

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

10 April 2024

The Egg Industry Consultative Committee met via video conference on Wednesday 10 April 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), Rowan McMonnies (Australian Eggs), Franko Pirovic (Pirovic Enterprises), Georgie Trowbridge (NSW Farmer's Association).

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Joanna Blunden (Development Officer, Poultry Eggs), Jo Coombe (NSW Chief Veterinary Officer and Group Director Animal Biosecurity), David Cusack – Acting (Director, Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority (Chair)), Eric Davis (Manager, Food Policy & Partnerships), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Mark Mackie (Manager, Regulatory Operations), Helen Schaefer (Team Leader, Animal Welfare Policy & Programs), Brendan Sharpe (Senior Veterinary Policy & Project Officer Animal Biosecurity).

Apologies: Anne McIntosh (Manager, Food Incident Response & Complaints), Lisa Szabo (Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Peter Matuszny (Manning Valley Free Range Eggs), Greg Vakaci (Director, Compliance).

Industry updates

- Representatives from the Federal Department of Agriculture (DAFF) are set to visit a NSW liquid egg plant in April 2024. The site visit is to help DAFF officials gain a greater understanding of the plant and process.
- Regarding the new Federal Biosecurity Levy set to commence on 1 July 2024, it was advised that several organisations were granted extensions until 17 April 2024 to provide submissions.
- Australian Eggs held an Innovation Roadshow in Sydney on 18 April 2024.
- The Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza virus (HPAI) and associated risks continue to be of concern for the egg and poultry industries. Industry as a sector is working with government to ensure Australia remains HPAI free through increased surveillance of wild birds and enhanced biosecurity practices. Industry is also keeping a watchful eye on the global situation.
- Members discussed the December 2023 disruption to rendering facilities for the

disposal of meat waste/spent hens around the broader NSW Basin and the risks to meat including poultry and egg industries should this service be discontinued. This included concerns about how suppliers and retailers would deal with waste and spent hens from meat processing and egg industries without access to rendering facilities. Industry representatives commented that rendering provides a useful service for the management of spent hens. The absence of this service will result in the industry considering alternative options for spent hens.

It was agreed that raising the profile of this issue is the best course of action for this Committee. DPI will also seek to engage broader government agencies on this matter.

1) Matters raised relating to the Egg Food Safety Scheme

Food safety compliance report

DPI Compliance and Integrity Systems Unit provided an update on the egg industry compliance activities for the period July to December 2023. 98% of licensed egg industry businesses recorded an acceptable audit and/or inspection result, a 4% rise on the previous year's comparable period. 39 audits and inspections were conducted in total, with 5 improvement notices issued. The lower audit numbers are due to the targeted auditing program, which has just commenced.

Efforts to work with the Industry during the Biosecurity (Salmonella Enteritidis) SE control order and subsequent operational response contributed to an increase in industry Compliance. Compliance activities will focus resources on assisting industry in fulfilling SE testing requirements during audits that will be conducted across the coming year.

The Biosecurity (Salmonella Enteritidis) Control Order (SE)

NSW Farmers Egg Committee agenda paper regarding the Biosecurity (Salmonella Enteritidis) SE control order due to expire on 30 June 2024 – see [SE Enteritidis Control Order 2020](#). Industry expressed concerns that improved biosecurity outcomes achieved across industry may be lost if the order is allowed to expire.

The EICC provided support for maintaining biosecurity/food safety requirements introduced under the control order. There was further support for maintaining these controls through regulation. The EICC further supported the proposed process of moving the controls under the Control Order to the Egg Food Safety Scheme as part of the staged repeal of Food Regulation to preserve their longevity.

The EICC was informed that the process of staged repeal of *Food Regulation 2015* (the Regulation) is ongoing. A consultation draft, once appropriately authorised, will be provided for public consultation. The EICC will be pro-actively informed of the consultation draft.

Primary Production and Processing Standard for Eggs and Egg Product (Standard 4.2.5)

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) develops individual standards in the Food Standards Code which become law if they are approved by the Food Ministers' Meeting - see <https://www.foodregulation.gov.au/activities-committees/food-ministers-meeting>.

FSANZ is currently considering the adequacy of food safety and primary production requirements for eggs and egg products - see <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/food-standards-code/proposals/Proposal-P1060-20-20Egg-Food-Safety-26-Primary-Production-Requirements>. Various EICC members reported engagement in this FSANZ process.

Publication and protection of EICC Members' personal information

Members were advised that government agencies have a requirement to protect the privacy and personal information of the Egg Industry Consultative Committee members. The Food Authority is also required to be transparent about the legislated requirements for consulting with industries regulated under its legislated Food Safety Schemes.

All personal information will only be collected and used with informed consent. Members will be asked via email following this meeting to provide this consent in writing.

2) Other matters raised

Animal welfare update

DPI Animal Welfare Unit gave a verbal update on the following matters:

Poultry Standards and Guidelines (S&G)

- The “Australian Animal Welfare Standards & Guidelines for Poultry” were published in August 2022.
- Agriculture Senior Officials Committee (AGSOC) met on 15 June 2023 and agreed to progress the poultry standards and guidelines to the Agriculture Ministers’ Meeting (AMM) for consideration.
- The Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry were endorsed at the July 2023 AMM meeting in Perth.
- Implementation of S&G, including timeframes, will occur at state and territory level having regard to the specific operational environments of each jurisdiction.
- Jurisdictions are currently considering implementation options.

Livestock Processing Establishments Standards and Guidelines (S&G)

- Targeted consultation of preliminary draft documents has occurred. A revised draft is being completed.
- Public consultation on the draft documents will occur in the first half of 2024.
- A Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) for the S&G is expected to be drafted by the end of 2024.

Renewing the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy

- The Australian Government is seeking input on the renewal of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS).
- The renewed AAWS will provide a national approach to animal welfare and establish Australia’s commitment to modern, sustainable, evidence and science-based welfare practice.
- More information and to have your say visit ‘Renewing the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy’ – <https://app.converlens.com/agriculture-au/australian-animal-welfare-strategy-aaws>. Responses may be submitted up to AEST 4pm, Monday 20 May 2024.

How is the strategy being developed?

- The Australian Government will work closely with state and territory governments, animal industries, non-government organisations and the public to develop the renewed AAWS. There is a commitment that the process will be transparent, collaborative, evidence based, inclusive and culturally appropriate.

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>.

*The date for the next meeting of the Egg Industry Consultative Committee is
21 August 2024.*