

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Budget Estimates Feb 2006

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question no: PIAPH 1

Division/Agency: PIAPH

Topic: BSE Report

Hansard page: 70

Senator O'Brien asked:

Dr Murray—There have been a number of consultancy reports. The one I think I was referring to was a study of costs that may be imposed should a BSE case occur in, for example, the management of feed mills, the feeding of animals and changes to abattoir construction arrangements. As I recall, this is what I was talking about.

Senator O'BRIEN—Is it available on the website?

Dr Murray—I do not think it is on the website, but we can make it available to this committee.

Answer:

Attached please find a hardcopy of the “Costed Options for Ruminant Feed Segregation During Manufacture and Transport” report.

[PIAPH 01 attachment – not included. Available from the committee secretariat on request]

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Budget Estimates Feb 2006

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question no: PIAPH 02

Division/Agency: PIAPH

Topic: Vaccine – Egg Supply

Hansard page: 77

Senator Heffernan asked:

CHAIR—I understand; that is far enough on that. I thank Biosecurity Australia for the briefing I got on this. My point at the time was that, if there was a worldwide outbreak of bird flu or whatever it is we need these eggs to create a vaccine for, I would have thought that if I was America and the supplier of these eggs and had a serious outbreak of bird flu and wanted to get as much vaccine as I could then I would tell everyone else to go hunt. So, if we relied on importing these eggs in the event of a worldwide outbreak of a disease of some kind, we would be putting ourselves at grave risk of not being able to get the eggs to enable the production of vaccines et cetera. It followed in my mind that the sensible thing for Australia to do would be to put a few dollars—whether it is \$1 million or \$5 million or whatever; it would be cheap insurance—into creating a separate egg farm away from the one we have in an appropriate location as some sort of national insurance, rather than relying on someone else. It is like water. It is not much good relying on the farm that has water every time except when there is a drought. My view is that, while that contingency plan may well be biosecure, it may not be secure in the event of some global catastrophe. Is there no merit to that argument? You can tell me to go to hell, if you want to.

Dr Martin—I guess that issue is not one for Biosecurity Australia. My understanding is that there used to be three SPF premises and now there is one.

CHAIR—Do you think there is someone out there in the government listening to this conversation? I hope there is, because I think that is an issue that we need to address, I just thought I had better raise it to give it a bit of a run.

Ms Hewitt—I will take that question on notice. I think it is something that we should reflect on further and perhaps resume discussion about when we meet next.

Answer:

The supply of fertile specific pathogen free eggs (SPF) is important for a number of biomedical and veterinary procedures, including disease diagnosis, biomedical research, the hatching of SPF eggs to produce SPF chickens, the production of some mammalian and human vaccines, the production of most inactivated avian vaccines, and the production of live avian vaccines.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Budget Estimates Feb 2006

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

The operators of the sole SPF flock in Australia have indicated their ability to meet current and foreseeable demands for SPF eggs and chickens provided sufficient lead time is provided to allow eggs to be set to meet increases in demand. The proposal to provide for imports of SPF eggs, in the event the Australian supply source is compromised by disease or other unforeseen circumstances, is intended to be a safeguard measure. The adequacy of this contingency measure will be kept under review and, if necessary, alternative measures considered. There are currently no plans for governments to directly intervene in the commercial market for the supply of SPF eggs.

Question no: PIAPH 03

Division/Agency: PIAPH

Topic: Bumble Bee

Hansard page: Written

Senator Milne asked:

What action is AQIS taking to prevent the spread of the bumble bee from Tasmania to mainland Australia?

Answer:

The bumblebee, *Bombus terrestris*, is a prohibited species under legislation administered by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) and the Department of the Environment and Heritage, because of the threat the species poses to conservation areas and the risk of introducing parasitic organisms that could infect native bees and honey bees. Consequently, an application to import the species from outside of Australia would be refused and, if the species was detected as part of border operations, appropriate quarantine control measures would be imposed.

AQIS only has responsibility for managing the risk of introducing quarantine pests from other countries. The potential for spread of an organism, such as the bumblebee, between Australian states is a state responsibility. In this case, Victoria is the most likely first point of entry for the spread of bumblebees from Tasmania to mainland Australia. Victorian legislation does prohibit the introduction of bumblebee to that state and Victoria has regulatory measures in place, in particular to address the risk of deliberate introduction by individuals that view the bumblebee as a desirable pollinator for the horticulture industry. Related legislation also applies in other states.