

## Meat Industry Consultative Council

The primary objective of the Meat Industry Consultative Council is to contribute to the Food Authority's goal of ensuring the production and sale of meat products that are safe and suitable for human consumption, by advising on policy and practices introduced into provisions of the Meat Food Safety Scheme as it relates to meat and developed through a consultative process. Other government agencies may seek to use the broad expertise and experience of the Council members to obtain advice on matters beyond the scope of the provisions of the meat food safety scheme.

### Summary of meeting outcomes

#### Meat Industry Consultative Council - Summary of meeting outcomes 31 July 2024

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The Meat Industry Consultative Council met via video conference on Tuesday, 31 July 2024. Issues considered at the meeting are outlined below.

#### Attendees

**Meat Industry Consultative Council:** Brian Calderwood (Pepe's Ducks Ltd), Ash Cooper, (NSW Farmers' Association), Vaibhav Gole (Australian Pork), Ian Hayes (Australian Meat Industry Council), Susy Klein (Ingham's Enterprises Pty Ltd), Trevor Moore (Northern Co-operative Meat Company Ltd), Anthony Pavic (Baiada Poultry Pty Ltd), Antonio Sgro (Sgro Enterprises Pty Ltd), William Stacy (NSW Farmers' Association), Verity Price (Australian Chicken Meat Federation).

**NSW DPIRD – Biosecurity & Food Safety:** David Cusack (Manager, Food Standards and Programs), Eric Davis (Manager Food Policy & Partnerships), Kiowa Fenner (Director, Sheep & Goat Traceability), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Jannene Geoghegan (Acting - Manager Animal Biosecurity Preparedness Response), (Mark Mackie (Manager Regulatory Operations Unit), Helen Schaefer (Team Leader, Animal Welfare Policy & Programs).

**Apologies:** Mary Wu (Australian Chicken Meat Federation), Trevor Moore (Northern Co-operative Meat Company Ltd), Melisa Norris (Senior Policy and Programs Officer), Lisa Szabo (Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority).

#### Conflict of interest declaration

Members confirmed that there are no conflicts of interest.

#### Members provided updates on key and emerging issues/concerns:

- The Victorian Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee released its majority and minority reports on the "Inquiry into Pig Welfare in Victoria" from the Victorian Parliament. The majority report includes 18 recommendations. Some of the recommendations highlight work already underway by the industry; however, several recommendations would be detrimental to animal welfare. Australian Pork Limited will work with industry to prepare a robust analysis of the recommendations. The Victorian Government has six months to respond to the report.
- Australian Pork Limited, in collaboration with SunPork Group and NSW DPI, has successfully obtained a Traceability grant from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries

and Forestry to develop the PigPass app for real-time tracking of pig movements. NSW Farmers Association wrote a letter to DAFF supporting applications that support the objectives of NSW Farmers policies relative to traceability.

- NSW Farmers Association is working with DPIRD's reference Group, state farm organisations and peak industry councils to ensure the harmonisation of regulations by other states for mandatory individual eID for sheep and farmed goats. The published NSW mandatory individual eID for sheep and farmed goats regulation has been shared with other state farm organisations to support the objective of national harmonisation of eID regulations.

The Australian Chicken Meat Federation (ACMF) announced the following updates:

- They will host an Avian Influenza Summit on the Gold Coast on 26 and 27 August 2024, bringing together industry and government for this event.
- ACMF will launch its Chicken Meat Sustainability Strategy Framework at Parliament House in August 2024.
- In July, they launched their Industry Workforce Strategy, which aims to attract, retain, and train staff for the poultry industry. This initiative includes efforts related to school curriculums, supporting those returning to work, and assisting individuals with special needs. ACMF is currently in the process of developing a Work Plan for this program.
- ACMF recently reached an agreement with its Queensland members to voluntarily implement a routine surveillance program for Newcastle disease.
- ACMF members have reported some minor issues with the implementation of poultry welfare standards and guidelines into state legislation. These minor issues could have significant implications for its members. ACMF is currently working with NSW DPIRD to rectify these issues before they are implemented into legislation. In addition, ACMF has met with Minister Moriarty and her state counterparts to ensure consistency in the implementation of these standards.

## **1) Matters raised relating to the Meat Food Safety Scheme**

### **Food Safety Compliance Report**

DPIRD Compliance and Integrity Systems Unit provided an update on the meat industry compliance activities for the 2023-24 financial year to date. 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. The focus on the retail meat sector resulted in an increase in audits and inspections towards the end of this period with 3,350 audits and inspections conducted in total. This focus will continue into next year. These activities form a critical part of our risk mitigation measures.

A total of 247 sanctions were issued including improvement notices, penalty notices, prohibition orders, seizure notices, and warning letters.

## **2) Other matters raised**

### **Animal welfare update**

DPIRD Animal Welfare Unit updated members on the following:

### **Australian Animal Welfare Standards & Guidelines for Livestock at Processing Establishments**

- The independent scientific review of processing establishment practices for livestock welfare commissioned by the AWTG was published on the [AWTG website](#) under 'Current work priorities' in March 2022.

- Following 11 meetings with the stakeholder advisory group (SAG) comprised of key national stakeholder organisations, to discuss initial proposals for the S&G, the development of the S&G is progressing well.
- A second draft version has been developed following consideration of around 1000 items of feedback from the SAG and the Australian Meat Regulators Group (AMRG).
- Work is currently being done to produce a regulatory impact analysis.
- A plan for public consultation is underway.
- Finalisation of the S&G is due 2024.

### **Poultry Standards and Guidelines (S&G)**

- The “Australian Animal Welfare Standards & Guidelines for Poultry” were published in August 2022.
- The Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry were endorsed by all agriculture ministers at the AMM meeting in Perth on 13 July 2023.
- Implementation of the standards and guidelines including timeframes will take place at the state and territory level having regard to the specific operational environments of each jurisdiction.
- Jurisdictions are currently considering implementation options.

### **Virtual Fencing**

#### **National work:**

- In March 2021, former Federal Agriculture Minister the Hon. David Littleproud MP wrote to state and territory Agriculture Ministers seeking support for a national examination of the issues related to virtual fencing technology, with a view to harmonising the approach to animal welfare regulation across jurisdictions.
- The Agriculture Senior Officials’ Committee (AGSOC) referred the issue to the Animal Welfare Task Group (AWTG), which accepted the referral.
- The AWTG Virtual Fencing (VF) subgroup, of which NSW is a member, was established in February 2022.
- Animal welfare is primarily a state and territory responsibility, and each jurisdiction has its own regulatory framework to monitor and enforce animal welfare requirements. The AWTG project is about supporting a harmonised approach to optimising consistent animal welfare outcomes, regardless of the type of VF product or where it is used.
- In 2023, the subgroup identified the need to conduct an independent scientific literature review on animal welfare considerations for virtual fencing for livestock. The finalised literature review has been published on the [AWTG website](#).
- Due to competing priorities, meetings of the VF subgroup had been on hold for some time. They recommenced early this year.
- A Stakeholder Reference Group has been established to inform the subgroup’s work to support harmonisation, which will be through the development of an Australian animal welfare guide for virtual fencing. The guide will provide recommendations and guidance to achieving consistent animal welfare outcomes with the use of VF for beef and dairy cattle, based on current science and evidence.
- The completion of the guide does not prevent individual states or territories from mandating requirements to permit the use of VF. Following the guide’s completion, states and territories may use the guide content to adopt into their individual regulatory frameworks as appropriate.

#### **NSW:**

- As indicated above, NSW is participating in a national process within AWTG to assess animal welfare impacts of VF with a view to achieving national harmonisation of regulatory

approaches. Every effort is being made to consider all the evidence available, as thoroughly and as expediently as possible.

- The Virtual Stock Fencing Private Members Bill (*Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Virtual Stock Fencing) Bill 2023*) was introduced by the Hon. Phil Donato (IND) The Bill aims to amend the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (POCTAA) to permit the use of virtual fencing devices.
- The matter was referred to a Legislative Assembly Committee to conduct an inquiry into the following:
  - The animal welfare, biosecurity and community safety implications of permitting virtual fencing.
  - Any benefits, issues or unintended consequences raised by the bill, and whether any amendments may address those.
  - Any other related matter.
- The Committee is to report back to Parliament in October 2024
- The first public hearing of the Inquiry into the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Virtual Stock Fencing) Bill 2024 was conducted on 5 July 2024. NSW DPIRD appeared as witnesses.

**More information** on national animal welfare policy and regulatory matters, can be found at the Animal Welfare Task Group - <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/agriculture-land/animal/welfare/awtg>.

### **Sheep and Goat Electronic Identification Tags (eID)**

The Director of Sheep & Goat Traceability Agriculture & Biosecurity team provided an update on the implementation of mandatory individual eID for sheep and farmed goats within NSW. Scanning and data upload began on 1 July 2024, with all processors required to start scanning and uploading to the database. It is expected that sale yards and producers will come online on 1 January 2025. To date, 23 out of the 26 sale yards have placed purchase orders and have either installed or are awaiting installations. DIPRD is working with the last 3 sale yards to ensure that all sale yards are up and running before 1 January 2025.

### **Closure of AJ Bush & Sons Rendering Plant**

The Committee was updated on the department's response to the closure of AJ Bush & Sons Riverstone rendering facility on 31 May 2024. This closure necessitated the formation of a working group to help affected stakeholders who collectively produce approximately 500 tonnes/week of animal waste products develop alternate waste solutions. Assistance has also been provided in disseminating information and providing support to affected businesses.

### **NSW DPIRD Actions:**

NSW DPIRD's involvement in this issue was to facilitate impacted stakeholders to collaborate on potential solutions.

- In response to the subsequent announcement that the Riverstone facility will cease operations in late May 2024, NSW DPIRD brought together relevant Government agencies for a meeting on 24 April 2024 and subsequently a meeting comprising industry leaders and relevant government agencies on 30 April 2024.
- This meeting agreed that the need for a short-term solution for waste collection, aggregation and disposal was a priority and agreed to establish a working group to assist stakeholders work through options and solutions. The working group has met weekly during May 2024, and fortnightly since.
- The Working group comprises the NSW Environment Protection Authority, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Australian Renderers Association, Australian Meat Industry Council, Australian Pork Limited, Australian Chicken Meat Federation, NSW

Farmers' Association, Local Government NSW, Waste Management & Resource Management Association and Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

- As part of working group discussions, it became clear that land fill (via general red bin waste or a waste provider) will likely be the only disposal option available to butchers in the short term (it is understood that meat processors have largely determined alternate options). This entails a cost for pick up, transport and disposal costs (whereas previously AJ Bush and others undertook these services for free or at low cost).
- The working group drafted a Frequently Asked document to assist affected businesses.
- The Small Business Bureau has also drafted a one-page document to outline the services and support provided by the organisation.
- Both documents have been provided to AJ Bush for circulation to its suppliers. The same information was circulated via the Australian Meat Industry Council membership database (i.e. the peak industry body for independent butchers and meat processors), the NSW Food Authority database (i.e. which covers all licensed butchers), and the Small Business Bureau database which identified five commercial waste management providers that could provide a service.

### **Current situation**

The Remondis waste company has now started collecting meat waste from some of the 1052 meat retailers who were previously serviced by A.J Bush and is looking to invest further by purchasing smaller waste trucks that will help in accessing those properties with difficult access. The conversation that will potentially look at transforming meat waste from a waste product into a co-product through composting has started.

DPIRD, NSW Department of Planning, Business NSW, and NSW Food Authority have set up a pan-departmental group that will encompass the greater Sydney Metropolitan Plan that will be looking a location specific and specific industry needs and flag any future problems such as what caused the A.J Bush rendering plant closure.

### **Avian Influenza Response Update**

The Acting Manager of Animal Biosecurity Preparedness Response provided an update on the department's activities in response to the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza virus (HPAI). Decontamination of affected sites is underway, and the focus is transitioning from general disease surveillance and tracing to fulfilling the requirements for proof of freedom from the virus. Surveillance and testing will continue as part of DPIRD's response to HPAI, including responses to calls to DPIRD's helpline from individuals concerned about sick or dead birds. There have been no further detections of HPAI in NSW.

*The date for the next meeting of the Meat Industry Consultative Council is  
To be advised.*