

Egg Industry Consultative Council

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

Summary of meeting outcomes

Egg Industry Consultative Committee

21 August 2024

The Egg Industry Consultative Committee met via video conference on Wednesday 21 August 2024. Issues considered at the meeting are detailed below.

Attendees:

Egg Industry Consultative Committee: Georgia Byriell (The Henn House), Nadine Davis (Australian Eggs), Grant Dearden (Pace Farm), Melinda Hashimoto (Egg Farmers of Australia), Brett Langfield (NSW Farmer's Association), Peter Matusznyi (Manning Valley Free Range Eggs), Rowan McMonnies (Australian Eggs), Franko Pirovic (Pirovic Enterprises).

NSW DPIRD – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Joanna Blunden (Development Officer - Poultry Eggs), Geneveive Bonello (Manager Consumer and Industry Insights), Jo Coombe (NSW Chief Veterinary Officer and Group Director Animal Biosecurity), Andrew Davies (Chair - Manager Local Government Unit), Eric Davis (Acting - Director, Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Peta Easey (Leader Pigs & Poultry), Melisa Norris (Acting - Manager Food Policy & Partnerships), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Mark Mackie (Manager Regulatory Operations), Anne Mcintosh (Manager Food Incident Response & Complaints), Helen Schaefer (Team Leader Animal Welfare Policy & Programs).

Apologies:

Ashley Cooper (NSW Farmer's Association), David Cusack (Manager, Food Standards & Programs), Lisa Szabo (Acting - Executive Director Biosecurity & Food Safety).

Conflict of interest declaration

Members confirmed that they had no conflicts of interest.

Industry updates

The Australian Chicken Meat Federation hosted a Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza virus (HPAI) summit in August on the Gold Coast. The summit focused on the associated risks that are still a concern for the egg and poultry industries. The industry is collaborating with the government to ensure that Australia remains free of HPAI through increased surveillance of wild birds and improved biosecurity practices.

1) Matters raised relating to the Egg Food Safety Scheme

Egg Farmers of Australia provided an update on the following:

FSANZ - Proposal P1060 - Egg Food Safety & Primary Production Requirements

Egg industry representatives in the Stakeholder Development Advisory Group (SDAG) attended the most recent meeting on 1 August 2024 in Canberra with plans to attend the next meeting scheduled for October 2024.

The industry supports the work by NSW Food Authority and industry through initiatives such as the Australian Eggs Egg Trace and industry and NSW government SE control order to be included in the review to demonstrate the work undertaken since SE events. The different approaches between individual states will help inform consideration of recommendations to increase harmonisation.

Food safety compliance report

DPIRD Compliance and Integrity Systems Unit provided an update on the egg 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. 486 audits and inspections were conducted in total with eight enforcement actions issued. Biosecurity and Food Safety Compliance will focus resources on assisting the industry in fulfilling its SE testing requirements through the collection and reviewing of testing submissions and results.

Compliance activities in the egg industry will continue and these activities form a critical part of the risk mitigation measure.

Salmonella Enteritidis (SE) update

Members were updated on the SE detections in an egg grading facility in Western Sydney and a feeder farm, with all other farms supplying the grading facility testing negative for SE. Arrangements for the destruction and disposal at the infected farm. Both the farm and the grading facility are now under Individual Biosecurity Direction (IBD) restricting egg movements for both sites.

The process of identifying trace properties involved in the supply of eggs to and from the grading facility is ongoing. All relevant properties and food business owners have been provided with the SE Tracing Survey to assess their biosecurity measures. Sampling of properties supplying eggs to the grading facility will commence on August 22, 2024, with two farms from the Hunter region scheduled for sampling the following day. This sampling of other farms will continue into next week.

Some of the larger properties will receive sampling kits to conduct their sampling. A second farm in the Tamworth region has been identified as presumptively positive for SE. The control order drag swabs identified both this farm and the original farm near Lithgow. These properties and the grading facility are now under Individual Biosecurity Direction (IBD) restricting egg movements for both sites.

It was agreed that DPIRD and industry would continue to collaborate and explore implications of SE remaining in the environment and what this means for the industry in future. This work also needs to consider additional measures to reduce the frequency of SE outbreaks. A discussion paper will be presented at the next committee meeting.

2) Other matters raised

Avian Influenza Response Update

The NSW Chief Veterinary Officer and Group Director of Animal Biosecurity provided an update on the department's activities in response to the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza virus (HPAI). Destruction and disposal of infected birds at the affected sites have been completed. Decontamination of the affected sites has begun, and the focus is now transitioning from general disease surveillance and tracing to meeting the requirements for proof of freedom from the virus. This work is now being carried out at a national level, with different jurisdictions working together on the high level strategy for proof of freedom. Surveillance and testing will continue as part of DPIRD's response to HPAI, including responding to calls to the EAD hotline from individuals concerned about sick or dead birds. There have been no further detections of HPAI in NSW.

DPIRD is also exploring ways to amend the zones before completely resolving the infected premises. This can help improve logistics for the industry. DPIRD will present an updated emergency animal disease response plan that will include surveillance and resolution of infected premises at the upcoming Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Disease (CCEAD) meeting.

Work is currently underway to prepare for H5N1, with DPIRD briefing the Secretary for the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, and Water (DCCEEW). DCCEEW has indicated that they will do whatever they can to help in terms of preparedness, particularly focusing on raising awareness about the signs of disease in wild birds.

DPIRD will participate in a national H5N1 Exercise Volare in August and September 2024. The exercise will consist of three scenario-based discussions, exercises, and activities focused on detecting H5N1 high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) clade 2.3.4.4b in Australian wildlife.

These exercises aim to enhance preparedness across agriculture, environment, health portfolios, and respective stakeholders in managing future HPAI outbreaks. Specifically, the exercises will focus on informing the management of HPAI H5 across wildlife, livestock industries, and health.

Simulated scenarios will be carried out through in-person and online discussion-based exercises. Representatives from government, various jurisdictions, key industry, and non-government stakeholders will participate in and contribute to the exercises.

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's involvement in this issue was to facilitate stakeholder collaboration on potential solutions.

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 to help access properties that are difficult to access with larger trucks. 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 and Business NSW are seeking to set up a pan-departmental group to engage with the greater Sydney Metropolitan Plan and look at

location specific and industry specific needs to help avoid future problems of the kind that caused the A.J Bush rendering plant closure.

Animal welfare update

DPIRD'S Animal Welfare Unit presented a paper on the following matters:

Australian Animal Welfare Poultry Standards & Guidelines (S&G)

- The “Australian Animal Welfare Standards & Guidelines for Poultry” were published in August 2022
- At the Agriculture Senior Officials Committee (AGSOC) meeting on 15 June 2023, it was agreed to progress the S&Gs to the Agriculture Ministers’ Meeting (AMM) for consideration.
- The S&Gs were endorsed by all agriculture ministers at the AMM meeting in Perth on 13 July 2023.
- All jurisdictions are currently considering implementation options.
- NSW continues to consult with industry and animal welfare groups to understand the potential impacts of implementation.

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, a draft version of the S&Gs was developed.
- 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.

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

future of SE and its implications for the industry.

The date for the next meeting of the Egg Industry Consultative Committee is to confirmed