft Animal Welfare Bill 2022 (Draft Bill), in line with the NSW Government's commitments under the NSW Animal Welfare Action Plan, to streamline and modernise NSW's animal welfare legislative framework.

The Draft Bill was developed following two rounds of public consultation, with almost 6,000 submissions received from stakeholders and community. Most recently, from August – September 2021, the NSW Government sought public feedback on the *NSW Animal Welfare Reform: Discussion Paper*, which set out the key proposals for the Draft Bill. We received over 4,800 responses to the Discussion Paper from a wide range of community members and stakeholders.

The release of the Draft Bill marked the third opportunity for stakeholders and the community to have their say in shaping animal welfare laws in NSW. Submissions closed 28 February 2022.

A parliamentary committee is currently reviewing the Draft Animal Welfare Bill 2022 as part of the Inquiry into Animal Welfare Policy in NSW. The committee's interim report is due by 30 May 2022. More information regarding this inquiry is available at the Parliament of NSW website.

The NSW Government will consider all feedback received on the Draft Bill, prior to its introduction into Parliament.

Information on the animal welfare reform, including a copy of the Draft Bill and consultation outcomes report, is available on DPI website at <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/animals-andlivestock/animal-welfare/animal-welfare-reform>

NSW update on AVG

Jeffrey Go provided an update on Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis (AVG) that was detected through active surveillance in May 2021, in a mix of retail, restaurants and wholesale premises in Sydney. Following the detection and subsequent eradication of AVG in NSW live seafood holding facilities in July 2021, NSW DPI has revised its border movement restrictions to minimise the risk of introduction of AVG into NSW abalone populations. All affected premises were de-stocked and cleaned, and as a result, NSW has now been declared AVG free. AVG has not been detected in wild NSW abalone. The revised movement restrictions and biosecurity conditions are established under the Biosecurity (Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis) Control Order (No 4) 2021.

[Biosecurity \(Abalone viral ganglioneuritis\) Control Order \(No.4\) 2021](#)

Update resilient aquaculture industries in NSW

Jeffrey Go provided an update and presented a paper on the Australian Aquaculture industries that are facing increased biosecurity threats. In the last decade several exotic pathogens have been detected on aquaculture farms on Australia's east coast, including NSW, and often this has led to catastrophic business impacts. Businesses affected by biosecurity threats sometimes do not recover from the impact.

A 2021 social research study conducted with the NSW aquaculture industry found that industry members would like NSW DPI to engage with them more. Industry members were also apprehensive about contacting DPI regarding biosecurity issues as they were unsure of what will happen when they do. Workshops that bring industry and DPI together to share information in a meaningful and transparent way are planned as part of the ongoing program. Resources and tools will be developed and in consultation with industry to increase resilience to disease outbreaks, and awareness and knowledge of biosecurity issues and obligations.

A pilot workshop has been scheduled to take place at the 2022 NSW Oyster Conference at Batemans Bay on 18th May 2022. The aim of the workshop is to engage with oyster farmers and provide information about how DPI partnerships and increased collaboration, between and within industry groups and DPI, can improve information exchange and overall disease preparedness within the industry

QX in Port Stephens update

Jeffrey Go updated members on QX outbreak that was detected in Sydney Rock Oysters from Port Stephens in August 2021. QX has been redetected in multiple western growing areas of Port Stephens during the planned NSW DPI (Department of Primary Industries) 2022 autumn presence / absence surveillance testing of the estuary. There have been multiple reports by leaseholders of mortality events associated with QX. QX has been detected in both wild and cultivated oysters and across multiple size classes across western growing regions of the Port.

The QX risk area status of Port Stephens has been classified as under investigation until results of surveillance sampling in 2022 are finalised with movement controls of oysters and oyster cultivation equipment managed under the Biosecurity (QX Disease) Control Order 2021. https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1331696/biosecurity-qx-disease-control-order-2021.pdf

Port Stephens is the second largest oyster growing estuary in NSW, and presence of QX is having significant impacts during 2022. QX is a seasonally occurring disease of Sydney Rock Oysters (*Saccostrea glomerata*) known to have caused impacts in several estuaries in NSW. QX is caused by a protozoan parasite (*Marteilia sydneyi*). QX leads to progressive destruction of the oyster's digestive gland with affected oysters losing condition and dying throughout autumn and winter.

QX is not a human health issue and has no food safety implications. Further surveillance is under way to determine the extent of QX spread and whether this is due to recent environmental issues.

DPI is continuing discussions with funding bodies, seeking support for required research to help fill important information gaps for the longer-term management of this significant disease. Samples that were collected and processed as part of the initial surveillance have

been stored for further analysis, such as molecular characterisation research into the potential for QX strain variation, if additional funding sources can be obtained.

White spot disease update

Jeffrey Go gave a verbal update to members and informed members that NSW DPI will continue to contribute to the national White spot surveillance program surrounding the Queensland Movement Restriction Area (MRA) by sampling prawns to the south of the MRA from the Richmond River. This is to determine whether there has been spread of White spot outside of the MRA. DPI was to undertake sample collection in autumn of this year. Efforts to collect relevant samples started in March, but severe weather conditions in the Northern Rivers prevented samples from being obtained until late last week.

These samples were sent to EMAI and are to be tested in the near future. The results from those samples will then be considered by the national white spot surveillance working group.

Biosecurity update

Jeffrey Go informed the committee that due to continued rainfall and low salinity in NSW, multiple reports had been received from both recreational and commercial fishers of ulcerated fish consistent with Epizootic ulcerative syndrome (EUS) or 'red spot'. EUS or 'red spot' can affect many species of fish. Red spot is known to be endemic in a number of waterways in NSW. EUS is reasonably common in NSW coastal catchments and has been previously reported in many freshwater catchments and estuaries throughout Australia, including NSW, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Members were informed that the causative agent of red spot does not pose a human health risk and that, consistent with advice from the Food Authority, mildly affected fish are safe for human consumption, but heavily ulcerated fish should not be consumed due to the potential for other pathogens to be present besides EUS.

The date for the next meeting of the NSW Seafood Industry Forum is on 14 September 2022.