

NSW Dairy Industry Consultative Committee

The primary objective of the NSW Dairy Industry Consultative Committee is to contribute to the Food Authority's goal of ensuring the production and sale of Dairy products that are safe and suitable for human consumption, by advising on policy and practices introduced into provisions of the Dairy Food Safety Scheme as it relates to Dairy and Dairy 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 Dairy Food Safety Scheme.

Summary of meeting outcomes

NSW Dairy Industry Consultative Committee

19 June 2024

The NSW Dairy Industry Consultative Committee met via video conference on Wednesday 19 June 2024. Issues considered at the meeting are detailed below.

Attendees:

NSW Dairy Industry Consultative Committee: Stewart Davey (Dairy Australia), Iain Fee (The Riverina Dairy Pty Ltd), Malcolm Holm (NSW Farmers' Association), Ruth Kydd (eastAUSmilk), Chandni Rathi (Norco Foods), Bimi Singh (Bega Cheese Ltd), Andrew Smith (Dairy NSW), Su Zhang (Star Combo Pharma Ltd).

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Eric Davis, (Manager, Food Policy & Partnerships), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Ken Garner (Manager, Dairy Livestock Systems Branch), Mark Mackie (Manager, Regulatory Operations Unit), Helen Schaefer (Team Leader, Animal Welfare Policy & Programs), Lisa Szabo (Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority).

Invited attendees: Elen Welch (NSW Farmers' Association), Ken Garner (Manager, Dairy Livestock Systems Branch NSW DPI)

Apologies: Ashley Cooper (NSW Farmers' Association), David Cusack, (Manager, Food Standards & Programs), Emily Doyle (Acting - Manager, Animal Biosecurity Surveillance & Engagement & Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer), Greg Vakaci (Director, Compliance).

Industry updates

Members provided updates on the following key and emerging issues in their respective industry sectors:

- Milk producers are eagerly anticipating farmgate milk pricing for the 2024 – 2025 season.
- The industry is excited about the upcoming review and development of the Australian Dairy Plan (The Dairy Plan) and is looking forward to potential pathways for the industry. A Dairy Action Plan Implementation Panel (DAPIP) has been established, and the industry is awaiting advice from the Minister regarding the appointment of a dairy and fresh food advocate and the chair for DAPIP.

- Members were informed about the detection of fall armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) (FAW) in grain crops across the Midcoast and North coast of NSW. The importance of following chemical label instructions and adhering to recommended withhold periods was emphasised. [Resistant Management](#)
- Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (AI) and its potential spread to other animal species overseas was discussed. It was noted that AI strains currently in Australia have not spread to other species and do not pose a risk to humans.
- The persistent wet conditions in the southern coastal parts of NSW continue to pose challenges for farmers.
- Supply chain issues are also causing problems for dairy product exporters.

1) Matters raised relating to the Dairy Food Safety Scheme

Food Safety Compliance Report

DPI Compliance and Integrity Systems Unit provided an update on the dairy industry compliance activities for the FY 2023 -2024. 99 % of licensed Dairy businesses recorded an acceptable audit and/or inspection result, a 5% rise compared to the same period in 2022. A total of 297 audits and inspections were conducted during this period, with a combined total of 10 regulatory interventions (improvement notices, prohibition orders, or warning letters). Biosecurity and Food Safety Compliance has moved to an audit and inspection calendar which retains the risk based operational model for all licensed food businesses. The Regulatory Operations team may need to adjust its planned activities and frequency of compliance monitoring depending on emerging risks and strategic priorities. Complaints, inspections, and investigations relating to dairy businesses will continue to be managed on an as needs basis.

2) Discussion Items

A paper was presented by Dairy Australia on its Dairy Export Assurance Program (DEAP) with members noting the following;

DEAP provides an opportunity for the Australian Government, state regulatory authorities and industry to co-design a future focussed regulatory framework for the dairy export industry. The program aims to expand knowledge and export capacity, reduce regulatory burden and streamline dairy sector audit arrangements.

The Commonwealth government has funded the program from 2020 to 2024 with approval for additional \$2 M in FY2024–25. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) has partnered with Dairy Australia to deliver the DEAP.

DEAP focuses on four key project areas.

- Identifying and reducing regulatory hurdles for domestic dairy manufacturers to become exporters. Providing access to better tools and information so they are better prepared for the process. DEAP has developed a modernised suite of resources to help regulators, manufacturers, and exporters better understand and meet the requirements and obligations of registered exporters, including meeting Australian and importing country requirements. The suit of resources includes a welcome pack which provides a one-stop shop of useful information for those wanting to become export registered, and those who are already export registered and want to access new markets. This resource is available on the DAFF web site <https://www.agriculture.gov.au/biosecurity-trade/export/controlled-goods/dairy/welcome-pack>.
- Aligning food safety in regulatory and commercial assurance programs and reducing regulatory and audit burdens.

- Using data to determine risk so that regulatory intervention is based on risk and performance, rather than a one size fits all approach.
- Streamlining export certification through the application of digital solutions.

3) Other matters raised

Animal welfare update

DPI's Animal Welfare Unit updated members on the following:

Livestock Processing Establishments Standards and Guidelines (S&G)

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 key national stakeholder organisations to discuss initial proposals for the S&G, the development of the S&G is progressing well.
- A Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) for the S&G is currently being drafted.
- Finalisation of the S&G is due 2024.

Virtual Fencing

National work:

- In March 2021, Minister Littleproud 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 regulation across jurisdictions.
- The Agriculture Senior Officials' Committee (AGSOC) referred the issue to the Animal Welfare Task Group (AWTG).
- The AWTG Virtual Fencing (VF) subgroup, of which NSW is a member, was established in February 2022.
- The subgroup identified the need to conduct an independent scientific literature review of animal welfare considerations for virtual fencing for livestock. The literature review has been finalised and published on the [AWTG website](#),
- Due to competing priorities, meetings of the VF subgroup had been on hold for some time, but recommenced early this year.
- A Stakeholder Reference Group has been established to explore the documentation required to facilitate nationally harmonised regulation of virtual fencing.
- Subsequent to any national 'in-principle' agreement regarding regulation of virtual fencing, it will then be up to each state and territory to consider implementation within its own animal welfare legislation.

NSW:

- As indicated above, NSW is participating in a national process within AWTG to assess animal welfare impacts of Virtual Fencing with a view to achieving national harmonisation of regulatory approaches. Every effort is being made to consider all available evidence as thoroughly and as quickly 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 aimed to amend the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (POCTAA) to permit the use of virtual fencing devices.
- The Bill as currently worded was defeated, and was referred to the Legislative Assembly Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development for examination of the following:
 1. Animal welfare, biosecurity and community safety implications of permitting virtual fencing.

2. Any benefits, issues or unintended consequences raised by the bill, and whether any amendments may address those.
 3. Any other related matter.
- The first public hearing of the Inquiry into the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Virtual Stock Fencing) Bill 2024 will be conducted on 5 July 2024.
 - NSW DPI has been invited to appear.
 - The Committee will report back to NSW Parliament by 22 October 2024.

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

Virtual Fencing in NSW

NSW Farmers' Association presented a paper outlining its support for the use of Virtual Fencing in NSW. The discussion included environmental, occupational health and safety, and animal welfare benefits of virtual fencing as well as potential for misuse and the need to further develop regulatory requirements for using this technology. Use of virtual fencing is currently restricted and is not appropriate for use as boundary fencing.

Publication and protection of DICC Members' personal information

Members were advised that government agencies have a requirement to protect the privacy and personal information of the NSW Dairy 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.

The date for the next meeting of the NSW Dairy Industry Consultative Committee is 23 October 2024.