Food Authority

Egg Industry Consultative Committee

The primary objective of the Egg Industry Consultative Committee is to support the Food Authority's goal of ensuring that eggs and egg products are safe and suitable for human consumption. The committee advises on policies and practices developed through consultation for inclusion in the Egg Food Safety Scheme. Other government agencies may also draw on members' expertise and experience for advice on matters beyond the scope of the scheme.

Summary of outcomes

Egg Industry Consultative Committee

16 September 2026

The Egg Industry Consultative Committee met via video conference on Wednesday 16 September 2026. The matters considered are summarised 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 Farmers' Association), Amanda Walker (Australian Eggs).
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 (Director, Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Melisa Norris (Acting Manager of Food Policy and Partnerships), Brendan Sharpe (Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer), Darren Waterson (Team Leader Regulatory Operations).

Apologies:

Jo Coombe (Director Animal Biosecurity), Rowan McMonnies (Australian Eggs), Franko Pirovic (Pirovic Enterprises), Peter Matuszny (Manning Valley Free Range Eggs).

Conflict of interest declaration

Members confirmed that they had no conflicts of interest.

Industry updates

Australian Eggs

Australian Eggs advised that, following industry consultation, changes have been made to the Egg Standards of Australia (ESA) for Rearing and Laying Farms to support certified egg farms in complying with state housing orders introduced to protect flocks from Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1. The updated standards are expected to be rolled out to industry in October.

Australian Eggs also advised that free range egg farmers are updating product labelling to inform consumers of temporary biosecurity measures introduced in response to H5N1. These measures, recommended by state veterinary authorities, may require free range laying hens to be housed indoors or enclosed to reduce contact with wild birds and minimise the risk of disease transmission. More information is available at Australian Eggs.

Egg Farmers of Australia

World Egg Day 2026 will be celebrated on 9 October 2026, with the Egg Farmers of Australia hosting a breakfast event at Parliament House in Canberra to mark both the 30th anniversary of World Egg Day and the 10th anniversary of Egg Farmers of Australia.

Melinda Hashimoto announced her retirement from the NSW Egg Industry Consultative Committee (EICC) after nearly seven years of service, having been appointed on 23 November 2019. She acknowledged the leadership of Brett Langfield, Chair of Egg Farmers of Australia, and the support from NSW Farmers Policy Officer in representing the interests of the egg industry.

Key achievements highlighted during the update included:

- Strengthened Salmonella Enteritidis (SE) management, surveillance and outbreak response coordination.
- Supported the development of risk-based food safety policies through research, modelling and vaccination initiatives.
- Contributed to the review and improvement of the NSW Egg Food Safety Scheme.
- Enhanced collaboration between industry representatives, producers and regulators on compliance and emerging issues.
- Improved industry preparedness for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 through regular biosecurity and surveillance updates.
- Supported industry engagement in national food safety reforms, including FSANZ Proposal P1060.
- Assisted with updates to the Egg Standards of Australia (ESA) assurance programs.
- Facilitated discussion of animal welfare, housing policy, traceability and egg stamping requirements.
- Improved communication and information sharing between industry and government during biosecurity incidents and food safety events.

Egg Food Safety Scheme

Food safety compliance report

The NSW DPIRD Compliance and Integrity Systems Unit provided an update on egg industry compliance activities for the 2025–26 financial year. Of licensed egg industry businesses, 96% recorded an acceptable audit or inspection result. A total of 398 audits and inspections were conducted, and 20 enforcement actions were issued. Biosecurity and Food Safety Compliance will continue to support industry compliance with Salmonella Enteritidis testing requirements by collecting and reviewing testing submissions and results. Ongoing egg-sector compliance activities remain an important part of DPIRD's broader risk mitigation strategy.

DPIRD Biosecurity update

DPIRD's Biosecurity Unit gave a verbal update on the following matters:

- H5N1 avian influenza virus has been detected in wild birds, predominantly among seabird species along the Australian coastline. Both NSW DPIRD and DAFF maintain dedicated H5N1 information webpages, including H5 bird flu in NSW and Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. It was also noted that H5N1 detections are monitored and reported nationally by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and

Forestry, which provides updates on active detections in wildlife and ongoing biosecurity surveillance and response activities.

- DPIRD is developing a heat map to provide industry with a clearer understanding of bird detection and testing activity across different areas. The map is intended to provide greater context and proportionality around surveillance findings, which may assist industry in making informed decisions about housing free-range birds during the current outbreak period, particularly where mandatory control measures are not in place. However, industry should be aware that, as surveillance strategies for wild birds evolve and H5N1 becomes more established, testing priorities may change over time. As a result, there may be limitations in relying on a heat map as a sole indicator of risk, as the distribution and intensity of surveillance activity may not remain consistent. Notwithstanding these limitations, DPIRD is progressing this initiative to provide additional information to support industry decision-making.
- Importantly, there have been no detections of H5N1 in commercial poultry, captive birds or other livestock.
- Surveillance in NSW remains extensive, with more than 8,500 reports received through the EAD Hotline since July. Reporting has transitioned to an event-based approach, consistent with national arrangements, with detections recorded by species and location rather than by individual birds.
- The recommendation for poultry producers to house free-range birds remains in place; however, mandatory housing orders have not been implemented, as the current risk level does not warrant this measure.
- Recent detections included single greater crested terns in Goulburn and Woy Woy. While most detections continue to occur along the coastline, it was noted that sick seabirds can be displaced inland.
- DPIRD continues its preparedness activities relating to depopulation, disposal and decontamination (DDD). A dedicated task group is developing a state disposal strategy, including decision-support tools and site selection criteria. Work also continues on depopulation procedures, safety protocols and workforce training. Industry contractors are expected to play a key role in any future response.

- Planning is also underway for a live-bird depopulation trial in NSW with the chicken meat industry, with ethics approval having been obtained.
- A consultation paper on a proposed risk-based response framework for Salmonella Enteritidis was circulated to industry representatives for feedback. Submissions received will be reviewed and used to inform the development of a national policy proposal for consideration by the relevant national committee, with the aim of achieving a nationally consistent approach wherever possible.

Food Safety Plan 2026–2030

The NSW Food Authority presented its Food Safety Plan 2026-2030, which sets out a modern risk-based approach to food safety and regulation. The plan's purpose is to protect public health by ensuring food is safe from farm to late, while supporting a strong and innovative food industry. Key themes include:

- reducing foodborne illness by targeting high-risk hazards, including Campylobacter and Salmonella, and responding to emerging food safety risks;
- using a coordinated, risk-based and future-focused regulatory approach to prevent harm and respond proportionately;

- protecting consumers while enabling innovation and supporting industry growth; and
- strengthening risk management and driving continuous improvement through collaboration across the food chain.

The next meeting of the Egg Industry Consultative Committee will be held in 2027, with the date to be confirmed.