

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2012

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 31

Division/Agency: Biosecurity – Food Division

Topic: Export of Cooked Meat

Proof Hansard page: 61

Senator XENOPHON asked:

Senator XENOPHON: I will put some on notice. I recently met with an exporter in South Australia who exports a cooked meat product. As a condition of his export license he is required to have an AQIS veterinary officer conduct inspections on his premises, his books and so on. Given that the meat arrives at his premises after slaughter, can AQIS explain why the producer is required to have a veterinary officer conduct the audit, given the extra costs of a veterinary officer?

Ms Mellor: Unfortunately, the officers have just left the table. We will just quickly get them back or we can take it on notice.

Answer:

A Veterinary Officer is no longer required to conduct audits of export meat processing facilities. As part of the Export Certification Reform Package a review of all importing country requirements was carried out. This identified that a Veterinary Officer is no longer required. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has adjusted the auditing arrangements to reflect this.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2012

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 65

Division/Agency: Biosecurity – Food Division

Topic: Australian Quarantine Inspection Services

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator XENOPHON asked:

What steps will AQIS be taking in response to the recommendations made by the Rural Affairs and Transport Committee Biosecurity and Quarantine Arrangements interim report?

Answer:

The Australian Government will respond to the committee's recommendations in accordance with the usual processes.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 67

Division/Agency: Biosecurity – Food Division

Topic: Export of Cooked Meat

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator XENOPHON asked:

I recently met with an exporter in South Australia who exports a cooked meat product. As a condition of his export license he is required to have an AQIS veterinary officer conduct inspections on his premises, his books and so on. Given that the meat arrives at his premises after slaughter, can AQIS explain why the producer is required to have a veterinary officer conduct the audit, given the extra costs of a veterinary officer?

Answer:

A Veterinary Officer is no longer required to conduct audits of export meat processing facilities. As part of the Export Certification Reform Package a review of all importing country requirements was carried out. This identified that a Veterinary Officer is no longer required. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has adjusted the auditing arrangements to reflect this.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2012

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 68

Division/Agency: Biosecurity – Food Division

Topic: Export of Cooked Meat

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator XENOPHON asked:

There was a suspected outbreak of avian flu in Victoria at the end of January.

- a. What steps did AQIS take to inform exporters of the implications of this outbreak?
- b. I understand that Japan immediately ceased all imports of Australian chicken meat. When did AQIS become aware of this? When were exporters informed?
- c. Can AQIS outline the timeline from when they were notified to when the relevant exporters were notified?

Answer:

- a–c.** The Victorian Department of Primary Industries advised the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) of the confirmed detection of low pathogenic notifiable avian influenza (LPNAI) on Wednesday 25 January 2012.
- Australia notified the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) on 27 January 2012.
 - Australia's Chief Veterinary Officer also wrote to a number of key trading partners including Japan on 27 January 2012.
 - Exporters must meet importing country requirements and the implication of the detection of LPNAI was that these requirements changed for some countries.
 - Under emergency pest and disease arrangements, between the states, industry and the Australian Government, responsibility for communication with industry bodies and individuals is defined for such an event. In most situations the Australian Government would be responsible for notifying national industry bodies, national bodies and state agencies and would be responsible for notifying state and regional bodies. State authorities would be responsible for notifying individuals who may be affected by restrictions or controls that need to be applied. DAFF issued a Market Access Advice (MAA1206) to affected export industries on 30 January 2012 providing background information on the outbreak and providing a table of countries and product types where certification was affected. Based on a letter from the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), this Market Access Advice said that the Japanese ban applied to Victorian product. These advices were sent to the Australian Chicken Meat Federation, Australian Renderers Association, Australian Meat Industry Council, Pet Food Industry Association of Australia, Australian Ostrich Association, Emu Industry Federation of Australia and the Australian Duck Meat Association. Separate but similar advices were sent to the Australian Egg Corporation.

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Question: 68 (continued)

- Japan's MAFF wrote to Australia advising of the ban on 27 January 2012 (attached to a cable from the Australian Embassy in Tokyo on 30 January 2012). This amended letter (with the same date and file reference as the first letter) advised that the ban applied to all of Australia.
- DAFF issued a second Market Access Advice (MAA1207) to industry on 1 February 2012. This clarified that the Japanese ban applied to poultry product from all of Australia.
- Another Market Access Advice (MAA1208) was issued on 2 February 2012 further clarifying the products that were affected by the Japanese ban. Based on information from the Australian Embassy in Tokyo, it advised that pet food and other highly processed products were excluded from the ban.
- Following advice from the Australian Embassy in Tokyo, a further Market Access Advice (MAA1213) was issued on 22 February 2012 clarifying that some pet food and other highly processed products which Japan required a health certificate for, were affected by the ban.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 69

Division/Agency: Biosecurity – Food Division

Topic: Australian Quarantine Inspection Services

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator XENOPHON asked:

In terms of AQIS authorised officers – where a company's officials can be trained to perform the same role as AQIS inspectors – is this option available to small businesses?

If not, why not?

Answer:

Yes, this option is available to any export registered establishment, subject to market access requirements.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 148

Division/Agency: Biosecurity – Food Division

Topic: Australian Quarantine Inspection Services Authorised Officers

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

Provide a list of all current AQIS Authorised Officers and the scope of their authorisation.

Answer:

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry is able to provide the following information regarding Australian Quarantine Inspection Service Authorised Officers (AAOs):

Export meat

529 applications are being progressed, with 215 AAOs having successfully completed the process and appointed at this time. The AAOs are authorised to conduct post mortem inspection on the slaughter floor.

Plant exports (horticulture and grain)

294 applications are being processed, with 117 prospective AAOs having completed the training process and awaiting assessment. Assessments are scheduled to be conducted in March and April 2012.

Plant AAOs are authorised for inspection/commodity types such as empty containers, empty ship holds, grains, horticulture, cotton, forest products, or hay and straw.

Other commodities

There are no AAOs for any other export commodities currently.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 191

Division/Agency: Biosecurity – Food Division

Topic: Export Reform

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

When will the Government undertake an independent study that examines whether there are legitimate costs to government as promised by former Agriculture Minister Tony Burke, agreed to in the House of Reps on 13 October 2011 and requested in QON 187 October 2011?

Answer:

The Australian Government has delivered its undertakings to the meat sector, including a reduction in the cost of government service delivery in the meat program in the order of \$27.4 million per annum and the commissioning of an independent financial analysis of the Export Meat Program costs, overhead costs, and attribution of costs which found that these costs are consistent with the government's cost recovery guidelines.

A link to the Ernst and Young Report on Cost Recovery in the Meat Program has been placed on the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry website at www.daff.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1931146/ey-independent-review-meat.pdf.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: 194

Division/Agency: Biosecurity – Food Division

Topic: Meat Industry Export Reforms

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator COLBECK asked:

1. QON 188 October 2011 asked about the consultation process for the meat export reforms. The response was that all of the small export operators were consulted regarding the reform process. Given the backlash from export businesses, do you consider the consultation to have been effective?
2. The response to QON 188 October 2011 indicated that "all registered export meat businesses" were notified by email of the final fee structure. Does "all registered export meat businesses" include storage, casings, further processors?
3. If not, how and when were these businesses notified of the changes? How and when were they consulted?

Answer:

1. As articulated in QoN 188 October 2011, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry went to some lengths to consult with peak industry bodies and, as information became available, individual businesses.

The Australian Government has been advised that prior to its agreement to the Meat Program export certification fees and charges, the Coalition also made contact with industry organisations and specific businesses to canvass their views on the fees and charges model. The Coalition announced its agreement to the fees and charges model on 12 September 2012 "*Coalition stands by the Meat Industry to the tune of \$25.8 million*".

2. Yes.
3. N/A.