

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

18 March 2026

The Meat Industry Consultative Council met via video conference on Wednesday, 18 March 2026. Issues considered at the meeting are outlined below.

Attendees

Meat Industry Consultative Council: John Houston (Pepe's Ducks Ltd), Susy Klein (Ingham's Enterprises Pty Ltd), Anthony Pavic (Baiada Poultry Pty Ltd), Rhiannon Heath (NSW Farmers' Association), William Stacy (NSW Farmers' Association), Verity Price (Australian Chicken Meat Federation).

NSW DPIRD – Biosecurity & Food Safety: David Cusack (Manager, Food Standards and Programs), Eric Davis (Manager Food Policy & Partnerships (Chair)), Peta Easy (Leader Pigs & Poultry), Kiowa Fenner (Director, Sheep & Goat Traceability), Elizabeth Furguson (Acting Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Brendan Sharpe (Acting Director, Animal Biosecurity), Petrea Wait (Senior Program & Project Officer, Animal Welfare).

Apologies: Brian Calderwood (Pepe's Ducks Ltd), Ash Cooper, (NSW Farmers' Association), Andrew Davies (Acting, Director, Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority) (Chair), Ian Hayes (Australian Meat Industry Council), Patrick Phillips (Acting - Manager Regulatory Operations Unit), Trevor Moore (Northern Co-operative Meat Company Ltd), Antonio Sgro (Sgro Enterprises Pty Ltd), Mary Wu (Australian Chicken Meat Federation).

Conflict of interest declaration

Members confirmed they had no conflicts of interest.

Members provided updates on key and emerging issues/concerns:

The Australian Chicken Meat Federation (ACMF) provided the following updates: ACMF is actively collaborating with all states and territories to implement the new Poultry Welfare Standards. The organisation has provided regulators with updates on the real-world and financial impacts these new standards will have on the industry. In NSW alone, the costs associated with the necessary infrastructure improvements range from approximately \$204

million to \$270 million. Engagement with the relevant departments within DPIRD continues as the implementation of the new standards progresses.

ACMF continues its work around Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Control, including destruction, disposal, and decontamination of poultry facilities, with an industry and government workshop scheduled in NSW for late July 2026, aimed at operationalising the depopulation methods.

ACMF is working in collaboration with Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) on the development of a work plan aimed at reducing the incidence of Campylobacter in chicken meat. Initial discussions between ACMF and FSANZ have been completed, and ACMF plans to provide feedback through a survey. Additionally, ACMF is sharing preliminary information about the industry's current controls for reducing Campylobacter.

Pepe's Ducks Limited provided the following updates:

Pepe's Ducks Limited is investigating the recent importation of raw duck meat, with all information gathered to be passed on to the relevant authorities.

Pepe's Ducks Limited is working closely with a French company that has been vaccinating ducks against Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) for the past three years. Early results from this initiative are looking promising. Pepe's Ducks Limited is hopeful that France's approach may serve as a model for potential adoption across Australia and the EU, as it has been recognised as an effective tool for disease control.

Pepe's Ducks Limited expressed that they are against any free range duck farms supported by the Australian Duck Meat Association (ADMA).

1) Matters raised relating to the Meat Food Safety Scheme

Food Safety Compliance Report

The DPIRD Compliance and Integrity Systems Unit provided an update on meat industry compliance activities for the July to December 2025 period, with 94% of licensed meat industry businesses recording an acceptable audit and/or inspection result, representing a 1% drop from the previous year. A focus on the retail meat sector resulted in increased audits and inspections during the first half of FY 2025-26, with 1,589 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 141 sanctions were issued, including improvement notices, penalty notices, prohibition orders, seizure notices, and warning letters.

2) Other matters raised

Animal welfare update

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

Livestock Processing Standards

Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Livestock at Processing Establishments (the processing standards) will replace the 2002 [Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Livestock at Slaughtering Establishments](#). While this large and complex

project has taken longer than anticipated, the Animal Welfare Task Group (AWTG) remains committed to delivering this important work.

A sub-group of the AWTG is working to address jurisdictional feedback on a third draft of the processing standards in preparation for public consultation in 2025-26 (as per AWTG webpage 6/3/26). Industry is requesting further consultation with before to any drafts being released for public consultation.

Virtual Fencing

The NSW Government amended the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulation 2025* to remove the previous prohibition, legalising the use of GPS-enabled electronic collars for cattle as of December 2025. Virtual fencing for livestock in New South Wales is now legal for commercial use, with the legislative process having concluded in late 2025. The amendment adopts an [Animal Welfare Guide for Virtual Fencing of Cattle](#) and will be supported by an education campaign and a review after 2 years.

Poultry Standards

- DPIRD met with poultry stakeholders in December 2025 to further consult on the Poultry Standards and their implementation into NSW legislation. The Department is currently in the process of considering the details of all the consultation feedback that was received from targeted stakeholders in February 2026. The feedback from all stakeholders will be used to inform future decision-making and implementation of the Standards in NSW. Further consultation will be performed by the Department.

Animal Welfare at Saleyards

- Welfare of animals at saleyards has continued to receive attention via Animal Angel's reports. Further information about their activities can be found on their website: [Saleyards and Animal Markets in Australia](#). DPIRD has produced a Factsheet for saleyards '[Animal welfare at saleyards - Responsibilities for managers and staff](#)'.
- DPIRD has also begun online training for saleyard managers, staff and agents in conjunction with Local Land Services staff. All Rural Crime Prevention Team (RCPT) and RSPCA inspectors have also attended similar online training with a focus on saleyard attendance.

More information on national animal welfare policy and regulatory matters can be found at [AWTG](#)

Drought

- Drought conditions continue across NSW with periods of very dry and extremely hot weather through summer. Approximately 48% of NSW is in one of the NSW Combined Drought Indicator Categories.
- The most likely forecast outcome is for widespread drought conditions to develop across much of NSW by early autumn 2026. The seasonal climate outlook for the March to May 2026 forecast period (issued 5 February 2026) suggests the chance of above median rainfall is low for most of NSW, with a high chance of above median maximum temperatures.
- The most likely outcome is for drought conditions:

- to expand further into western, central and northern NSW (including Walgett, Narrabri, Ivanhoe and Tibooburra regions).
- will likely further decline in parts of eastern NSW (e.g., north of parts of the Hunter and South East regions). with transition to the NSW-CDI Drought Affected category by the end of April 2026.
- will likely ease in the eastern Riverina and Murray, and transition back into the less severe Drought Affected category
- New drought support measures include:
 - Drought relief loans with low-cost finance to help farmers undertake drought resilience projects while also covering operational costs such as feed and transport.
 - Increased funding for the Rural Financial Counselling Service
 - Free feed and water testing through Local Land Services
 - Greater funding to target feral and pest animals

Animal Biosecurity Update

DPIRD's Animal Biosecurity Unit updated members on the following:

- Ongoing work between the NSW Government and industry is focused on enhancing depopulation capacity for poultry emergency animal disease. This initiative involves testing, procedure development, and commissioning to improve capabilities for both shed-level and containerised methods to ensure readiness. Noting the important role that industry play's in preparedness.
- On-farm composting trials in New South Wales, supported by DPIRD, Australian Eggs and industry partners, have successfully composted approximately 65,000 spent hens, meeting crucial microbiological pasteurisation targets. This initiative provides a secure method for managing daily mortalities and emergency animal disease responses while assisting regulatory requirements for resource recovery. DPIRD is collaborating with Australian Eggs to develop written and digital instructional materials for this program. These materials will be made available to all other industries once finalised.
- The NSW Foot Rot Program is currently undergoing a strategic review aimed at updating its approach after extensive stakeholder discussions. The planned changes focus on Greater Flexibility, which will allow producers to have more choices in managing disease, easing the financial burden of strict eradication. Aiming to minimise the stigma of footrot diagnosis and high eradication costs traditionally shouldered by producers. Regulatory measures under the Biosecurity Act 2015 will be applied as needed, especially for high-risk cases. DPIRD and LLS will continue offering extension services, advice, and support to improve animal welfare and reduce productivity losses. Implementation by 2026. The new framework is set to be approved and implemented by the end of 2026 to better align with industry needs.

DPIRD Agriculture Update

DPIRD's Agriculture Unit updated members on the following:

Alison Stone was appointed as the first statutory NSW Agriculture Commissioner, officially announced in February 2025, to lead initiatives focused on land use, productivity, and reducing

conflicts in regional NSW. One of her key priority areas is the facilitation of a Farm Practices Panel pilot, which was established in December 2025.

The panel aims to improve how routine and acceptable farming practices are communicated and adopted by regulators and industry, while also improving community understanding. The chicken meat industry was selected for the pilot following consultation with the Australian Chicken Meat Federation, Local Government NSW, and NSW Farmers.

The pilot was established for 12 months, chaired by Alison Stone, with members including independent experts in the chicken meat industry experience and land-use planning. The panel focuses on reducing land-use conflicts, updating environmental/planning guidelines, and providing clearer guidance for councils, with a report due to the Minister for Agriculture in August 2026. The pilot serves as a feasibility study for managing intensive agriculture, with potential to expand to other sectors like dairy, pigs, and feedlots.

The date for the next meeting of the Meat Industry Consultative Council is 19 August 2026.