

Food Authority

## Summary of meeting outcomes

### Egg Industry Consultative Committee

17 August 2022

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The Egg Industry Consultative Committee met via video conference on Wednesday 17 August 2022. Specific issues considered at the meeting are detailed below.

#### Attendees

**Egg Industry Consultative Committee:** Brett Langfield (NSW Farmer's Association), Peta Easey (NSW Farmer's Association), Peter Matuszny (Manning Valley Free Range Eggs), Rowan McMonnies (Australian Eggs), Paul Pace (Pace Farm), Franko Pirovic (Pirovic Enterprises).

**NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety:** Joanna Blunden (Development Officer (Poultry Eggs), David Cusack - Acting Chair - (Manager, Food Standards & Programs), Eric Davis (Manager, Food Policy & Partnerships), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Mark Mackie (Manager, Regulatory Operations Unit), Helen Shaefer (Team Leader, Animal Welfare Policy & Programs), Greg Vakaci (Director, Compliance & Integrity Systems).

**Apologies:** Geneveive Bonello (Manager, Communications Strategic Programs & Partnerships), Sarah Britton (NSW Chief Veterinary Officer and Group Director Animal Biosecurity), Peter Gray (Senior Veterinary Policy and Project Officer Animal Welfare Unit), Melinda Hashimoto (Egg Farmers of Australia), Melisa Norris (Senior Policy and Programs Officer, Food Policy and Partnerships), Paul Pace (Pace Farm), Byron Stein (Poultry Co-ordinator, Animal Biosecurity), Lisa Szabo (Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority).

#### Industry updates

- Industry members raised concerns about potential biosecurity/food safety management risks arising from exemptions to licensing provisions currently applied to very small layer flocks.
- Industry members continued to express their aspirations that egg licensing and stamping exemptions for very small egg farms be removed as part of the staged repeal and re-make of Food Regulation 2015. These concerns were previously acknowledged by NSW DPI and will be considered during the staged repeal process (now postponed until 2023). It was agreed that David Cusack will provide more information on the staged repeal process to committee members out of session. DPI previously outlined the Better Regulation requirements that must be met in order to impose new regulatory requirements including consideration of industry requests to change regulations for very small egg farms.
- Industry is struggling with supply chain issues and COVID-19 related absenteeism.
- Australian Eggs and Queensland United Egg Producers are working on an Avian Influenza (AI) preparedness project (in light of current overseas outbreaks) to identify regulatory and industry gaps in the event of an AI outbreak. NSW DPI has offered its assistance and experience in terms of scenario writing. The objective is to draw together as much knowledge as possible in the event that a real outbreak occurs.

- Industry advised that Food Standards Australia New Zealand has been provided with a brief on the 'Egg Trace' traceability tool to inform its review of Standard 4.2.5 – primary production and processing standard for eggs and egg products.

### **Food safety program compliance report**

Mark Mackie updated the Committee on the egg industry compliance activities for the 2021-22 financial year. 94% of licensed egg industry businesses recorded an acceptable audit and/or inspection result. A total of 451 audits and inspections were conducted with 10 receiving improvement notices, penalty notices, warning letters or a biosecurity direction for non-compliance. Lower than usual inspection numbers are due to field officers focusing on increased surveillance and monitoring to manage *Salmonella* Enteritidis (SE) and the impacts of COVID-19, NSW/QLD floods and the recent Varroa Mite detection in NSW bees.

### **Animal welfare update**

#### **1. Animal welfare reform**

- The NSW Parliament Standing Committee on State Development reviewed the Draft Animal Welfare Bill 2022 as part of the Inquiry into Animal Welfare Policy in NSW.
- Its interim report was released on 15 June 2022 and contained two recommendations which the Government has three months to respond to.
- The report can be accessed here: [Animal welfare policy in New South Wales](#)

#### **2. Poultry Standards & Guidelines (S&G)**

- In February 2020, an independent panel was asked to revise draft Standards and Guidelines based on feedback from consultation and new poultry science.
- The Panel presented its revised Standards and Guidelines, and an associated regulation impact statement, to the Agriculture Senior Officials Committee (AGSOC) in August 2021.
- The Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) then invited jurisdictions to provide feedback on the revised Standards and Guidelines and regulation impact statement.
- The Panel considered feedback from jurisdictions and provided the Standards and Guidelines and regulation impact statement to AGSOC for consideration on 28 April 2022.
- DAFF has advised their new Minister is being briefed on the Standards & Guidelines and an update will be provided in due course.

#### **3. Processing Establishment Standards & Guidelines (S&G)**

- The Stakeholder Advisory Group is meeting monthly.
- To date, general principles common to all species have been discussed (e.g. interaction with Transport S&Gs, stock handling/ competency, pre-slaughter handling, stunning, management of vulnerable animals, emergency slaughter etc).
- Species-specific issues are now being conducted.
- NSW DPI is a member of the SAG Observers Group (jurisdictional representatives).
- Public consultation on draft documents is expected to occur in late 2022/early 2023.

### **Industry Summary**

Peta Easey presented a paper on industry's aspirations and concerns around egg licensing and stamping exemptions for very small egg farms and the biosecurity/food safety risk this poses to industry. Industry is concerned that the several human SE cases have been detected in NSW, and to date have not been clearly attributed to any licensee/egg producer.

Industry's concern is that very small farms, schools and backyarders are exempt from audits and additional requirements imposed on licensed farms. Industry expressed frustration that licensed farms are held to higher standards than very small operators.

Some industry concerns that were discussed include:

- The recent SE outbreak and resulting introduction of the SE control order across the NSW poultry industry has highlighted the importance of baseline biosecurity measures across all sectors of the industry.
- Ongoing, low level human health cases indicate that there is still a source of SE, potentially as an environmental contaminant in the unregulated section of the industry. The SE Control order and the Small Farm Exemption means that "micro" bird or egg movements are uncontrolled and there is no mandatory SE testing or auditing requirement for these egg producers.
- The online trading of poultry and eggs is an emerging risk due to lack of visibility or transparency leading to significant traceability (food safety and biosecurity) concerns.
- The inability to effectively trace human SE cases back to a source poses a significant risk to industry reputation and consumer trust.
- Australian Eggs has launched 'Egg Trace' which is an easy-to-use traceability tool. All egg producers and traders, regardless of size, have access to reliable and accurate traceability tools.
- There is no formal system to monitor spent hen movements from commercial flocks into backyard flocks (less than 100 birds) posing a significant risk to biosecurity and food safety.

DPI also previously outlined the Better Regulation requirements that must be met in order to impose new regulations. These obligations will apply to the staged repeal of Food Regulation 2015 in relation to all proposals to increase regulatory requirements including industry requests to remove current exemptions applying to very small egg businesses.

It was acknowledged that all stakeholders will have opportunity to make submissions during the staged repeal of Food Regulation 2015 and the re-making of a new regulation.

It was agreed that Lisa Szabo would respond to industry's concerns.

The meeting discussed the review of the FSANZ Primary Production and Processing Standard for Eggs and Egg Products, which will provide a means of reviewing the risk profile of the national flock. This review has commenced and members will be kept informed of developments in this area. David Cusack will liaise with Peta Easey, Melinda Hashimoto, Rowan McMonnies and Brett Langfield to this effect.

### **Biosecurity update**

Nil

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