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BSE Food Safety policy

In October 2009, the Federal Government announced a change in Australia's Bovine Spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) food safety policy for imported beef and beef products. The new policy came into effect on 1 March 2010. In March, after considerable community concern, the Government announced that in addition to a food safety assessment by FSANZ, an Import Risk Analysis will be conducted by Biosecurity Australia. The Association developed policy at the 2010 March Executive Council meeting, stating:

That a full Import Risk Analysis and In-Country inspection is undertaken for any prospective importing country, before any importation of beef and by-products can commence. This would allow for any atypical outbreaks that could possibly occur in the importing country. That no beef or beef by-products be imported into Australia without the importing country having the equivalent production protocols that Australian producers are subject to (eg. Full lifetime traceability, residue testing, food safety declarations, etc).

Food Amendment (Beef Labelling) Act:

The *Food Amendment (Beef Labelling) Act 2009* was passed in the NSW Parliament late last year. The Cattle Committee supports the intent of the Act and the concept of truth in labelling, however, the Association has some concerns with the Act. The Committee is concerned that the Minister may be able to regulate the AUS-MEAT language, and believe that any changes to AUS-MEAT should be made by industry. The Committee also has some wording concerns, particularly the inclusion of words such as "budget", "low grade", "low quality" and the impact that the words would have on consumers when purchasing meat.

As a result of industry concerns on the ramifications of the Act, the NSW Food Authority developed the Beef Labelling Reference Group. Richard Chamen, Chairman of the Cattle Committee represents the Association on the Reference Group.

NLIS

The NSW NLIS Cattle Consultative Committee met on 28 April 2010. Bob Barwell and Terry Toohey represented the Association for the Cattle and Dairy Committees. The Association raised a number of concerns including the following:

- Members have expressed concerns that they receive an error message from the database reporting that an animal has been sold, when that animal has been reported as lost or deceased. NLIS Ltd has added the 'inactive' status to the database for tags that have been lost, damaged or associated with an animal that has deceased. Devices with an 'inactive' status remain registered to the PIC, but removed from the active device list on the database, therefore an error message will not be stimulated.
- Inclusion of the purchaser's PIC on the NVD. The Review Group decided that the inclusion of the extra PIC would cause confusion and could be unreliable, therefore they decided not to adopt.

- Activation of tags once placed in the animal's ear. The Review group believed this could be unreliable as it would require an additional step by producers who would be responsible for updating the database to activate the tag.

Effluent

In 2009, the Association together with industry representatives was involved in an effluent workshop. The aim of the workshop was to understand the problem of effluent loss from trucks. At the 2009 Annual Conference, the Association developed policy opposing the mandatory fitting of effluent tanks to trucks. At the workshop there was a unanimous feeling that belly tanks are not the solution as it would cost the industry too much. The workshop identified synergies between good livestock preparation and enhanced animal/product quality and reduced effluent discharge. It was noted there was a need for further research and development into curfew times and their effect on carcass quality and animal welfare. As a result from the workshop, a Working Group was established, Senior Vice President John Ridley represents the Association on this group.

Cattle Ticks

The Cattle Tick Advisory Committee (CTAC) met on Tuesday 4 May 2010, Terry Toohey represented the Association at the meeting. A number of issues were discussed, including the slight increase in the number of tick outbreaks this year compared to 2009. The infested properties are currently involved in an eradication program. CTAC reported that the cameras are all working well, however due to the RTA changing the bypass, the cameras on Sexton Hill will be moved to another location. The CTAC will meet again in August, please forward any tick issues to the Association.

Upcoming meetings

Date	Meeting
18 & 19 May 2010	Cattle Council of Australia
20 – 22 July 2010	NSW Farmers' Association Annual Conference



Get to know your Committee...

Committee Member Peter Dixon-Hughes thinks diversity is key: on his property in the Hunter Valley and in the beef industry more broadly.

Peter runs his family's irrigated property in the Hunter Valley with a focus on stud and commercial, breeding cows, vealer and steer production, as well as hay and opportunity grain production.

Off the farm, he is actively engaged in directly marketing part of his product to the consumer through farmers markets.

"It gives me great contact and familiarity with the consumer and all parts of the production chain. I use these contacts and presentation opportunities to promote this great beef industry for its healthy eating qualities, its environmental attributes, its great long term sustainability and its importance to this nation's economy, says Peter."

One of the industry's ongoing challenges is the burden of red tape and the impact on the farmers hip-pocket.

"I am concerned with the evolving excessive regulation from farm gate to consumer that is always reflected back with reduced prices to the farmer. Regulations are often not enforced evenly across the whole industry even though farmers are receiving less in the anticipation that they are being complied with, particularly toward the consumer end where profit making is a big driver in a climate of low competition."

Peter has been a Member of NSW Farmers' Association Executive Council for approximately seven years.

In 2008, he was also elected to the Cattle Committee bringing with him his background in the production of seed stock and commercial cattle as well as a successful history exhibiting Lincoln Red beef cattle at Sydney and other royal shows regionally and interstate, and says if the industry wants to be adaptable it has to be diverse.

"I am passionate about maintaining as wide a diversity of livestock breeds in our industry as possible," Peter says.

"Breed diversity gives our beef industry the ability to evolve quickly to meet changing market specifications and requirements and enables our beef industry to withstand the effects of possible rapid climate change."

Peter brings to the Committee a commitment to the success of the beef industry on Australian soil.

"I am very focused on the domestic market where my main business and experience lies but am very aware that a strong domestic market is underpinned by a strong export market," Peter concluded.

Progress of 2009 Annual Conference Motions

Motion	Report
<p><u>Annual Conference 2009:</u> That the Association support that the current \$5 per head transaction levy be retained.</p>	<p>The Association actively supported the retention of the \$5 transaction levy. Members of the Cattle Committee submitted letters to the Editor of the Land throughout September and October. Information regarding the levy vote was included in the October 2009 Cattle Update. The Association also put out a media release reminding producers to vote and Richard Chamen had an opinion piece in The Land.</p> <p>At the 2009 MLA, producers voted to retain the levy.</p>
<p><u>Annual Conference 2009:</u> That the Association lobby for compulsory Property Identification Codes for all land carrying livestock.</p>	<p>In 2009, the Association lodged a submission to the review of the <i>Stock Diseases Regulation 2009</i>. In the submission, the Association supported the mandatory uptake of any land carrying livestock to be issued with a Property Identification Code.</p> <p>The Stock Diseases Regulation 2009 commenced on 1 September 2009. The Regulation states the requirement for the owner or occupier of a property on which the following stock are held in captivity must ensure that the property has a property identification code: bison, buffalo, camelids, cattle, deer, equines, goats, pigs, poultry and sheep.</p>
<p><u>Annual Conference 2009:</u> That the Association request that the NSW Department of Primary Industries and the Research and Development Corporations for Wool, Meat and Dairy continue their research on the evaluation of grazing crops using livestock as these are the only research trials in Australia which objectively assess the grazing value of new crop varieties under different environments.</p>	<p>The Association is currently compiling a briefing note outlining research projects that MLA, AWI, DA and DPI fund.</p>
<p><u>Annual Conference 2009:</u> That the Association seek that:</p> <p>A. Any domestic breed society that meets the criteria of the Rare Breed Trust of Australia for critical, endangered or vulnerable have 100% of their society semen/embryo storage, stored at a recognised AI facility, with the cost covered by Federal Government under conservation funding or national heritage funding; and</p>	<p>The Association has written to the Rare Breeds Trust of Australia outlining Association policy on this issue.</p>

B. If the Breed Society folds that genetic material is held in trust by the Federal Government at a site of the choosing in perpetuity.

Annual Conference 2009:

That the Federal Government develops a register of rare domesticated breeds of livestock in Australia.

The Association has written to the Rare Breeds Trust of Australia outlining Association policy on the issue.

Annual Conference 2009:

That the Association opposes the mandatory fitting of effluent tanks to trucks.

The Association has expressed in meetings with the RTA that effluent tanks are not the answer to effluent loss from trucks.

The Association is in the process of developing a brochure, with other industry bodies. The brochure is aimed at educating producers on livestock preparation so that effluent loss from trucks is reduced.

Executive Council Oct 2009:

That the Association supports the current review process for the management of BJD, including the movement towards a risk-based approach for managing BJD and the removal of BJD zoning in NSW.

The Association lodged a submission to the Industry & Investment NSW review into BJD policy. In the submission, the Association supported a move to a more risk-based approach to managing BJD and the removal of BJD zoning.

The results of the review have not been announced.

Executive Council March 2010:

The Association demand that no beef or beef by-products be imported into Australia without the importing country having the equivalent production protocols that Australian producers are subject to (eg. Full lifetime traceability, residue testing, food safety declarations, etc). That a full Import Risk Analysis and In-Country inspection is undertaken for any prospective importing country, before any importation of beef and by-products can commence.

The Association has informed Cattle Council of Australia of the policy passed at the Executive Council meeting in March 2010.

Executive Council Mar 2010:

That the Association insist that Cattle Council Australia and the Red Meat Advisory Council not accept anything less than 100% accuracy in identification at point of sale of any future imported beef.

The Association has informed Cattle Council of the policy passed at the Executive Council meeting in March 2010.