

## 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 outcomes

#### Meat Industry Consultative Council - Summary of outcomes 5 March 2025

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The Meat Industry Consultative Council met via video conference on Wednesday, 5 March 2025. Issues considered at the meeting are outlined below.

#### Attendees

**Meat Industry Consultative Council:** Brian Calderwood (Pepe's Ducks Ltd), Raymond Chia (Australian Pork), Ian Hayes (Australian Meat Industry Council), Anthony Pavic (Baiada Poultry Pty Ltd), Lizzie Sarks (NSW Farmers' Association), William Stacy (NSW Farmers' Association), Verity Price (Australian Chicken Meat Federation), Andrew Walsh (Inghams Enterprises Pty Ltd).

**NSW DPIRD – Biosecurity & Food Safety:** David Cusack (Manager, Food Standards and Programs), Andrew Davies (Acting - Director, Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority) (Chair), Eric Davis (Manager Food Policy & Partnerships), Kiri Boad (Project Manager, Sheep & Goat Traceability), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Brendan Sharpe (Acting - Manager Animal Biosecurity Preparedness Response), Jocelyn Todd (Acting - Veterinary Policy & Program Officer), Mark Mackie (Manager Regulatory Operations Unit), Helen Schaefer (Team Leader, Animal Welfare Policy & Programs (Livestock)),

**Apologies:** Ash Cooper, (NSW Farmers' Association), Vaibhav Gole (Australian Pork), Susy Klein (Ingham's Enterprises Pty Ltd), Trevor Moore (Northern Co-operative Meat Company Ltd), Antonio Sgro (Sgro Enterprises Pty Ltd), Lisa Szabo (Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Mary Wu (Australian Chicken Meat Federation), Greg Vakaci (Director, Compliance).

#### Conflict of interest declaration

Members confirmed they had no conflicts of interest.

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

The Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) advised it is currently in discussions with an organisation seeking \$50 million funding from 3rd parties and the Australian Government for alternate organic waste disposal options given the recent closure of the western Sydney rendering plant. The goal is to develop a solution manage fat and bone, but also all other organic waste. This proposal aims to process materials as diverse as oyster shells and cow hides, transforming all organic waste into valuable co-products instead of sending them to landfill. This would result in the creation of feed pellets designated for aquaculture, pork, and

poultry. It's important to note this proposal does not include costs related to land purchase or logistics.

A small trial is currently underway in Victoria and results are being monitored by CSIRO and the University of Western Sydney.

The prospective timeframe to establish the first NSW facility is estimated to be between 12 to 15 months, provided funding is approved. There are plans to launch a marketing campaign within the next two months. Additionally, there is a smaller scale insect-based solution being considered for the long term. While this solution is not currently scalable due to high costs, early successes suggest it could be a promising future option.

Australian Pork Limited (APL) provided the following updates:

- There have been reported cases of Japanese encephalitis virus in Queensland and Victoria, raising concerns for pork producers in New South Wales. There are concerns about availability of vaccines for NSW farm workers and APL is working with NSW Health to ensure its members have access to these vaccines as a top priority.
- The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority has approved APL's request for emergency permits to allow mosquitoes to be controlled on and around farms.
- APL continues to host Pork n Talk events, which provide information about its new strategic plan, the Australian Pork Industry Quality Assurance Program (APIQ), animal welfare etc.
- APL is proposing to develop animal welfare standards and guidelines for the pig industry [*Note – APL has recently written to jurisdictional governments and the Animal Welfare Task Group advising of its proposal*].
- Farm raids by activists continue to cause significant challenges for pig farmers.

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

- The detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H7N8 in Victorian poultry farms is a significant concern for its members.
- In response, the ACMF is enhancing its preparedness capabilities. ACMF has launched an internal research project called the High 5 Project. The initial phase involves an extensive national mapping exercise across to identify all poultry facilities. The project began by focusing on meat chicken farms, categorising them by local government area, size and type (free-range and non-free-range). It then overlaid this data with information from the egg industry to create a comprehensive risk map for the entire sector. Additionally, ACMF incorporated data on large water bodies to help assess risks in each LGA.
- This exercise has proven valuable and highlighted key areas that require increased attention in managing HPAI detections.
- Research has been conducted using liquid nitrogen as a destruction tool. This method is currently being utilised worldwide but is not yet available in Australia. ACMF conducted a trial in February 2025, which yielded promising results and in many respects replicated successful international practices. ACMF has begun collaborating with the states and territories to share its preliminary findings as it prepares a formal report for the Animal Health Committee. Additional trials will commence once current HPAI conditions improve. These upcoming trials will aim to replicate the initial study in different types of facilities to better understand its applicability across the entire industry.

## **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 July – December 2024 period. 95% of licensed meat industry businesses recorded an acceptable audit and/or inspection result, with no change from the previous year’s comparable period. The focus on the retail meat sector resulted in an increase in audits and inspections during the first half of FY 2024-25 with 1,730 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 129 sanctions were issued, including improvement notices, penalty notices, prohibition orders, seizure notices, and warning letters.

### **Operation Cattle Catcher**

The DPIRD Compliance and Integrity Systems Unit presented a paper on Operation Cattle Catcher, initiated by Biosecurity and Food Safety (BFS) to monitor cattle movements between properties in New South Wales (NSW). All movements must be recorded in the National Livestock Traceability System (NLIS) to ensure traceability in case of an emergency animal disease.

The operation targeted individuals moving over 100 cattle without completing the necessary NLIS records. It highlighted issues such as inadequate management practices and a lack of understanding of traceability obligations.

BFS Compliance will continue to enforce NLIS requirements and monitor those who received warning letters to ensure compliance standards improve. During the operation, more than 12,000 cattle movements were reviewed. A total of 33 warning letters were issued, along with 11 penalty notices, amounting to \$11,000 in penalties. Additionally, 44 movements were investigated. Cattle Catcher Operations will continue into next year with a focus on NLIS compliance now that its mandatory individual eID’s for sheep and farmed goats within NSW.

## **2) Other matters raised**

### **Animal welfare update**

DPIRD Animal Welfare Unit updated members on the following:

#### **Australian Animal Welfare Standards & Guidelines (S&G) for Livestock at Processing Establishments**

- Work continues on the new “Australian Animal Welfare Standards & Guidelines for Livestock at Processing Establishments,” which will replace the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animal Livestock at Slaughtering Establishments 2001.
- After considerable consultation with the stakeholder advisory group (SAG) and Animal Welfare Task Group (AWTG) and various target consultations. It is anticipated that the final draft will be released for public consultation later in 2025.

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

- The “Australian Animal Welfare Standards & Guidelines for Poultry” were published in August 2022.
- The Australian Animal Welfare S&Gs for Poultry were endorsed by all agriculture ministers at the Agriculture Ministers’ Meeting in Perth on 13 July 2023.
- G&G implementation and timing will occur at the state and territory level having regard to the specific operational environments of each jurisdiction.
- Jurisdictions are currently considering implementation options.

- The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulation 2025 came into effect on 1 February 2025 and included greater welfare requirements for layer poultry, such as prescribing improved cage requirements for new installations, which are in line with the S&G.

## Virtual Fencing

### National work:

- NSW DPIRD is concurrently participating in a national process with AWTG including as a member of the AWTG Virtual Fencing (VF) Subgroup. The aim is to assess animal welfare impacts of VF with a view to achieving national harmonisation of regulatory approaches.
- Based on current science and evidence assembled via a literature review, consultation with a Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG), and collaboration by the VF Subgroup, a DRAFT 'Australian Animal Welfare Guide for Virtual Fencing' has been developed and provided to the AWTG (in December 2024) for review. Given the rapidly evolving technology, the draft allows for flexibility and can be adopted as desired by states and territories.
- Following consideration of AWTG feedback and consultation with the SRG, the final DRAFT Guide will be presented to AWTG for its endorsement, and subsequent publication on the AWTG webpage: [Virtual fencing technology - DAFF](#). This is expected to occur mid-2025.

### NSW:

- Virtual fencing (VF) is currently prohibited in NSW under (Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment (Virtual Stock Fencing) POCTAA, unless use is conducted in accordance with the Animal Research Act 1985.
- The technology is currently legal in Queensland, Western Australia, Northern Territory and Tasmania.
- Any proposed amendment to NSW animal welfare legislation must consider animal welfare safeguards and best practice.
- 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.
- NSW Government response to Committee Report is due in April 2025.

**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>.

### Remake of the Meat Industry Levy Regulation

The DPIRD Policy and Programs Team presented a paper on the Meat Industry Levy Regulation 2016 (MIL regulation), which is due for automatic repeal on 1 September 2025 (under the *Subordinate Legislation Act 1989*) unless it is remade.

The Food Authority plans to remake the MIL regulation with administrative amendments. Public consultation on the draft will be open for four weeks, expected to commence in May 2025.

The MIL legislation provides for NSW meat producers to contribute to NSW Food Authority food safety efforts which benefit the meat industry as a whole. The MIL is charged annually to Local Land Services ratepayers who pay the animal health rate. The MIL is collected by Local Land Services on behalf of the NSW Food Authority.

The NSW Food Authority has reviewed the current MIL and proposes to maintain the annual MIL contribution at \$5, plus 0.6 cents per stock unit based on the notional carrying capacity for each producer. This contribution from meat producers is considered sufficient to fund anticipated food safety efforts.

The Department proposing the following administrative amendments to reduce red tape, reduce costs and simplify operation of the MIL:

- Change the date for levy notices to be given to meat producers to 31 March - aligns with the date of LLS rates notices.
- Remove unnecessary details from the notification form for changes in occupancy or ownership of land – aligns with LLS.
- Delete the additional \$5 fee for an application to obtain information about levies due and payable on a piece of land - only the LLS fee will be required.
- Clarify that certificates issued by LLS to inform a ratepayer about the MIL levy payable can be in a format designed by LLS.
- Change the Court jurisdiction for meat producers who want to object to the validity of a levy from the District Court to the Local Court. This reduces costs for producers.
- Set the way interest is calculated on overdue levies to align with the method used by LLS.
- Modernise the way property and producer information for the levy book is kept.

The Food Authority will notify members of the Meat Industry Consultative Council when the draft MIL Regulation and Regulatory Impact Statement opens for public consultation. The Food Authority expects the consultation to begin in May 2025.

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

The Sheep and Goat Traceability team provided an update on implementation of mandatory individual electronic ID for sheep and farmed goats in NSW. Scanning and data upload for all sale yards began on 1 January 2025, when all sale yards were required to have their fixed or portable scanning equipment ready. Two NSW sale yards are yet to become operational. There have been 82 sales to date in 2025. DIPRD is continuing to assist processors with data management, installation of equipment and software, and handling any minor discrepancies. There are some non-NLIS eID tags and old management tags for mutton-type animals coming through the system. A decline in the number of non-NLIS and old tags is expected over time.

Property to property scanning and eID upload by producers, and eID requirements commenced for lambs or kids born on or after 1 January 2025. This has resulted in a sharp increase in the number of tags purchased, with the tag discount program driving tag sales. Nearly 4.2 million tags have been sold under this program to date since 1 November 2024, with approximately 4.8 million eID tags sold in the previous year from October 2023 to October 2024.

*The date for the next meeting of the Meat Industry Consultative Council is 30 July 2025.*