

## Egg Industry Consultative Committee

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

2 April 2025

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The Egg Industry Consultative Committee met via video conference on Wednesday 2 April 2025. Issues considered at the meeting are detailed below.

### Attendees:

**Egg Industry Consultative Committee:** Georgia Byriell (The Henn House), Grant Dearden (Pace Farm), Brett Langfield (NSW Farmer's Association), Peter Matuszny (Manning Valley Free Range Eggs), Franko Pirovic (Pirovic Enterprises).

### NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) –

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

### Apologies:

Jo Coombe (NSW Chief Veterinary Officer and Group Director Animal Biosecurity), Ashley Cooper (NSW Farmer's Association), Nadine Davis (Australian Eggs), Melinda Hashimoto (Egg Farmers of Australia), Rowan McMonnies (Australian Eggs), Lisa Szabo (Director, Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority).

### Conflict of interest declaration

Members confirmed that they had no conflicts of interest.

### Industry updates

#### **Egg Farmers of Australia (EFA) provided a paper with the following updates:**

Discussions about Avian Influenza response and costs have highlighted the challenges of free-range bird production. Some producers mistakenly think transitioning to free-range is simple, but it requires significant capital investment for suitable land and adherence to stocking density standards. Additionally, business plans based on free-range outcomes must account for servicing these investments.

EFA is up to date with changes to poultry standards under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulation. NSW Farmers continues to update EFA on matters related to the Australian Animal Welfare Poultry Standards and Guidelines (S&G).

EFA aims to ensure continued egg production in remaining cage facilities to help alleviate food security concerns. The Queensland Minister for Agriculture has communicated with counterparts in New South Wales and Victoria to harmonise regulations and prevent inter-state egg dumping. Additionally, state departmental officers met at the Animal Welfare Taskforce Group on 31 March to discuss the implementation of standards.

EFA continues to work with FSANZ in relation to the updated egg standard which will go to public consultation soon.

EFA will continue to advocate for the removal of egg stamping exemptions in jurisdictions where these remain in place (NSW, VIC, TAS, and ACT) to ensure all eggs produced for consumption are stamped and traceable.

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

### **NSW Farmers Association**

NSW Farmers Association presented a paper outlining its aspirations for the adoption and implementation of a *Salmonella Enteritidis* (SE) vaccine regime across the egg industry.

SE outbreaks can significantly impact egg farmers, often forcing them to make difficult decisions, such as depopulating affected birds and temporarily shutting down operations at SE-positive farms. This response typically involves destroying the infected birds, which can be a considerable setback for the entire egg industry. However, countries like the USA and the UK have developed strategies to manage these situations more effectively through measures including vaccination.

In these countries, farmers have a range of options to keep their businesses running, such as testing eggs so that only those without SE can go into the food chain as table eggs. Farmers with SE infected flocks can choose to depopulate, or divert all eggs to pulping (pasteurization), or undertake an egg testing protocol to provide evidence that there is no egg transmission of SE. The latter involves culture of 4000 eggs over 8 weeks at 2-week intervals. This sampling regime would provide a 99% confidence of detecting a single positive egg if the infection level in the eggs was 1%. If no SE is present in this egg sample, the farm returns to normal supply of table eggs, under continued environmental testing. Vaccination programs help farmers stay in production even when there's a threat of SE.

With the recent extension of the NSW SE Control Order, which supports business continuity, there is an opportunity to explore SE vaccination as a way to prevent SE and related foodborne illnesses. The goal here is to create a system that mirrors what's been successful for egg farmers in the USA and UK.

According to the *Salmonella Enteritidis* Vaccine Feasibility report 2025 by Dr Peter Groves, BVSc, MANZCVS PhD commissioned by Australian Eggs (Groves (2025)), the way Australia currently manages farms with positive SE detections isn't quite in line with best practices from other countries, and it can have serious consequences for those affected farms, many of which find it difficult to recover. Australia doesn't currently have an SE vaccine but vaccine candidates are being considered by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines

Authority (APVMA) so there is now a chance to consider a vaccination program that could help protect consumers from SE in eggs.

Groves (2005) also points out that successful control efforts for SE and other Salmonella strains have been seen overseas. For instance, in the UK, there was a significant rise in human cases of salmonellosis linked to SE during the early 1980s, but those numbers started to drop after they started using inactivated SE vaccines in the late 1990s.

Beyond just developing and approving SE vaccine, it's really important to understand the regulatory environment in NSW as this can either help or hinder vaccine development and use. Having a clear picture of these rules will give farmers and vaccine developers the confidence they need to see the potential benefits of vaccination both for their businesses and for public health.

DPIRD has engaged a consultant poultry veterinarian, Dr Peter Gray, to conduct a detailed SE literature review. This review aims to understand the protective effects of a potential SE vaccine, which will help DPIRD assess the policy implications of vaccine availability. Additionally, it will explore what implementation of an SE vaccination program would look like for the egg industry and identify other supporting measures that may be needed. DPIRD considers that a national SE management approach is needed including a comprehensive set of supporting measures alongside vaccination. Such an integrated approach should be evaluated as a whole. NSW is currently the only jurisdiction with specific biosecurity requirements to minimise SE and other biosecurity risks. Evaluating the effectiveness of these biosecurity requirements is essential for implementing a comprehensive set of measures beyond just vaccination. We need to assess the adequacy of these measures, particularly in light of a new approach that avoids culling infected flocks and instead focuses on alternative approaches.

There are no legislative barriers preventing the use of a killed SE vaccine in on-farm risk mitigation strategies provided the vaccine has been approved by the APVMA.

### **Food safety compliance report**

DPIRD Compliance and Integrity Systems Unit provided an update on the egg industry compliance activities for the period July to December 2024. 94 percent of licensed egg industry businesses recorded an acceptable audit and/or inspection result, a one percent decrease on the previous year's comparable period. 36 audits and inspections were conducted in total, with two improvement notices issued. Biosecurity and Food Safety Compliance will continue to focus resources on helping the egg industry meet its SE testing requirements through the collection and reviewing of testing submissions and results.

DPIRD recently conducted a review of licensed egg farms to assess compliance with mandatory Salmonella Enteritidis (SE) testing requirements under the [Biosecurity \(Salmonella Enteritidis\) Control Order 2024](#). The review found a very high level of compliance, with no enforcement actions necessary. DPIRD remains committed to ongoing monitoring of all SE Control Order requirements to ensure food safety standards remain consistently high.

### **Salmonella Enteritidis (SE) update**

Members were asked if they supported extending the [Biosecurity \(Salmonella Enteritidis\) Control Order 2024](#) and all members supported this.

Members expressed ongoing concerns and frustrations regarding the lack of oversight of birds

from farm resellers, backyard hens, and online sellers. The egg industry believes more action is needed to mitigate the risks this lack of oversight poses to commercial farms. It was agreed that there is no easy solution to this issue, continued collaboration among all areas of government and industry is necessary to find a practical and effective pathway forward.

## 2) Other matters raised

### 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.
- The S&G were endorsed by the Agriculture Senior Officials Committee in June 2023 and the Agriculture Ministers’ Meeting in July 2023.
- Implementation of the S&G, 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.
- 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 improved cage requirements (in line with the S&G) for new installations. For further information, refer to the [Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulation 2025](#).

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

- New “Australian Animal Welfare Standards & Guidelines for Livestock at Processing Establishments” drafted by Animal Welfare Task Group (AWTG) and led by Qld Department of Primary Industries will replace the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animal Livestock at Slaughtering Establishments 2001 .
- Actions are tabulated below.

DATE	ACTIVITY
2023	Engagement with the animal welfare Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) and other targeted stakeholders, including visits to livestock processors, informed practical and technical aspects for the first draft of the S&G. Substantial feedback on this first draft was provided by members of the SAG and AWTG and targeted stakeholders
2024	Based on feedback from the first draft, a second draft was developed and provided to key stakeholders for feedback. Work commenced to procure a consultant to [prepare a Regulation Impact Analysis.
2025	A third draft is being prepared and is expected to be released for public consultation later this year.

#### Renewed [Australian Animal Welfare Strategy \(AAWS\)](#)

- The [National Statement on Animal Welfare](#) was endorsed by all Agriculture Ministers and published on the DAFF website 13 December 2024.

- The renewed AAWS will be delivered in chapters across six animal groups, with the final strategy expected to be published by mid-2027.
- The six chapters cover:
  - livestock and production animals
  - aquatic animals
  - animals in the wild (native, introduced and feral animals)
  - companion animals
  - animals used for work, sport and recreation
  - animals used in research and teaching.
- The AAWS will be developed in consultation with stakeholders, with AWTG continuing its governance role.

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

*The date for the next meeting of the Egg Industry Consultative Committee is  
20 August 2025.*