

Food Authority

Summary of meeting outcomes

Meat Industry Consultative Council - Summary of meeting outcomes 8 March 2023

The Meat Industry Consultative Council met via video conference on Wednesday 8 March 2023. Specific issues considered at the meeting are outlined below.

Attendees

Meat Industry Consultative Council: Ash Cooper, (NSW Farmers' Association), Clair House (Australian Meat Industry Council), Vaibhav Gole (Australian Pork Limited), John Houston (Pepe's Ducks Pty Ltd), Susy Klein (Ingham's Enterprises Pty Ltd), Anthony Pavic (Baiada Poultry Pty Ltd), Georgie Trowbridge (NSW Farmers' Association).

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Elizabeth Braddon (Manager Animal Biosecurity Preparedness Response), David Cusack (Manager, Food Standards and Programs), Eric Davis (Manager Food Policy & Partnerships), Miriam East (Senior Policy & Programs Officer), Kiowa Fenner (Director, Sheep and Goat Traceability), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Mark Mackie (Manager Regulatory Operations Unit), Melissa Norris (Senior Policy & Programs Officer), Jenine Ryle (Senior Policy and Programs Officer), Helen Schaefer (Team Leader, Animal Welfare Policy & Programs), Lisa Szabo – Chair (Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority).

Invited attendees: David Banham (NSW Farmers' Association), Daniel Popovski (NSW Farmers' Association), Charley-Rose Ford (Australian Pork Limited).

Apologies:

Sarah Britton (NSW Chief Veterinary Officer and Group Director Animal Biosecurity) Vivien Kite (Australian Chicken Meat Federation), Greg Vakaci (Director Compliance & Integrity Systems), Mary Wu (Australian Chicken Meat Federation).

Members provided updates on key and emerging issues/concerns:

Members were advised that the Australian Chicken Meat Federation has published a report (Surveillance for antimicrobial resistance in enteric commensals and pathogens in Australian meat chickens 2022). [ACMF AMR Report 2022](#)

Food Safety Compliance Report

Mark Mackie provided an update on the meat industry compliance activities for the period July to December 2022. 95% of licensed meat industry businesses recorded an acceptable audit and/or inspection result, no change in the previous year's comparable period. 1,025 audits & inspections were conducted in total. The Varroa mite emergency response impacted business as usual activities, and this has resulted in the lower audits and inspection numbers. Compliance activities in the meat industry will continue and these activities form a critical part of the risk mitigation measures.

In total there were 55 improvement notices, penalty notices, warning, letters, seizure

notices, prohibition orders, prosecutions, sanctions were issued.

Animal welfare update

Helen Schaefer updated members on the following.

Animal welfare reform

- A parliamentary committee reviewed the Draft Animal Welfare Bill 2022 as part of the Inquiry into Animal Welfare Policy in NSW. The [First Report](#) from the Inquiry into AW Policy in NSW (the Draft Bill) was released 15 June 2022. It contained two recommendations, which the Government responded to in September 2022 - the response can be seen [here](#)
- The NSW Government is considering all stakeholder and community feedback provided on the Draft Animal Welfare Bill through the inquiry process and will work towards developing draft regulations for public and stakeholder feedback – consistent with Recommendation 1 of the Committee’s First report.

Livestock Processing Establishments Standards & Guidelines (S&G)

- The final meeting of the independently facilitated stakeholder advisory group (SAG) was held in December and drafting of the Standards has commenced.
- Public consultation on draft documents is expected to occur mid-2023.

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

Poultry S&G

- The “Australian Animal Welfare Standards & Guidelines for Poultry” were published in August 2022.
- Jurisdictions are currently considering implementation options. Further discussions will occur within the Agriculture Senior Officials Committee (AGSOC), and subsequently by Agriculture Ministers.

Livestock market chain engagement

The Animal Welfare livestock team, in partnership with LLS, is continuing to prioritise engagement with stock agents and saleyard management to promote practical application of welfare legislation and collaboration with relevant agencies and industry groups.

Actions since July 2022 include:

- Nine face to face presentation/discussions with stock agents and other saleyard stakeholders.
- Distribution of more than 50,000 copies of the “Glovebox Guides: biosecurity, emergency animal diseases and preparing livestock for transport” in partnership with NSW Farmers, Local Land Services, RSPCA NSW, Animal Welfare League NSW, Australian Livestock Markets Association, Animal Welfare Institute, Australian Veterinary Association, Agriculture Victoria (border region).
- Streamlining the Animal Welfare Incident Reporting process (AWIRs), liaising with the RSPCA and Department Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry abattoir Veterinarians to improve the quality of reports and to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of investigations into potential animal welfare breaches. Investigations may involve producers, transporters, sale yards or processors depending on the welfare issue identified.
- Development and publication of the fact sheet “Preventing and Managing Ingrown Horns”. Distribution via LLS is imminent.

- Reprinting the DPI book “Welfare scoring nutritionally deprived livestock”.
- A project has commenced to analyse NLIS data from deceased livestock at saleyards to quantify the number of livestock transported to saleyards for sale that do not survive the process. This will inform targeted education programs for relevant stakeholders.
- More than 600 aluminium A1 & A4 “Fit for Transport” and “Bobby Calf Welfare” signs were distributed to NSW saleyards.

Virtual Fencing

- **Current NSW legislation prohibits the use of electric collars on livestock, except when carrying out animal research in accordance with the NSW Animal Research Act 1985.**
- The issue of virtual fencing is currently being considered by the AWTG as directed by AGSOC.
- NSW is a member of the Virtual Fencing subgroup established by AWTG.
- All available information from virtual fence manufacturers, and international and domestic virtual fencing experience and trials is being collated and examined to inform national recommendations on the use of virtual fencing.
- It will be up to each state and territory to consider implementation if in-principle national agreement can be reached on virtual fencing regulation.
- All available evidence is being considered as thoroughly and expediently as possible to ensure any legislative changes that may be recommended are defensible and do not have adverse animal welfare impacts.
- Further updates on national consideration of virtual fencing are available at the AWTG [website](#) under Work Priorities and Communiques.

NLIS Electronic Identification Tags (eID)

Ash Cooper presented a NSW Farmers’ Association paper on concerns about the lifetime of the eID tags and their ability to be changed if the tag stops working, becomes damaged or is lost. Members want greater eID tag longevity and would like DPI to liaise with tag manufacturers to see if longevity can be improved.

Kiowa Fenner advised that accredited eID tag manufacturers must meet National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) requirements such as trial periods in relation to tag durability and retention. Full NLIS tag accreditation involves a three-year process managed by Integrity Systems Company (ISC). A metal tag that will extend longevity compared to current plastic tags is currently undergoing NLIS accreditation.

DPI is working with Total Agricultural Institute to create educational material for producers on how to extend eID tag longevity. This will cover things like storage of tags when not in use and cleaning and disinfection of tags and applicators to reduce the risk of infection which can result in the tag coming free.

It was agreed that eID tag information be included in the winter edition of DPI Foodwise publication.

Updates to Australian Standard 4696: Hygienic Production and transportation of meat and meat products for human consumption (AS 4696)

David Cusack presented a paper on impending updates to the Australian Meat Processing Standard AS 4696. This standard has provided nationally consistent domestic and export meat processing standards for cattle, sheep, pigs and goats industries for over 20 years but post-mortem inspection and carcass disposition procedures in Schedules 2 and 3 of AS 4696 have not been reviewed since the 1980’s.

Changes due to be published soon will bring current post-mortem inspection procedures into line with more contemporary meat inspection procedures in other countries and with the risk-based approach prescribed in Codex Alimentarius. Palpation and incision of lymph nodes risks cross-contamination of surrounding muscle and so should only be used where necessary.

The changes also reflect changes in Australia's domestic disease status and access to better supply chain data via NLIS. The revised standard will be available from Standards Australia.

Staged repeal update

Miriam East presented a paper planning to update and remake the *Food Regulation 2015* before September 2023.

The *Subordinate Legislation Act 1989* requires NSW regulations to remain contemporary through a process called staged repeal, where each regulation is automatically repealed every five years unless a postponement is granted, or the regulation is remade.

Proposed amendments relevant to the meat industry include:

- Updating references to the updated AS4696 which will soon be published.
- Broadening application of the relevant Australian Standards to abattoirs and meat processing plants operating illegally without a licence. This will have no impact on licensed businesses but will provide another enforcement tool for illegal meat businesses.
- Aligning small poultry producers with requirements that apply to larger poultry producers.
- Aligning the licence fee structure for poultry farms with the fee structure of primary production in other food safety schemes based on number of food handlers employed.
- A general increase in fees, charges and penalties in line with the Consumer Price Index.

The Food Authority will alert members of the Meat Industry Consultative Council when the proposed Regulation and Regulatory Impact Statement open for public consultation.

The Food Authority will provide further updates on progress of this work at the next Meat Industry Consultative Council meeting in July.

Biosecurity update

Elizabeth Braddon provided an update on the following:

Japanese Encephalitis Virus (JEV)

As of 28 February 2023, no new cases have been detected. NSW DPI is continuing to work with NSW Health and other experts on surveillance and disease modelling to improve our understanding of JEV as an emerging disease in NSW. Further JEV updates are available at this [Link](#).

The national policy is to closely monitor JEV in domestic animal populations to support public health agencies and the affected industries. More information about national disease response activities is available at outbreak.gov.au

Murray Valley encephalitis (MVE)

MVE virus was detected in Victoria and other south-eastern Australian states in early 2023. With one human case reported in Victoria. The importance of mosquito preparedness was reiterated. More information on NSW Arbovirus Surveillance and Mosquito Monitoring 2022-2023 can be found at this [Link](#).

Lumpy skin disease (LSD) and Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD)

DPI currently has a range of projects in place that focus on key areas such as the destruction of large animals and how the process can be made more humane, safer for everybody involved, including animals and people, and more efficient. These projects are due to be delivered, ideally by 30 June 2023 or shortly thereafter. Work continues large animal disposal planning for mass mortality events and more information can be found at this [Link](#).

Key areas of focus are pyrolysis, composting and alkaline hydrolysis. These are being considered as either proof of concept or further development for practical implementation in the next few months.

Work is also currently underway on the following:

- Training for internal staff, other government agencies, veterinary and para-veterinary communities’.
- Consideration of lay vaccinators and how to ensure they are sufficiently trained and resourced for a vaccination rollout.
- Adequacy of the cold supply chain for FMD vaccine in particular, but this would also apply to LSD vaccination.
- How would mass vaccination be rolled out, where will vaccination hubs need to be established and the logistics involved including what specialised equipment will be needed.
- Response preparedness of documentation and procedures and standard operating procedures so that our staff are ready to act.
- Similar considerations for LSD mRNA vaccine trials with results expected in late 2023.
- DPI are collaborating with LLS to implement a targeted LSD and FMD surveillance program in saleyards. This samples animals that have skin lumps along with other signs of illness (like fever, lethargy) that may be associated with LSD or FMD.
- Since October 2022 there have been 39 FMD and 22 LSD exclusions i.e. all have been negative.

***Salmonella* Enteritidis (SE)**

An SE outbreak has occurred in Queensland. Only one egg producer was affected and the flock has been de-populated. There were no egg movements traced to New South Wales and the affected producer does not supply eggs into NSW. The SE strain detected in the QLD cases is closely related to the 2018-19 NSW outbreak strain (5 SNPs difference). Industry members queried if there were any consideration of national action on SE.

Egg food safety requirements proposal – Proposal P1060

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has commenced a review of egg food safety requirements (Proposal P1060). This will revisit the risk assessment for layer hens to explore SE as a risk factor and consider whether the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code needs to be updated to address this. P1060 will include consultation with state and local government, the egg production and processing industries, retailers

and consumer groups. Egg industry guidance material may also need to be developed to support this work. Further information is available at this [Link](#).

Application A1269 Cultured quail as a novel food

David Cusack provided an update on a recent application to FSANZ (application A1269) by VOW Pty Ltd, a NSW company seeking permission to produce cell-based quail as a food. Public consultation on A1269 is expected to occur in August and again in late 2023. Further information is available at this [Link](#).

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) Update

The European Commission (EU) has established maximum levels for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in certain foods, effective from 1 January 2023, after which EU food businesses cannot sell foods that exceed the maximum PFAS levels. Foods that were lawfully placed on the market before January 1, 2023 are allowed to remain on the market until their date of minimum durability or use-by date.

The maximum levels are laid out in [Regulation \(EC\) 2022/2388](#). This specifically focuses on perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS), perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA), and perfluorohexane sulfonic acid (PFHxS), which are types of PFAS that are or have been widely used for commercial and industrial purposes.

The date for the next meeting of the Meat Industry Consultative Council is 12 July 2023.