

Senate Rural Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2010
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 01

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Food Division

Topic: Export of meat to India

Proof Hansard Page: 106

Senator Back asked:

Can you tell me what those diseases are, by any chance?

Answer:

India requires certification from Australia for the following sheep diseases: black leg; border disease; ovine epididymitis; ovine brucellosis; caprine arthritis/encephalitis; ovine chlamydiosis; leptospirosis; and contagious agalactia.

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Question: BSG 02

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Plant Division

Topic: Import Beef Policy

Proof Hansard Page: 114-115 (20/10/2010)

Senator HEFFERNAN asked: So with respect to the stuff that the United States is not in a position to provide, could you provide to this committee all that correspondence on the issues that you are raising and that it cannot provide? We would like to know what the direction is. I have to say that I have not changed my mind and I am very grateful that Japan had an outbreak of foot-and-mouth because they were, on the basis of their BSE status, an applicant in the pipeline to Australia. It just shows, for the Australian producers and the Australian farmers, that erring on the side of bloody caution is pretty important. So could we have all the correspondence that you have raised with the USA, through whatever agency, so that we know where you are going and where they see the roadblocks and exactly where we are up to with this, instead of being ambushed.

Dr Grant — I cannot see any reason, but I will take it on notice, if I may, to provide you with that correspondence, from the point of view of the Department of Agriculture. There is correspondence—

Answer:

Since 1 March 2010, there has been some correspondence exchanged between Australian officials and their counterparts in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The correspondence is considered government-in-confidence and the provision of copies of the correspondence would be subject to approval from the United States government.

The intent of correspondence has been procedural in nature, seeking to clarify the information needed as part of the Import Risk Analysis (IRA) and Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) Food Safety Risk Assessment Process. A list of correspondence and a summary of issues raised is as follows:

- 8 April 2010 – Email from Dr Andy Carroll, Australian Chief Veterinary Officer, to the USDA Chief Veterinary Officer advising of the Biosecurity Australia Advice 2010-10 that announced the commencement of the IRA.
- 29 April 2010 – Email from Dr Robyn Martin, General Manager, Animal Branch, Biosecurity Australia, to a senior officer in USDA, outlining the IRA process.
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Question: BSG 02 (continued)

- 10 August 2010 – Email from Dr Andrew Cupit, Senior Manager, Animal Branch, Biosecurity Australia to a senior officer in USDA requesting information on United States animal health status and sanitary controls for beef and beef products.
- 29 October 2010 – Letter from Dr Colin Grant, Chief Executive, Biosecurity Australia, to USDA Chief Veterinary Officer advising that if information on the United States animal health status and sanitary controls for beef and beef products is not provided, work on the IRA would need to be paused (i.e. invoke the ‘stop the clock’ provision as per the IRA regulations).

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Question: BSG 03

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Plant Division

Topic: Imported Beef Import Risk Analysis

Proof Hansard Page: 117 (20/10/2010)

Senator HEFFERNAN asked:

Senator HEFFERNAN—Fair enough. In that process, will you take industry representatives to foresee the human error side of it, rather than the science side of it? As you know, there are a lot of likeable rogues in the beef industry. In fact, there are a lot of stolen cattle going out on ships, live shipments, that belonged to the investors of an MIS scheme. They are just slipping through our system like that, because they do not have to be tagged if they are from property of origin if they go live on a ship out of Darwin—and I can assure you that this a police matter. In much the same way, are you going to insist, by way of principle, that if it is good enough for us to have national livestock identification, birth to death traceability, given the open border system with Canada, given the open border system with Mexico—and, fair enough, people that know nothing about the bush and our beef industry complying with a free trade agreement with the US—that if they do not shut the Canadian and US border traffic of beef they will have lifetime traceability in any beef from cattle that are proposed to be imported into Australia? As a principle, would you agree with that?

Dr Grant—I will refer to the answer I gave at the inquiry. I think we are a bit ahead of ourselves because we have not been over to the United States or to Canada to investigate the situation.

Senator HEFFERNAN—To go back to my original question, will you be providing the opportunity for industry representatives to be part of that delegation?

Dr Grant—I will take that on notice.

Answer:

This question has been raised in Senate Estimates by this committee previously.

The following is reproduced from page 95 of the Hansard record of the Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport legislative committee – estimates on 25 May 2010 (Senate RRA&T 95)

Senator HEFFERNAN — Is it possible for industry reps to be on that trip?

Dr Grant — This is a country-to-country inspection of their system by our—

Senator HEFFERNAN — This is bureaucrat-to-bureaucrat.

Dr Grant — Yes.

Senator HEFFERNAN — No industry.

Dr Grant — No.

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Question: BSG 03 (continued)

Answer:

Inspections of an exporting countries official certification and inspection system are conducted on a government to government level by authorised government officers.

A report of the assessment of the animal health controls of the competent authority will be available for stakeholder comment in the draft report of the IRAs for beef and beef products from the United States, Canada and Japan.

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Question: BSG 04

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Plant Division
Topic: Methyl Bromide Fumigation
Proof Hansard Page: 117 (24/05/2010)

Senator Colbeck asked:

I have just been asked to find some information—in fact, I do not know how far it goes back. I understand that there are a number of protocols for using methyl bromide for both fumigation and unloading or opening of containers, but it has been passed on to me by another member to ask some questions about that particular notice. I am sorry, I cannot give you a date on it. G2010/06, so I presume it is from this year.

Dr O’Connell—I think we would have to take that on notice.

Senator COLBECK—It may have been prompted by the circumstance that occurred out of Burnie this year, where there were some real problems with an export shipment of some logs, and the department may have put out—

Dr O’Connell—This was the timber?

Senator COLBECK—Yes. That was the timber: 5 May 2010.

Dr O’Connell—Yes. We may have to take that on notice, if that is okay?

Answer:

Industry Advice Notice G2010/06 was issued in May 2010, at the industry’s request, to provide increased flexibility in the timing of methyl bromide export fumigations. The notice provides the additional option of fumigation after inspection and covers prescribed grain, seeds, stockfeed, woodchips and mung beans.

More information on broader fumigation protocols is provided in response to question on notice BSG 07.

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Question: BSG 05

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Plant Division

Topic: Myrtle Rust

Proof Hansard Page: 122 and 123 (20/10/2010)

Senator COLBECK asked:

Senator COLBECK—You gave me a very comprehensive briefing about 12 weeks ago and I think there were some seasonal issues around the likelihood of an outbreak at that period of time. Are any of those outbreaks more recent?

Ms Ransom—We have been recording infected properties since we were notified of the disease in late April. We thought that the cooler conditions in winter would slow the infection down and we believe that has happened. We did think that under the cooler conditions it would be more difficult to find the disease—that the rust would not show up as it would under warmer conditions—but we have been picking up infection through winter. There is nothing to indicate at this stage that the amount of infection is increasing exponentially or at a great rate. Most of the infection has been found through tracing activities, particularly with a focus on nurseries. Where plants have been moving between nurseries and we have found an infected site, there has been tracing back to the origin or forward beyond that to see if we can find infected material.

Senator NASH—Perhaps you might take on notice giving the committee a time line of each of the determinations of the outbreaks and where they were.

Ms Ransom—Yes.

Senator NASH—I asked you for a time line of where the observations all occurred. Can you give me a whole time line of everything that has been done from the beginning to now in terms of the decisions that have been made, why they have been made and what has happened? Are there alarm bells going off all over the place about this?

Answer:

Chronology of myrtle rust detections and management decisions from 25 April 2010 to 1 November 2010 is provided at [Attachment A](#).

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Question: BSG 06

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Food Division

Topic: Export Certification Reform Package

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

1. With respect to each of the industry sectors, can you provide an update on the progress and whether or not each of the taskforces will meet all of their targets within the stipulated time?
2. Will all of the taskforces be able to complete their work within their respective budgets as originally set?
3. Will each of the taskforces achieve their targets with respect to costed efficiencies as originally set?
4. What are the costs to AQIS of each of the taskforces? Can you please provide a breakdown of the various costs (e.g. staff costs)?
5. Are these costs being recovered from each of the taskforces' budgets?
6. What stage is the Ernst & Young report into the costs of government at? You said in May the report was with the taskforce for 30 days comment and would then be provided to the Minister? Will this report be released publicly?

Answer:

1. All industry sector projects identified by the ministerial taskforces under the Export Certification Reform Package are on track for completion by the end of June 2011. For example, the Meat Ministerial Taskforce has agreed to a revised meat delivery arrangement. All the other taskforces are expected to agree revised service delivery arrangements for their industries by the end of November 2010. A new electronic system to support the service delivery changes is being built, and is in the prototype phase.
2. All work is anticipated to be completed on budget.
3. No costed efficiencies were originally set.
4. AQIS Export Reform Branch costs to support the reform process are \$1.6 million, of which \$1.1 million is direct employee expenses, and \$0.5 million is indirect employee expenses.
5. Yes.
6. The Meat Ministerial Taskforce has considered the report by Ernst and Young into AQIS fees and charges for meat exports and has decided that additional work is required and that the report would be used as an input to future charging models once implementation of the revised meat service delivery program commences. The Meat Ministerial Taskforce has not provided the report to the Minister and has decided not to make the report public at this stage.

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Question: BSG 07

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Plant Division

Topic: Fumigation Protocols

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

1. What industry consultative process was used to determine the "practicalities " of these new fumigation protocols?
2. Has there been any investigation of the financial impost on industry to meet the "new standards" being introduced?
3. Fans for "aeration". Why is this regulation required now and has not been prior?
4. Within the text of the advice, what is the determination of a "live pest"? (there needs to be clearer clarification on what constitutes a "live pest" as there has been considerable cost to industry when there has been ambiguity over wording and/or interpretation of certain clauses within the Act previously).
5. Can all the "other reasons" for rejection be detailed or where can someone find a list of "other reasons"? (it is too ambiguous to leave it open ended – there should at least be a reference to where registered premises can find the list of other reasons).
6. How does the work of AQIS in developing these new protocols for fumigating with Methyl Bromide fit with that of NSW WorkCover which undertakes licensing and auditing of registered fumigators using Methyl Bromide alongside the state protocol?

Answer:

1. The AQIS Grain Industry Consultative Committee was advised of the new fumigation protocol.
2. No. The new arrangement is optional.
3. The use of fans assists with the effectiveness of the fumigation by rapidly distributing methyl bromide to all parts of the commodity where insects may be present. The new arrangement provides the option of fumigation after inspection. However, the fumigation must be performed according to the AQIS Methyl Bromide Fumigation Standard (the standard) to ensure that effective doses of methyl bromide are maintained within the fumigation chamber. The standard is consistent with best practice principles for the performance of quarantine fumigations.

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Question: BSG 07 (continued)

4. In the context of the industry advice notice, a pest is considered to be an insect. If an insect moves or has the ability to move it is considered to be “live”.
5. No list of rejection reasons exists. Export conditions vary depending on the commodity and importing country requirements. AQIS provides export certification once these requirements are met.
6. The AQIS Methyl Bromide Fumigation Standard provides a technical guide for performing effective quarantine fumigation. The standard requires that fumigators meet all state or territory human safety and environmental requirements, including occupational health and safety requirements, when performing a quarantine and pre-shipment fumigation.

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Question: BSG 08

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Animal Division

Topic: **Claim for reimbursement from AQIS for the export of semen from Australia**

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

I have had a representation from a constituent in Western Australia who has an out of pocket claim against AQIS. The claim results from AQIS refusing to allow two separate consignments of semen straws to be exported in the same flask resulting in additional cost of approx \$3000 for the smaller consignment which was only worth that much.

1. Can AQIS explain why the two consignments were not allowed to be exported in the same flask?
2. When was the claim made to AQIS?
3. Has AQIS responded to the client? When?
4. Does AQIS intend on meeting the additional costs of the client (in part or full)?

Answer:

- 1.- 4. The department received a letter from a claimant on 29 July 2010 requesting compensation of \$2 679.60 for costs incurred in exporting two separate consignments of semen straws. This matter is being investigated by the department under the Scheme for Compensation for Detriment caused by Defective Administration (CDDA).

It would be inappropriate to comment on this matter prior to the finalisation of the investigation.

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Question: BSG 09

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Plant Division

Topic: Myrtle rust

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

1. Could DAFF advise what is the current status of myrtle rust?
2. What work has been undertaken to assess the risk imposed to the Australian forest industry by the outbreak of myrtle rust in NSW?
3. What work has been undertaken to contain and eradicate myrtle rust?
4. For how long does DAFF anticipate work will need to be undertaken at a national level to monitor the disease?

Answer:

1. & 3. Myrtle rust was first detected at a commercial cut flower property in April 2010.

Myrtle rust is a disease that affects the Myrtaceae family of plants, which includes many Australian native species. The disease was first detected in Australia in April 2010 although indications are that the disease may have been present in Australia well before this time.

Actions to suppress myrtle rust (*Uredo rangelii*) are continuing under an interim response plan agreed by governments, key national plant industries and Plant Health Australia. The response is being managed in accordance with the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed, a legally binding agreement between the Australian Government, state and territory governments, a number of plant industry bodies and Plant Health Australia.

The New South Wales Department of Industry and Investment, under the guidance of the myrtle rust National Management Group (NMG) is leading activities to suppress the outbreak of the disease with a view to its potential eradication. The myrtle rust NMG is comprised of the chief executive officers of the national and state/territory departments of agriculture and primary industries across Australia, a representative of the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, representatives of peak industry bodies and Plant Health Australia.

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The group is chaired by the Secretary of the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Dr Conall O'Connell.

Since the first detection of myrtle rust in April 2010, over 600 properties across New South Wales have been inspected.

As at 1 November 2010, the disease has been confirmed on 53 sites in the Gosford/Wyong area and the Sydney basin, with some trace forwards along the mid north coast and south to Nowra. The infected sites are mainly commercial properties with links to the commercial nursery and cut flower industries.

Of the 53 confirmed sites the disease has been identified on a two sites in the natural environment, seven residential properties, three public amenity sites and 41 commercial properties with links to the commercial nursery and cut flower industries. At this time, it is believed that all movement of the disease can be directly associated with human assisted spread such as mechanical transfer from clothing and equipment.

The myrtle rust NMG agreed to an interim response plan for suppressing the disease on 2 July 2010 and to further actions on 17 August 2010. Myrtle rust is a significant plant disease and actions endorsed in the interim response plan recognise its seriousness. Activities to date include removal and destruction of infected plants, fungicide applications in and around infected properties, movement restrictions of plant material out of the quarantine area and ongoing surveillance of surrounding bushland.

In addition to the activities contained within the interim response plan, New South Wales has also put in place state-based measures. The Gosford and Wyong Local Government areas have been declared a quarantine area restricting the movement of susceptible plants and related materials out of the area.

Surveillance work has found evidence of 14 species of plants in the plant family Myrtaceae affected by myrtle rust on the infected properties:

- willow myrtle (*Agonis flexuosa*)
- turpentine (*Syncarpia glomulifera*)
- bush turpentine (*Rhodamnia*)
- bottlebrush (*Callistemon viminalis*)
- round-leaved tea tree (*Leptospermum rotundifolium*)
- water gum (*Tristania neriifolia*)
- 'Tahiti' and 'Fiji' (*Metrosideros collina* "dwarf")

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- thready-barked myrtle, 'Aurora' and 'Blushing Beauty' (*Austromyrtus inophloia* – renamed *Gossia inophloia*)
- lilly pilly (*Syzygium leumannii* x *Syzygium wilsonii*)
- rose apple (*Syzygium jambos*)
- scrub turpentine (*Rhodamnia rubescens*)
- 'Meridian Midget' (*Syzygium australe*).
- *Lophomyrtus* (several red foliage types)
- *Melaleuca* 'Claret tops'

None of these hosts are eucalypts. To date, myrtle rust has not been detected in native forests on any Eucalyptus.

Host testing under controlled greenhouse conditions to determine the relative susceptibility of a wide range of commercially and ecologically significant Myrtaceae species including Eucalypts (this doesn't include field trials) is being undertaken. This will help to assess the potential impact of the disease on commercial production of affected species and the environment.

Early screening of some key commercial forest species through artificial infection of seedlings and cuttings showed that the following species could become diseased:

- Agonis 'Afterdark', wild accession (*Agonis flexuosa*)
- blue-leaved stringy bark (*Eucalyptus agglomerata*)
- Gympie messmate (*Eucalyptus cloeziana*)
- flooded gum (*Eucalyptus grandis*)
- blackbutt (*Eucalyptus pilularis*)
- broad leaved paperbark (*Melaleuca quinquenervia*)

Host testing that has been completed to date by CSIRO under controlled laboratory conditions has identified a number of additional plant species that develop disease under these conditions and are considered to be susceptible. These are:

- Tasmanian blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*)
- narrow-leaved paperbark, narrow-leaved tea tree (*Melaleuca alternifolia*)
- malabar plum, plum rose, rose apple (*Syzygium jambos*)
- giant water gum (*Syzygium francisii*)
- lilly pilly (*Syzygium paniculatum*)
- tea tree (*Leptospermum trinervium*)
- *Agonis flexuosa* wild accession

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- *Melaleuca quinquenervia*
- 'Captain Cook' *Syzigium australe*
- blue-leaved stringybark (*Eucalyptus agglomerata*)
- Geraldton wax (*Chamelaucium uncinatum*)
- one-sided bottlebrush (*Calothamnus quadrifidus*)
- golden penda (*Xanthostemon chrysanthus*).

The following species have been tested and are considered resistant to the disease based on the laboratory work:

- guava (*Psidium guajava*) – Hawaiian and Indian cultivars
- red bloodwood (*Corymbia gummifera*)

This work is continuing and will target local Myrtaceae from the Somersby Plateau including a number of species that are considered to be threatened species.

Regular advice on what is being done to combat the disease can be found on the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's website and the website of the New South Wales Department of Industry and Investment.

2. As outlined in part 1 of this response, surveillance work has found evidence of 14 species of plants in the plant family Myrtaceae affected by Myrtle rust on the infected properties. Commercial species commonly utilised by the forestry industry have been subject to host testing in laboratory conditions where ideal light, temperature and humidity conditions are created to favour infection. These plants, tested under controlled laboratory conditions and considered susceptible, have not yet shown infection in the field. Laboratory susceptibility can only be used as an indication of what may happen in the natural environment.
4. The current surveillance and management program is funded until mid-November 2010 under the guidance of the myrtle rust NMG.

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Question: BSG 10

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Animal Division

Topic: Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Xenophon asked:

1. The Australian Standards for Live Animal Export are enforced at a Commonwealth level by AQIS. Are there state-based authorities capable of undertaking this enforcement?
2. What percentage of shipments does AQIS check to ensure they are conforming to the ASEL?
3. Are the ASEL legally enforceable?
 - a. What penalties are in place for breaches of the ASEL?
 - b. Since the introduction of the ASEL, how many shipments have been penalised for not meeting the standards?
4. Was the ASEL drawn up with input from animal welfare agencies?
5. When is the ASEL due to be reviewed?
6. Do the ASEL take into account variations such as the length of the journey the animals will be undertaking, what weather they are likely to experience and so on, or are they generic standards applied to all cases?
7. How does AQIS ensure that the ASEL is adhered to once the animals have left Australia?
 - a. Are they monitored during the journey?
 - b. Are conditions at their destination taken into account and monitored?
8. What standards do countries importing live animals from Australia have to meet in terms of animal welfare?
9. What studies have been done into how much of the live animal export trade could be replaced with a chilled meat trade?
 - a. What do these studies conclude?

Answer:

1. Some state-based authorities have the capability to enforce the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) but they do not have jurisdictional responsibility for administering the ASEL.
2. Livestock exporters are required to comply with the ASEL as part of their export license under the *Australian Meat and Livestock Industry Act 1997*. For all consignments AQIS seeks attestations supported by documentation from all licensed exporters that the animals have been prepared for export in accordance with the ASEL. These checks occur at multiple stages during the export process. The Department also verifies this system by auditing an annual sample of the licensed exporter's consignment documentation for compliance with the ASEL.

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In addition, for 100 per cent of livestock consignments, AQIS accredited veterinarians and AQIS veterinarians assess whether the animals are fit to travel prior to export.

3. Yes, the ASEL are legally enforceable.
 - (a) Penalties that could be imposed for preparation of animals for export that do not comply with the ASEL include:
 - rejection of some or all of the livestock in the export consignment
 - withholding of export documentation for all or some of the export consignment
 - imposition of more stringent conditions on subsequent export consignments
 - modification, suspension or cancellation of export licenses.
 - (b) The department works with livestock exporters throughout the export process and may apply the above mentioned penalties to ensure ASEL requirements are met. Export certification is only issued when the importing country requirements and relevant ASEL requirements are met.
4. Yes. Dr Hugh Wirth AM, the then RSPCA (Australia) National President was a member of the Livestock Export Standards Advisory Committee. This committee provided advice to the minister through the department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry on the development, revision and implementation of the standards. The RSPCA is represented on the current Livestock Export Standards Advisory Group.
5. A review of the ASEL is planned in 2011.
6. ASEL takes account of variations such as the time of year and the length of the journey. Voyages of less than 10 days are short-haul voyages while voyages of 10 days or more are long-haul voyages. Minimum pen area per head for certain consignments is determined using a heat stress risk assessment model which takes account of expected weather conditions.
7. Each voyage by sea must be accompanied by a stockperson accredited by Livecorp. In addition, higher risk voyages are accompanied by an AQIS accredited veterinarian. This includes voyages to or through the Middle East. AQIS receives reports from the onboard stockperson or veterinarian as prescribed by the ASEL. For livestock exports by air, AQIS receives a report from the exporter as prescribed by the ASEL.
 - (a) Yes, as described above.

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- (b) The end of voyage report requires comments on the discharge operations from the vessel or aircraft. The ASEL does not include standards for post arrival facilities or handling. However, in recognition of the importance of promoting and improving animal welfare practices in importing countries, the Australian Government and industry are investing \$3.2 million over three years to further improve animal welfare and support trade in overseas markets.

The Live Trade Animal Welfare Partnership builds on the Live Animal Trade Program, both of which have funded a range of improvements, including better infrastructure to reduce livestock stress or injury and training for feedlot, abattoir and transport staff in overseas markets.

8. Countries importing Australia's live animals, where they are members of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), are obliged to comply with the OIE animal welfare standards for transporting, handling and slaughter of Australian livestock.

Australia has signed memoranda of understanding (MoUs) on the trade in live animals with ten countries in the Middle East and Africa region. The MoUs require importing countries to unload animals on arrival irrespective of health status and outline the need for importing countries to comply with OIE animal welfare standards.

9. The most recent ABARE-BRS report on Australian live animal exports is: (ABARE) 2008, *Live animal exports: A profile of the Australian industry*, F. Drum and C. Gunning-Trant, Research Report 08.01.

The primary purpose of this report was to provide an overview of the Australian live animal export industry. Some comments were, however, made on the demand for live animal exports from Australia and the scope for substitution between meat and live animal exports. These are as follows:

- p15: "As the demand for live sheep in the Middle East has increased in the past ten years, so too has the demand for sheep meat. The urban populations of many of the main importing countries are increasingly westernised and do not have the same demand for freshly slaughtered meat as do their rural counterparts."
- p24: "A combination of transport and infrastructure logistics in importing countries, together with a range of cultural and religious practices, mean that there is currently a strong preference for live animals rather than chilled or frozen meat. Live animal exports to these markets are not perfect substitutes for exports of beef, veal and sheep meat. If that were the case, the current demand for chilled and frozen halal beef and sheep meat to south east Asia and the Middle East would probably be higher. Indeed, Middle East markets for both live sheep and sheep meat have been growing at similar rates as a result of the growth in urban centres and

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incomes. Regardless of this trend for sheep meat, however, growth in Australia's share of these markets will continue to depend on the trade in live animals. Any restrictions on this trade from Australia are therefore expected to have an adverse impact on the industry as the importing countries would source livestock from competing markets rather than substantially altering their demand for beef, veal or sheep meat."

- p25: "If Australia were to restrict live exports it is likely that there would be significant regional economic effects, particularly on the cattle industry of western and northern Australia and the sheep industry of Western Australia."

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Question: BSG 11

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Plant Division

Topic: Spotted Winged Drosophila (SWD or *Drosophila suzukii*)

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. Has the Spotted Winged Drosophila (SWD or *Drosophila suzukii*) Pest Risk Analysis (known as PRA) been released?
2. If not, why not?
3. If not, with such an unknown, why is the IRA on Chinese apples not halted?
4. Is this an appropriate Level of Protection?

Answer:

1. The draft pest risk analysis report for *Drosophila suzukii* was released on 21 October 2010 for a 60 day comment period – which is the same comment period available for a regulated import risk analysis. The draft report is available from the Biosecurity Australia website.
2. Not applicable (see answer to question 1).
3. Not applicable (see answer to question 1).
4. The draft report recommends that additional measures be applied to fresh fruit and flowers of identified plant species being sourced from areas where *Drosophila suzukii* is known to occur. Biosecurity Australia considers the measures specified in the report will achieve Australia's appropriate level of protection for identified host commodities.

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Question: BSG 12

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Plant Division

Topic: Apples from China

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. Will consignments of Chinese apples be homogenous?
2. If not, doesn't that mean the science used for inspection will not be appropriate?

Answer:

1. Yes, the consignments of apples from China will be homogenous in that each consignment will be sourced from one production area that is subject to the same level of monitoring, surveillance and certification.
2. Not applicable, see answer 1.

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Question: BSG 13

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Plant Division

Topic: Apples from China

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. How can you be sure that the Chinese apples will be from specific provinces?
2. What are the protocols to ensure this?
3. How will these protocols be policed/monitored?
4. Is forgery of certificates a problem in China?

Answer:

1. The systems for exporting apples from specific provinces to Australia are implemented by China's quarantine agency and have been audited and verified by Biosecurity Services Group (BSG).
2. The export orchards and packing houses systems must be audited and registered by China's quarantine agency and the list is provided to BSG for approval.
3. These protocols are monitored through a system of audit by China's General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine and BSG prior to export and through verification inspection by BSG inspectors in China as well as on-arrival verification.
4. BSG has systems in place to verify the authenticity of phytosanitary certificates. This includes BSG officers verifying documentation in China and on arrival in Australia.

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Question: BSG 14

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Plant Division

Topic: Nursery stock imports from fire blight affected countries

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

5. Does China import nursery stock from Fire Blight affected countries, without it being placed in quarantine?
6. Does Australia import nursery stock from Fire blight affected countries, without being placed in quarantine?

Answer:

5. The Chinese Ministry of Agriculture requires that product is sourced from areas certified as free of fireblight. In addition, officers from the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of the People's Republic of China advise that they inspect all material prior to it being moved to approved facilities where it is monitored by the provincial department of agriculture, prior to it being released.
6. Australia allows the importation of nursery stock from fireblight affected countries and applies a range of quarantine measures according to whether the imported nursery stock are hosts of fireblight. Plant species known to be hosts of fireblight require mandatory confinement in a government post entry quarantine facility to observe growth of the plant and screening for evidence of disease. However, plant species that are not known hosts of fireblight may either be released without observation of growth in the post entry quarantine facility (for example tissue cultures) or may be directed for observation of growth in private post entry quarantine facilities.

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Question: BSG 15

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Animal Division

Topic: Outbreak detection, containment and management

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Heffernan asked:

2007 Equine Influenza outbreak cost in excess of \$100m, and multiple Hendra virus disease outbreaks in Australia, there are remaining concerns about Australia's ability to detect and contain exotic plant and livestock disease incursions or manage outbreaks amongst, especially in at-risk rural and regional areas.

1. DAFF maintains 'sentinel' livestock herds in regional Australia to test for incursions of exotic livestock diseases. Are these sufficient and sufficiently tested to adequately detect exotic disease incursions?
2. Is the single remaining diagnostic laboratory operational in Australia, the CSIRO Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL), capable of diagnosing exotic and zoonotic disease incursions before they develop into outbreaks, given the long asymptomatic periods of incubation of some of these diseases?
3. What is the approximate latency between detection of potential diseases in these sentinel herds or privately owned livestock to diagnosis of suspected diseased livestock samples at AAHL, and is this sufficient to prevent outbreaks?
4. Is AQIS capable of containing incursions of dangerous exotic zoonotic diseases (such as Hendra virus) or diseases with material cost to food-producing livestock (such as foot and mouth disease, footrot, Johne's disease, etc) before they develop into outbreaks?
5. What internal quarantine procedures have been implemented since the 2007 EI outbreak to prevent the spread of infection through livestock once an incursion has been detected?
6. Are there any plans to fund and reopen defunct regional veterinary and horticultural diagnostic laboratories to reduce the time lag for diagnosing exotic disease incursions?
7. In the context of the approximate cost of an exotic disease outbreak, what was the financial outlay of maintaining these now-defunct regional veterinary and horticultural diagnostic laboratories?
8. What support, financial or institutional, is being provided to encourage newly trained veterinarians to work in large animal practises in regional and rural agricultural areas?

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Question: BSG 15 (continued)

Answer:

1. The department contributes to maintaining sentinel livestock herds of pigs and cattle used for monitoring certain endemic and exotic diseases of concern. Viruses such as bluetongue, Akabane, bovine ephemeral fever and Japanese encephalitis are endemic in parts of Australia. Northern sentinel cattle herds in the National Arbovirus Monitoring Program are used to facilitate the export of ruminant livestock by helping define the bluetongue transmission zone. These herds are also used to provide early detection of incursions of exotic strains of bluetongue virus. The department's Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy also uses a subset of these sentinel cattle herds to monitor for the presence of exotic pests and diseases including surra, screw worm fly and foot and mouth disease. These programs are maintained under review to help ensure their continuing effectiveness.
2. The Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) is not the only diagnostic laboratory in Australia that maintains diagnostic capability for emergency animal diseases of importance. The Animal Health Committee has established the Laboratories for Emergency Animal Disease Diagnosis and Response network. The network comprises a number of state government laboratories in addition to AAHL with the objective of maintaining an effective laboratory system for the early detection of, and rapid response to, emergency animal diseases. The network also provides technical advice to the Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases – a committee of technical representatives of the Parties to the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA).
3. The priority of despatching diagnostic specimens to AAHL, and the priority for diagnostic testing by AAHL, is determined by the submitting state or territory veterinary authority depending on the assessed likelihood of an emergency animal disease as follows:
 - category 1 - routine, no suspicion of an emergency animal disease (e.g. specimens from pre-export testing, or routine surveillance)
 - category 2 - emergency animal disease exclusion (i.e. an emergency animal disease is within the differential diagnosis, but is of low probability); and
 - category 3 - emergency animal disease diagnosis (i.e. an emergency animal disease is of high or moderate probability and confirmation is sought).
4. The responsibility for containing incursions of animal diseases rests with state and territory governments. Localised outbreaks of disease, such as Hendra virus, are usually managed by the jurisdiction where they occur. State and territory governments have legislation to respond to emergency pest and disease incidents and implement appropriate control measures.

Formal arrangements are in place for the management of nationally significant animal disease incursions. The department, on behalf of the Australian Government, is party to the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement

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Question: BSG 15 (continued)

(EADRA), a legally binding agreement between the Commonwealth, states and territories, a number of livestock industries and Animal Health Australia. The EADRA and other preparedness arrangements, such as the Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan, significantly increase Australia's capacity to prepare for, and respond to, emergency animal disease incursions.

5. State and territory veterinary authorities, in consultation with industry, have longstanding preparedness measures in place to prevent the spread of emergency animal diseases. These measures existed prior to the 2007 equine influenza outbreak and are ongoing. They include early detection, livestock standstill and official quarantine and movement restrictions, and are underpinned by state and territory legislation and further detailed in the Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan. As is the case following an outbreak, this plan was reviewed following the 2007 equine influenza outbreak to reflect lessons learned and to help ensure best practice in responding to future disease incidents.
6. The organisation of veterinary and horticultural diagnostic services in states and territories, including their funding, is a matter for the respective governments of those states and territories.
7. See answer to question 6.
8. The department does not have specific programs to encourage newly trained veterinarians to work in large animal practices in regional and rural agricultural areas. However, the department is working with industry and agricultural representatives, including Australian Year of the Farmer and the Primary Industries Education Foundation to promote the desirability of careers in agriculture, including support services such as veterinary services.

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Question: BSG 16

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division

Topic: Kangaroo exports

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Heffernan asked:

1. What progress is being made to resume kangaroo export agreements with Russia? How soon do you expect exports to Russia to resume?
2. What is the timeframe for a review of Australian export-standard kangaroo processing plants by a Russian audit team, as indicated by AQIS at the last Estimates session on the 25th May 2010?
3. What was the total Government funding to assist with compliance by the kangaroo industry to the new requirements?
4. Kangaroo harvesters are required to undergo re-training under the new requirements to be accredited in 2011. Was this re-training included in any financial support provided by the Government?
5. The new requirements are specified by AQIS as additional requirements for wild game meat intended for export only. Are kangaroo harvesters supplying the local market (i.e. non-export only) supported by Government funding for this re-training?
6. Are kangaroo processing establishments that handle stock for both local and export markets required to comply with the new processing requirements across all stock or just the stock meant for export – if not, are there sufficient controls in place to prevent cross-handling of stock?
7. Are kangaroo harvesters and establishments for product intended for local consumption exempt from the new processing requirements, which include refinement of hygienic procedures to prevent contamination and maintain wholesomeness of the carcasses – if so, why?
8. The new requirements place an emphasis on micro-reporting and recording at every stage of the supply chain. What safeguards are in place to prevent tampering with records at any point in the supply chain to ensure compliance with the new requirements?
9. Is the auditing process capable of ensuring the ability of chillers operated by field depots to adequately refrigerate carcasses within the time specified in all conditions?

Hygiene standards for processing local and export stock

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Question: BSG 16 (continued)

10. Why are there discrepancies between maximum time to refrigeration, and therefore the time between chilling the carcass to a safe temperature, for wild game harvested at day or night, and between wild game and non-game carcasses?

Australian Standards

11. Non-game carcasses are refrigerated dressed, i.e. bled, skinned and eviscerated post-inspection. Wild game carcasses are field dressed at harvesting site, with much of the viscera (including the lungs, liver, heart and kidneys which are unfit for human consumption) retained in the carcass for inspection. What measures are taken to prevent contamination of edible material in the carcass by inedible material (i.e. viscera) over the period of time that may elapse from harvesting to inspection, and why is there a discrepancy between the requirements for wild game and non-game carcasses given the hygiene concerns?
12. At what stage during the meat inspection process is meat sampled for contamination or microbial infection that may otherwise be undetectable by the standard physical examination?
13. Why are hygiene standards lower for wild game meat in comparison to other red meat protein sources?

Answer:

1. The department has worked closely with the kangaroo industry and state regulatory authorities to improve the kangaroo meat production system to ensure compliance with Russia's requirements. Australia has provided written technical submissions to the Russian authorities outlining these improvements. The department is actively seeking Russia's consideration of the submissions and agreement to the recommencement of the kangaroo meat trade.
2. Various requests have been made by the department to the Russian authorities for an audit of the Australian kangaroo production system. As yet no timeline has been agreed to.
3. On 8 February 2010, the former Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the Hon Tony Burke MP, allocated an additional \$400 000 to extend the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation's kangaroo harvester training program. The first training course was held in May 2010 and the final course is scheduled for March 2011. The department and state regulatory authorities have also provided in-kind support for the training program.
4. Refer response No. 3.

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Question: BSG 16 (continued)

5. Yes.
6. The new processing requirements apply to all game carcasses processed at an export registered game processing establishment, irrespective of whether the final product will be sold on the domestic or export market. Establishments registered for domestic processing come under the jurisdiction of state regulatory authorities.
7. All game processing establishments have to comply with the Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production of Wild Game Meat for Human Consumption. All export game processing establishments must comply with the new requirements. State regulatory authorities, rather than AQIS, have jurisdiction at domestic registered establishments.
8. Several levels of official verification are in place throughout the supply chain to ensure compliance which includes checks on records.
9. Yes, official verification procedures are in place to ensure compliance with time-temperature parameters.
10. Field chilling specifications have been developed to accommodate Australia's environmental temperatures. For both game and non-game species, carcasses must be effectively chilled within 24 hours, in compliance with international standards.
11. The differences in handling wild game and non-game viscera reflect differences in slaughter methods. In both cases, the outcome is the same, that is meat that is safe for human consumption. The retained game offal does not present a risk to the edible portions of the carcass and supports an informed decision about the suitability of the carcass for human consumption. The offal of non-game species is not exposed until after the carcass has been skinned, so there is a minimal contamination risk.
12. Microbiological samples are taken on receipt of carcasses into the game processing establishment, after the carcass has been skinned and inspected, and from cartons of final product.
13. The requirements for traceability, training, temperature monitoring and microbiological testing of wild game meat are equivalent to the standards applied to non-game species.

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Question: BSG 17

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Plant Division

Topic: Imported Beef Import Risk Analysis

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator HEFFERNAN asked:

Dr Colin Grant, in an open letter published in The Land (NSW) on 26 August 2010, stated: “For a variety of reasons, which have all been explained by Australian and US government authorities, US export figures will include shipments that may be proposed for export to Australia but do not enter Australia or where products have been mis-coded by the US exporter. “ What exactly are the "reasons" Dr Grant refers to in this statement?

Answer:

There are a number of explanations for the differences between the Australian and the United States (US) trade figures; for example:

- import trade statistics in general tend to be more accurate than export statistics. There are a number of reasons for this
 - agents working for exporters, or even exporters themselves, may not know the final destination of the export and will indicate the first port of call as the destination rather than the final consumer
 - more customs resources are dedicated to imports and therefore import data are usually more accurate than export data, which is checked more for regulatory compliance than for statistical accuracy
 - the Australian client of the exporter may have never intended to land the goods in Australia, instead shipping them to other countries in the region – goods which are entered into bond do not cross the Customs frontier and therefore are not included as imports until they are released from bond
- shipments exported from the US and originally destined for Australia can, for commercial reasons, be diverted to another country before entering Australia
- some shipments by sea could be exported from the US in one calendar year but be imported into Australia in the next calendar year
- mis-coding of product where the importer, exporter or customs broker could enter an incorrect Harmonized System (HS) code that will therefore affect official figures.

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Question: BSG 18

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division

Topic: Export Certification Reform Package

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

1. What proposals does AQIS have to reduce inspection costs on small businesses who undertake small export orders, particularly in the horticulture and grains sectors?
2. Has AQIS consulted with such business to determine how they can be assisted in reducing red tape and costs through reforms made under the Export Certification Reform Package?
3. Has or is AQIS considering the formation of benchmarks for inspection times so as to provide greater consistency and certainty for small business operators who undertake small export orders?
4. What interaction has taken place between AQIS and the State Governments to ensure the reduction of red tape and regulatory costs with respect to small export orders? In particular, what consultation has been conducted with quarantine and inspection authorities in the Tasmania Government? What were the outcomes of these consultations?

Answer:

1. Proposals include the use of automated data capture, developing the use of authorised inspectors to support the certification process and removing inefficient regulatory practice.
2. Yes, consultation has occurred through the horticultural and grains ministerial taskforces.
3. Yes, standard auditing and inspection proficiencies across all export commodities are being developed.
4. The department is working closely with state authorities through the Food Export Regulators Steering Committee, the purpose of which is to reduce red tape and regulatory costs. The Tasmanian Government is a member of this committee.