

Meat Industry Consultative Council

The primary objective of the Meat Industry Consultative Committee 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 Committee members to obtain advice on matters beyond the scope of the provisions of the meat food safety scheme.

Summary of meeting outcomes

Meat Industry Consultative Council - Summary of meeting outcomes 9 April 2024

The Meat Industry Consultative Council met via video conference on Tuesday 9 April 2024. Issues considered at the meeting are outlined below.

Attendees

Meat Industry Consultative Council: Brian Calderwood (Pepe's Ducks Ltd), Vaibhav Gole (Australian Pork), Ian Hayes (Australian Meat Industry Council), Susy Klein (Ingham's Enterprises Pty Ltd), Trevor Moore (Northern Co-operative Meat Company Ltd), Anthony Pavic (Baiada Poultry Pty Ltd), Antonio Sgro (Sgro Enterprises Pty Ltd), William Stacy (NSW Farmers' Association), Mary Wu (Australian Chicken Meat Federation).

NSW DPI – Biosecurity & Food Safety: Jo Coombe (NSW Chief Veterinary Officer and Group Director Animal Biosecurity), David Cusack – (Acting Director, Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority (Chair)), Eric Davis (Manager Food Policy & Partnerships), Jaime Garcia (Secretariat), Mark Mackie (Manager Regulatory Operations Unit), Helen Schaefer (Team Leader, Animal Welfare Policy & Programs),

Invited attendees: Emily Doyle (Manager Animal Bio Surveillance & Engagement), Georgie Trowbridge (NSW Farmers' Association), Ashleigh Wildridge (Industry Liaison Officer - Sheep & Goat Traceability).

Apologies:

Ash Cooper, (NSW Farmers' Association), Brooke Cowan (Industry Liaison Officer - Sheep & Goat Traceability), Lisa Szabo – (Director Food Safety & CEO NSW Food Authority), Greg Vakaci (Director, Compliance).

Members provided updates on key and emerging issues/concerns:

- The council was made aware that there is heightened interest and activity from animal activist groups in relation to the Poultry sector and more broadly.
- The Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza virus (HPAI) and associated risks continue to be of concern for the egg and poultry industry. Industry as a sector is working with government to ensure Australia remains HPAI free through increased surveillance and enhanced biosecurity practices. Industry is also keeping a watchful eye on the global situation.
- The project by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) assessing presence of antimicrobial resistant bacteria in the Australian food supply (poultry, pork and beef commodities) was discussed. It was agreed that this Council will continue to keep a

close eye on developments and await the FSANZ report due later in 2024.

- Members discussed the December 2023 disruption to rendering facilities for the disposal of meat waste around the broader Sydney Basin, Newcastle and the ACT and the risks to meat including poultry and egg industries should this service be discontinued. This included concerns about how suppliers and retailers would deal with waste from meat processing and egg industries without access to rendering facilities.

Members advised that during the 2023 disruption, meat waste had to be transported interstate due to lack of local alternatives. DPI will have further conversations with the industry to investigate this matter more thoroughly and develop a better understanding of the associated risks and alternatives should the local rendering service be discontinued.

It was agreed that raising the profile of this issue is the best course of action for this Council. DPI will also seek to engage broader government agencies on the impact that ongoing urbanisation of Sydney will have on services of this kind in future.

- Australian Pork Limited recently provided a submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Pig Welfare. Submissions closed on 12 January 2024.

1) Matters raised relating to the Meat Food Safety Scheme

Food Safety Compliance Report

DPI Compliance and Integrity Systems Unit provided an update on the meat industry compliance activities for the period July to December 2023. 95% of licensed meat industry businesses recorded an acceptable audit and/or inspection result, no change in the previous year's comparable period. 1,552 audits and inspections were conducted in total. The focus on the retail meat sector resulted in an increase in audits and inspections during the first half of FY2023–24, as a result of shifting to a project based compliance and audit program across all food and biosecurity schemes. This focus will continue into the second half of the year. These activities form a critical part of our risk mitigation measures.

A total of 97 sanctions were issued including improvement notices, penalty notices, warning letters, seizure notices, and prohibition orders.

Publication and protection of Members' personal information

Members were advised that the government agencies have a requirement to protect the privacy and personal information of the Meat Industry Consultative Council 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.

2) Other matters raised

Animal welfare update

DPI Animal Welfare Unit updated members on the following:

Livestock Processing Establishments Standards and Guidelines (S&G)

- Targeted consultation of preliminary draft documents has occurred. A revised draft is being completed.
- Public consultation on the draft documents will occur in the first half of 2024.

- A Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) for the S&G is expected to be drafted by the end of 2024.

Poultry Standards and Guidelines (S&G)

- The “Australian Animal Welfare Standards & Guidelines for Poultry” were published in August 2022.
- At the AGSOC meeting on 15 June 2023, it was agreed to progress the poultry standards and guidelines to the Agriculture Ministers’ Meeting (AMM) for consideration.
- The Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry were endorsed by all Agriculture Ministers at the July 2023 AMM meeting in Perth.
- Implementation of S&G, including timeframes, will occur at state and territory level having regard to the specific operational environments of each jurisdiction.
- Jurisdictions are currently considering implementation options.

Pre-slaughter CO₂ stunning of pigs

- DPI has conducted two scientific literature reviews:
 - on recognised factors that affect pig response to CO₂ stunning to support best-practice, humane outcomes across industry.
 - on what research has been and is currently being conducted in Australia and internationally to identify alternatives to CO₂ stunning that are effective, welfare-positive, and commercially viable.
- These literature reviews have been provided to industry and published on the NSW DPI Animal Welfare website here, under “Other resources”
- A series of factsheets have been developed in collaboration with industry to highlight best practice management for pig welfare: on farms, in transport, and at processing establishments. Factsheets will be released and distributed in the coming weeks.

Virtual Fencing

- NSW is participating in a national process within Animal Welfare Task Group 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 expediently as possible.
- The aim is to ensure any legislative amendments are justified/defensible and will not negatively impact the animals to which it relates.
- The Virtual Stock Fencing Private Members Bill (the Bill) was introduced and second read in the NSW Legislative Assembly by the Hon. Phil Donato (IND) on 8 February 2024, and was debated on 21 March 2024.
- The Bill was defeated as currently worded, 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 Committee will report back to NSW Parliament by 22 October 2024.

Renewing the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy

- The Australian Government is seeking input on the renewal of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS).
- The renewed AAWS will provide a national approach to animal welfare and establish Australia's commitment to modern, sustainable, evidence and science-based welfare practice.
- More information and to have your say visit 'Renewing the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy' – <https://app.converlens.com/agriculture-au/australian-animal-welfare-strategy-aaws>. Responses may be submitted up to AEST 4pm, Monday 20 May 2024.

How is the strategy being developed?

- The Australian Government will work closely with state and territory governments, animal industries, non-government organisations and the public to develop the renewed AAWS. There is a commitment that the process will be transparent, collaborative, evidence based, inclusive and culturally appropriate.

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>.

Sheep and Goat Electronic Identification Tags (eID)

The Industry Liaison Officer - Sheep & Goat Traceability provided an update on the implementation of mandatory individual eID for sheep and farmed goats within NSW. Scanning and data upload is scheduled to start for processors on 30 June 2024 for all sheep and goats with eIDs in NSW.

It was advised that all producers must use eID tags for sheep and goats born from January 2025 onwards and for older sheep from January 2027. Currently, there are 15 active processors identified for sheep and goats, with 7 that have eID equipment installed. 11 have applied for the NSW Sheep and Goat eID Infrastructure Processors Rebate that covers some eID equipment costs. DPI's Sheep and Goat Traceability Team continues to work closely with industry in NSW to help prepare for the commencement and embedding of sheep and goat eID.

*The date for the next meeting of the Meat Industry Consultative Council is
Wednesday 31 July 2024.*