

**Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Budget Estimates May 2010**

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 01

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group – Strategic Projects

**Topic:** Increase in fee payable by Australia Post for the quarantine clearance of incoming international mail

**Hansard Page:** 39-40 (25/05/2010)

**Senator Abetz asked:**

**Senator ABETZ**—We can read the Hansard but, with great respect, my question was about consultation with Australia Post. Allow me to ask the question again, just in case there was any misunderstanding. What consultation, if any, occurred between your department and Australia Post in determining the \$5 million figure?

**Senator Sherry**—It is perfectly reasonable. It is perfectly justifiable for a commercial service to be paying for the services that are provided by another government department, agency, or outside private operator. It is perfectly reasonable. The government has taken the decision as to the charge that is to be applied and that Australia Post will pay. If Minister Burke has anything to add beyond that, I will take it on notice.

**Senator ABETZ**—It is perfectly reasonable to add this impost, which is a more than 100 per cent increase on that which was previously charged. Dr O’Connell, can you tell us what the previous charge was? \$3.2 million, from memory. Does that sound right?

**Dr O’Connell**—Yes, I believe that is correct.

**Senator ABETZ**—Right. This is more than a 100 per cent increase without consultation with the commercial supplier and without giving them any prior notice until the budget that this was going to be dropped on them. So I do not misquote you, Minister, you describe that as ‘perfectly reasonable’?

**Senator Sherry**—I was referring, if you check the *Hansard*, to the basis of the charge. It was a budget policy decision. I stand by it. It has been made and the charge will be applied.

**Senator ABETZ**—Why was the figure of \$5 million achieved, as opposed to \$4.5 million or \$5.5 million?

**Senator Sherry**—I will have to take that on notice.

**Answer:**

The rate was set by the government as part of the overall Budget process.

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 02

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division

**Topic:** Olive Oil

**Hansard Page:** 48-49 (25/05/2010)

**Senator XENOPHON**—Sure. Perhaps I will put some questions to FSANZ. Similarly, in terms of olive oil imports—and maybe some of this would cross over to FSANZ; you may wish to take some notes—how much is imported in bulk and how much is prepackaged? What steps does AQIS have in place to ensure that prepackaged oil is suitable for sale in Australia?

**Ms Mellor**—In terms of the volume, we will take that on notice.

**Answer:**

The department does not hold data on the volumes of olive oil imported in bulk and imported in a pre-packaged form.

Please refer to proof Hansard last two paragraphs page 34 and first eight paragraphs page 35 for a response to the Senator's question on label claims.

**Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2010

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 03

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division/Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry

**Topic:** Equine Influenza

**Hansard Page:** 49-50 (25/05/2010)

**Senator Back asked:**

**Senator BACK**— At that time, I was asking about possible vaccination scenarios. Dr Carroll, I think, advised us that there were four primary scenarios that were being proposed by the expert review panel on equine influenza. I was asking questions about the possibility of vaccination and we went into those discussions and did not go too much further. But on the next day, 9 February, there was in fact from you—from the department—a fifth scenario put to the horse industry. Do you recall that?

**Dr O’Connell**—Yes. I am not precisely sure of the dates but, yes, I do recall the extra scenario.

**Senator BACK**—I was just concerned: on the day before, would you have known that you were going to put a fifth scenario to the industry?

**Dr O’Connell**—I do not recall the precise discussion we had at the time. I would have to look at the *Hansard* and just check what the content of the discussion was and whether or not it would have been relevant.

**Answer:**

At the estimates on the 8 February 2010, Dr O’Connell and Dr Carroll responded to questions relating to the consideration of compulsory vaccination – no such option exists. The fifth scenario assumes that voluntary, pre-emptive vaccination will be available to those horse industry sectors that choose to avail themselves of this option.

**Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

**Budget Estimates May 2010**

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 04

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group.- Animal Division

**Topic:** Testing of marinated prawn product

**Hansard Page:** 54 (25/05/2010)

**Senator Back asked:**

**Senator BACK**—Could I ask a question? Senator Heffernan gave the demonstration here, humorous and all as it was, and I think you just made the observation about the degree to which it adheres. When he actually put the product into water, it was clear there was absolutely no marinade at all. Clearly, the marinade was a powdered form in the bottom of a packet and the prawns themselves did not come into contact with it. If he could perform such a simple test here, I would ask: is that similar to the type of test your officers would conduct to satisfy themselves as to the extent of adherence of the marinade to the product?

**Ms Cupit**—There are two parts to that and I will just answer one first. When we first started looking at the amount of marinade applied to prawns, we did a verification survey and there was a large number of surveyed product that did not meet the import conditions. We have actually tightened up that and have now instituted mandatory inspection.

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—Good.

**Ms Cupit**—Since that time, the inspection results now are showing a much reduced failure rate for product. As to the exact inspection process applied at the border, we would have to take that on notice. We have actually got a training program in place for our—

**Senator BACK**—You might have achieved something, Senator Heffernan, with your demonstration.

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—Yes, the job has improved, but the likeable rogues are still getting it in.

**Ms Cupit**—We will just take on notice the exact detail of what they actually inspect for, but it does involve a visual inspection and actually looking at how much marinade is applied to those. The work instructions that our inspectors use are national, so all the inspectors at all borders, at all points, apply the same standards.

**Answer:**

Testing by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service of marinated prawn products involves:

- a) visual examination of the amount of marinade on the frozen product
- b) thawing of frozen product to determine level of adherence of the marinade to the product
- c) comparing the thawed product with the photographs of the product submitted by the importer during import permit assessment.

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 04 (continued)

If testing determines that there is insufficient marinade on the product or the marinade does not adequately adhere to the product or the product in the consignment does not match the photographs of the product submitted by the importer during import permit assessment, the consignment will either be exported or destroyed.

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**Budget Estimates May 2010**

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 05

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division

**Topic:** Discrimination against Australian cheese producers

**Hansard Page:** 58 (25/05/2010)

**Senator Milne**—Whilst I hear what you are saying about the food standards, what about the issue of Australian producers being discriminated against? Is there no other mechanism to deal with this other than through FSANZ?

**Dr O'Connell**—It is a health benefit, yes. I think we can take it on notice. I do not need to say anything else, but there is essentially a health related barrier, so it does, I think, require that FSANZ work. If there is anything else, we can take that on notice and get back to you, but the basic point is what I understand.

**Answer:**

This is a matter that requires FSANZ standards development work.

**Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 06

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group – Plant Division

**Topic:** Apples from China IRA

**Hansard Page:** 76-77 (25/05/2010)

**Senator Heffernan asked:**

**Senator NASH**—Does the apple itself have to come from those provinces or can those provinces bring it in from another province that has said that they are not planning on exporting?

**Dr V Findlay**—No, there are very strict controls on the movement of apples between provinces, particularly with regard to certification under the Australian protocol that we are proposing.

**Senator NASH**—How do we verify that they are not moving across provinces within China itself?

**Dr V Findlay**—That is going to be the responsibility of AQSIQ which is the equivalent of BSG in China.

**Senator NASH**—Do you want to say that for me in English?

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—Are you able to provide the so-called protocol to this committee?

**Dr V Findlay**—I think that we could provide the protocol.

**Dr Grant**—We would need to agree that with the Chinese authorities as it is a government to government agreement.

**Answer:**

These protocols are government-to-government agreements and would require the Chinese government's consent before they could be provided.

**Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2010

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 07

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group, Animal & Plant Divisions

**Topic:** Apples from China IRA

**Hansard Page:** 78 (25/05/2010)

**Senator Heffernan asked:**

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—Are there regions within the continent of China which would have an apple industry for which we would knock them back on the known detail we have got now? Are there no-go zones?

**Dr Findlay**—If they cannot meet our requirements and they cannot meet the pest-free area production

requirements, then yes, there are no-go zones. But there have been none that have been blanket banned.

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—But there have been no pests, diseases or anything identified that are allegedly endangering our industry.

**Dr Findlay**—There have been none for which we have not been able to put in place a set of measures to give ourselves the confidence that safe trade can occur.

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—In terms of an area that is a no-go zone, adjacent to an area that is a go zone,

what is the setback? How do you protect one from the other?

**Dr Findlay**—There are very stringent rules around pest-free places of production—

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—Could you provide the details?

**Dr Findlay**—Sure.

**Answer:**

The International Plant Protection Convention has International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPMs) that provide guidelines for area freedom, such as ISPM No. 4: *Requirements for the establishment of pest free areas* (FAO 1995) and ISPM No. 10: *Requirements for the establishment of pest free places of production and pest free production sites* (FAO 1999). The standards are available on the IPPC website at:

[https://www.ippc.int/file\\_uploaded/1249300915840\\_ISPM\\_04\\_E.doc](https://www.ippc.int/file_uploaded/1249300915840_ISPM_04_E.doc)

[https://www.ippc.int/file\\_uploaded/1249301826035\\_ISPM\\_10\\_E.doc](https://www.ippc.int/file_uploaded/1249301826035_ISPM_10_E.doc)

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**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2010

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 08

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group - Food Division

**Topic:** Ban of Chinese Agriculture Chemicals

**Hansard Page:** 58 (25/05/2010)

**Senator Heffernan asked:**

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—In this FSANZ thing where we are going to ensure the animal side of it, can you supply to us a list of the chemicals that we ban that China uses?

**Senator NASH**—That is a good question.

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—Can I give you a couple of hints? Carbon bisulphide, dieldrin—

**CHAIR**—If you cannot answer that, can you take it on notice.

**Mr Read**—We will need to take that on notice. I am not sure whether we can get exactly or the full answer to that. On the information we have, we can take that on notice.

**Answer:**

The department does not keep a list of chemicals that are used in other countries. However, some of the pesticides AQIS screens for are not permitted for use in Australia. These include organochlorines, organophosphates, synthetic pyrethroids. The list of pesticides is provided in **Attachment 1**.

**[Attachment to BSG 08]**

**Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Budget Estimates May 2010

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 09

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group – Plant Division

**Topic:** Cherries to and from the US

**Hansard Page:** 59/60 (24/05/2010)

**Senator Back asked:**

**Senator BACK**—Thank you; that is very clear. If I can return to cherries, a complaint has been put to me by a constituent in the sense of, again, equivalence. The point is that the US requires their officers to supervise disinfection treatments here in Australia for cherries leaving Australia, and they do not recognise AQIS officers. The cost of such visits means that there is no trade because it would be prohibitive. He goes on to talk about the different temperatures at which fumigation takes place, and his complaint is that we want equivalence, that the Americans are at an advantage because of what they impose on us compared to what we impose on them. Could you give me some advice on that point.

**Ms van Meurs**—The situation for our exports of, for example, citrus is very different in that it is a cold disinfestation treatment. We undertake that in transit, so it means that we start the treatment and the treatment has a readout as it travels on the ship to the US and they accept that.

**Senator BACK**—That is for citrus—what about for cherries?

**Ms van Meurs**—We only export cherries from Tasmania, and that is area free so there is no requirement for a US officer to be in Australia. They are different situations.

**Senator BACK**—Is there any potential for states that export cherries, other than Tasmania, to be held up by these differences? The point he makes is that: currently their cherries— Americans'— can be fumigated down as low as six degrees. We are required to fumigate to 17 degrees. I know we are talking about different pests but there will be no trade in Australian cherries as if we are required to fumigate at 17 degrees, and the Americans know that.

That is the statement that was made. I am very keen to be able to respond to that.

**Ms Mellor**—We might take that on notice and help you out in more detail.

**Answer:**

The United States requires that cherries from mainland Australia should:

1. originate from a fruit fly free area approved by the US Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), or
2. be fumigated with methyl bromide at 70°F (21.11°C) or above, followed by a cold treatment, or
3. be irradiated, with an absorbed dose of 150 gray or greater

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 09 (continued)

Fruit fly free areas

The US recognises Tasmania, the Riverina, Riverland, and Sunraysia as free from fruit flies, and consignments of cherries from these areas do not require treatment for export to the US unless there has been an outbreak of fruit fly.

Treatments prior to export

Consignments from all other areas, or any of the above areas when in fruit fly outbreak, need to undergo a treatment. Under US law, treatments must be monitored by APHIS or an authorised official. In effect, this requires an APHIS official to be present in Australia for pre-shipment fumigation treatments.

Australian and US cherry treatments

Different rates of methyl bromide are applied to address the pests of concern for the US and Australia respectively. These different treatment rates are based on research on these different pests. The key pests of concern for the US are the Mediterranean fruit fly and the Queensland fruit fly, while the main pests of concern for Australia in the US are western cherry fruit fly and spotted wing drosophila.

Australia has sought, both through formal comment and in bilateral negotiations, equivalence to US conditions, both for fumigation at lower temperatures and for treatment supervision.

New treatments for Australian cherries

As part of the access for mainland Australian cherries to the US, a new cold treatment regime has been approved, which extends the temperature range for the treatment of fruit flies in cherries. This improved treatment protocol can be conducted during shipping and therefore will not require presence of an APHIS official in Australia.

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**Budget Estimates May 2010**

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 10

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group, Animal & Plant Divisions

**Topic:** Apples from China IRA

**Hansard Page:** 85 (25/05/2010)

**Senator Heffernan asked:**

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—Can this committee be given an assurance that—as we have done with many others of these, and to your great grief we did it with beef from Brazil—we will see before it is approved the final proposition that you are going to put to China as to the protocol?

**Dr O’Connell**—We will go through the regulatory process as we always do.

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—Can we then be briefed?

**Senator Sherry**—We cannot give you an assurance—

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—You have always done it in the past.

**Senator Sherry**—That is not right, as I am advised. In relation to a briefing: I will take on notice whether and what we can provide to you at the appropriate stage.

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—I do not think it is fair for us, on behalf of the growers, to have any chance of a reasonable judgment that what you propose scientifically and bureaucratically will pass the human failure test unless we see it.

**Senator Sherry**—Senator, we are going back over a conversation we had earlier. We are really going back over that. We will take it on notice. I am keen to assist you as much as we reasonably can within the understood practices, protocols and processes—

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—We are pretty keen to make sure we do not bugger it up.

**Senator Sherry**—and I will have to take it on notice for you.

**Answer:**

The policy determination for the import of apples from China was made by the Director of Animal and Plant Quarantine on 30 June 2010 and provided to stakeholders with a Biosecurity Australia Advice on the same day.

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 11

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division

**Topic:** Importation of honey bees

**Hansard Page:** 62 (25/05/2010)

**Senator HEFFERNAN asked:**

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—But did you consult the bee people?

**Dr Nunn**—There was consultation about the need to suspend because of those diseases.

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—Could you provide us with the paper trail of that consultative process?

**Dr Nunn**—I can attempt to.

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—Thanks very much. You can take that on notice.

**Answer:**

The Biosecurity Services Group constantly monitors the pest and disease status of other countries. If a pest or disease is considered to be a risk to Australia's animal health status, imports of the possibly affected commodity may be suspended immediately so as to address this biosecurity risk. This may occur without undergoing a formal consultation process, particularly where there is a change in health status affecting a commodity in a country from which Australia has import conditions in place.

This was the case with honey bees, for which imports from the United States were suspended in December 2005 (because of inability to meet quarantine requirements for Africanised honey bees) and from all other approved countries in August 2008 (because of colony collapse disorder). In both cases, imports were suspended without a formal consultation process with industry.

Previously however, the Australian Honeybee Industry Council had raised its concerns about the risk of entry of Africanised genes (in comments on a Technical Issues Paper on a proposed import risk analysis of honey bee semen). Similarly, a number of industry groups (including the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council and the Victorian Farmers Federation) had raised concerns about the risk of colony collapse disorder in formal submissions to a House of Representatives inquiry into Inquiry into the Future Development of the Australian Honey Bee Industry.

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**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 12

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division

**Topic:** Bumble bees

**Hansard Page:** 88 (25/05/2010)

**Senator NASH asked:**

There has been in the past—and I think it might have even started in 1997—an interest from some horticulturalists in being able to import the bumblebee, and I gather that *Bombus terrestris* is its proper name, for use in glasshouses for pollination. I understand they already exist in Tasmania, and I think Senator Colbeck has some questions as well. Could we just have a bit of a background on the issue and the reasons why access to import has been denied for the specific purpose of using the bumblebees for pollination in glasshouse environments?

Could you take on notice for me any information that Biosecurity can provide for the committee in terms of Biosecurity's involvement. In the past there was an application, it was knocked back. I was generally trying to get more of an understanding of what happened, the time line and the process from Biosecurity's point of view. If you could get that back to the committee that would be very useful.

**Answer:**

Biosecurity Services Group has not received an application to import bumblebees.

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 13

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division

**Topic:** Bumblebees

**Hansard Page:** 89 (25/05/2010)

**Senator COLBECK asked:**

**Senator COLBECK**—From a Biosecurity perspective, do we have any sense of how the bumble bees actually got to Tasmania?

**Dr Grant**—To the best of my knowledge, they have been there a very, very long time. Precisely how many years—

**Senator COLBECK**—My advice is 15 years.

**Dr Grant**—I think it is longer than that.

**Senator COLBECK**—Okay, my advice is 15 years.

**Dr O'Connell**—We will have to take that on notice.

**Answer:**

Biosecurity Services Group understands that bumblebees were detected in Tasmania in 1992.

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Budget Estimates May 2010

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 14

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division

**Topic:** Bumble bees

**Hansard Page:** 90 (25/05/2010)

**Senator HEFFERNAN asked:**

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—When considering the AHGA application, were the quite considerable economic and food safety benefits of bumblebee technology given appropriate consideration in the face of any environmental damage claims?

**Dr O'Connell**—Can you please clarify what you are referring to?

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—The industries that want the bumblebees say they will get a 30 per cent, roughly, increase in production, for example, in a closed tomato farm, or whatever. You have obviously used the precautionary principle, and I do not have an objection to that. The question is: is there a balance between the economic benefit and the environmental risk?

**Dr O'Connell**—I think we are going to take on notice getting you the history of any application that has occurred. If there is any environmental ban or constraint on that movement, how that decision making occurs is best put to the environment portfolio.

**Answer:**

The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts has undertaken an assessment of the environmental risks of importation of bumblebees to mainland Australia under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999* (the EPBC Act). The EPBC Act is the Australian Government's central piece of environmental legislation.

On 26 October 2008, the Hon. Peter Garrett AM, MP, Minister for the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts rejected a request by representatives of the hydroponics industry to allow bumblebees to be imported into Australia for crop pollination in greenhouses because the bumblebee could pose a serious risk to the Australian environment, native honey bee populations, and native bird species.

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**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 15

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division

**Topic:** Bumble bees

**Hansard Page:** 90-91 (25/05/2010)

**Senator HEFFERNAN asked:**

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—So this question can be put on notice. Given that reference was made by the environmental lobby of the alleged negative impact of the poor old bumblebee in New Zealand, why did DEWHA ignore the independent expert advice of Barry Donovan that countermanded the letter attached to this evidence?

**Ms Mellor**—We will come back on notice with a range of issues, some of which we may have to seek input from DEEWR on around whether or not there has been an import permit application for bumblebees and what the reasons were, if any, for not allowing it.

**Answer:**

The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts has undertaken an assessment of the environmental risks of importation of bumblebees to mainland Australia under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999* (the EBPC Act).

On 26 October 2008, the Hon. Peter Garrett AM, MP, Minister for the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts rejected a request by representatives of the hydroponics industry to allow bumblebees to be imported into Australia for crop pollination in greenhouses because the bumblebee could pose a serious risk to the Australian environment, native honey bee populations, and native bird species.

Biosecurity Services Group has not received an application to import bumblebees.

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**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 16

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group - Quarantine Operations Division

**Topic:** Eastern Creek Quarantine Station

**Hansard Page:** 91-92 (25/05/2010)

**Senator HEFFERNAN asked:**

**Senator BACK**—..... I have a couple of questions, if I may, regarding Eastern Creek, the quarantine station or centre. Its lease is due for expiry at the moment or in the near future—is that correct?

**Mr Chapman**—The current lease expires on 31 December of this year. We have a renewal option for another five years.

**Senator BACK**—Yes, and at the end of that five years?

**Mr Chapman**—At the end of that five years, it is unlikely that the owner of the property would agree to any further extensions.

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—Who owns it?

**Mr Chapman**—I am not sure who the actual owner is off the top of my head.

**Senator HEFFERNAN**—Could you let us know.

**Mr Chapman**—I can take that on notice.

**Answer**

The current lease for the Eastern Creek Quarantine Station expires on 31 December 2010. The department has exercised the option in this lease for a further five years, which will extend to 31 December 2015.

The land on which Eastern Creek Quarantine Station is situated is owned by Afteron Limited.

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**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 17

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division

**Topic:** Importation of bovine embryos

**Hansard Page:** 94 (25/05/2010)

**Senator Back asked:**

Thank you for that. My final question goes back to importation of some bovine products: semen and embryos. I have some figures for the importation of bovine semen over the last two or three years.

Can you give me or take on notice the information I would like to have on the importation of bovine embryos from other countries, obviously including countries that have had BSE: the UK, the US, Canada et cetera? Do you have that information available?

**Ms Mellor** – Not, but we are happy to take that on notice.

**Answer:**

**Bovine embryos imported from all countries in 2008 and 2009**

| <b>Country of origin</b> | <b>Number of doses 2008</b> | <b>Number of doses 2009</b> | <b>Total</b>  |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Canada                   | 645                         | 1 741                       | <b>2 386</b>  |
| Denmark                  | 0                           | 36                          | <b>36</b>     |
| France                   | 41                          | 73                          | <b>114</b>    |
| Italy                    | 80                          | 2 950                       | <b>3 030</b>  |
| Netherlands              | 0                           | 81                          | <b>81</b>     |
| New Zealand              | 98                          | 222                         | <b>320</b>    |
| South Africa             | 623                         | 833                         | <b>1 456</b>  |
| Switzerland              | 11                          | 0                           | <b>11</b>     |
| UK                       | 49                          | 0                           | <b>49</b>     |
| USA                      | 1 205                       | 1 494                       | <b>2 699</b>  |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>2 752</b>                | <b>7 430</b>                | <b>10 182</b> |

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 18

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group – Plant Division

**Topic:** Beef IRA

**Hansard Page:** 67 (25/05/2010)

**Senator Nash asked:**

**Senator NASH**—Do you have any ballpark figure of a time line for that, or do you simply not know at this stage when in-country inspections might take place?

**Dr Grant**—FSANZ have indicated that their process will run for the order of six to eight months. The in-country inspections will take place during that period; so, assuming that we will get an application reasonably soon, sometime between now and the early part of next calendar year, and I would say something in the order of four or five months time.

**Senator NASH**—Could I ask you to take on notice, if you would not mind, when that decision has been made for the in-country inspections to take place? Could you inform the committee of how many officers are going, where you are going and what the purpose of the visit will be?

**Dr Grant**—Yes, we will certainly do that.

**Answer:**

No decision has yet been made in relation to the timing of the in-country inspections, how many officers are going, or what localities they may visit. In-country inspections in the United States and Canada will be dependent on provision of documentation requested by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) by both the US and Canada to enable the BSE risk assessments to commence, and facilitation by these countries of visits by Australian officials.

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**Question:** BSG 19

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division

**Topic:** Health certification and investigations

**Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Williams asked:**

1. How does AQIS ensure its health certification procedures are accurate and correct?
2. What is the process for dealing with any problems raised with health certificates by Authorised Officers who have to sign these?
3. Have any officers refused to sign health certificates based on their concerns, and what did AQIS do in response?
4. What would be the likely consequences of health certificates that are not correct and true in every respect?
5. What is the process of dealing with complaints or allegations about AQIS or its officers?
6. Can you provide any examples where this has occurred?
7. What is the process of dealing with complaints or allegations by AQIS authorised officers about those they regulate?
8. Can you provide any examples where this has occurred?
9. How does AQIS ensure animal products imported into Australia meet our requirements?
10. Do we perform audits like the US and EU to verify our system is working?
11. Have any of the equine flu inquiry recommendations been looked at in context within the AQIS export programs due to their similarities, or did they just remain with the quarantine sector.
12. If not, why not?

**Answer:**

1. The department negotiates import conditions, the health certificate and details of the basis of certification with the importing country. Once agreed, the health certificate is placed on the department's intranet for use by Authorised Officers. Health certification procedures are documented in standard operating procedures and work instructions on the department's Instructional Material Library (IML).
2. In the first instance, the Authorised Officer raises any concerns regarding certifying health certificates with senior management regionally. Where these cannot be determined regionally, issues may be taken to the export program in Canberra for resolution. Where importing country health conditions cannot be certified, the issue may be referred back to the importing country for renegotiation.
3. From time to time, AQIS officers have raised concerns about signing health certificates. AQIS has dealt with these concerns on a case-by-case basis.

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**Question:** BSG 19 (continued)

4. If there was a systems failure and we fail to meet our system requirements in certifying to a particular market, product may be rejected by the importing country authority. In this case, further negotiations may be required to allow entry of the product. In the longer term, we will either fix our systems or renegotiate the import protocol requirement.
5. The Biosecurity Services Group is committed to complying with Standards Australia's Complaints Handling standard (AS 4269-1995). The AQIS Service Charter and information regarding the process for making a complaint can be found on the department's website at the following links:  
<http://www.daff.gov.au/aqis/about/reports-pubs/service-charter>  
<http://www.daff.gov.au/aqis/about/contact/compliments-complaints>
6. During 2008-09, 469 complaints and 106 compliments were logged by the Biosecurity Services Group and responded to in accordance with the AQIS Service Charter.

The AQIS Compliments and Complaints brochure states, 'all information provided to AQIS remains strictly in-confidence and personal information is protected under the *Privacy Act 1988*'.

7. The Biosecurity Services Group has a dedicated investigations team that investigates allegations by AQIS Authorised officers about those they regulate in accordance with the Commonwealth Fraud Control Guidelines which includes the Australian Government Investigation Standards (AGIS).
8. Alleged breaches relate to a variety of issues covered by the legislation. Examples include alleged non-compliance with directions given by Authorised Officers, concerns about accuracy of documentation and concerns about declarations made under legislation by those the department regulates.
9. Importers bringing animal products into Australia are required to apply for an import permit from AQIS. AQIS assesses all import permits and applies specific conditions which are aimed to minimise the quarantine risk to an acceptably low level. Conditions for each particular commodity as detailed in the Import Conditions Database (ICON) on the department's website.

All documents are examined by AQIS when products enter Australia. Consignments may be inspected or tested for quarantine or food safety purposes. Some products may also have post entry requirements as part of the import conditions.

Products that do not have the necessary documentation as stated on the import permit, or fail inspection or testing, will be re-exported or destroyed.

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**Question:** BSG 19 (continued)

10. Yes.

11-12. Yes.

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**Question:** BSG 20

**Division/Agency:** Animal Division - Biosecurity Services Group

**Topic:** Live cattle trade with Egypt

**Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Siewert asked:**

1. Has DAFF's investigation into the reasons for the high number of deaths of cattle and sheep - on the first shipment on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 2010 from Fremantle Port to Egypt since 2006 - been completed?
2. If yes, could I be provided with a copy?
3. What were the weather conditions in the port of Fremantle from 19 February to 23 February when MV *Ocean Shearer* sat loaded with cattle bound for slaughter in Egypt?
4. Is the road transport or loading onto ships of animals prohibited in extreme heat; and, if so, under what weather conditions is transport or loading suspended?
5. For what period was an officer of the animal welfare unit present during the loading of the MV *Ocean Shearer*?
6. What was the reason for the four-day delay in departure?
7. Why is live export to Egypt being resumed when it was banned only 3 years ago due to cruelty concerns?
8. How many cattle are anticipated to be exported live to Egypt this year and from where?
9. Does this indicate that the Minister intends on resuming the export of live sheep to Egypt as well?
10. Is it true that the Animal Welfare Unit in Western Australia currently only has one inspector for the whole state?
11. What resources (staff and funding) does the federal government provide to monitor compliance with the ASEL standards in the Port of Fremantle?

**Answer:**

1. Yes. The investigation into the cattle mortalities has been completed.
2. The report is available on the department's website.
3. The Bureau of Meteorology weather data indicate that temperatures in Fremantle for the period 19 – 23 February 2010 ranged between a minimum of 15.9 degrees Celcius and a maximum of 34.3 degrees Celcius.
4. The Department of Local Government, Government of Western Australia has provided the following information in relation to the transport and loading of animals during extreme weather conditions:

There are no prescriptive temperatures stated in the *Animal Welfare Act 2002* (WA) where loading or transport of livestock cannot proceed. However, under

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**Question:** BSG 20 (continued)

Section 19 (3) "...a person in charge of an animal is cruel to an animal if the animal –

- (a) is transported in a way that causes, or is likely to cause, it unnecessary harm;
- (e) is not provided with such shelter, shade or other protection from the elements as is reasonably necessary to ensure its welfare, safety and health;"

The Code of Practice for the Transportation of Sheep in WA, section 9.2 states "Transporting sheep in very hot or cold weather should be avoided where possible. It is advisable when planning a journey that may take place during bad weather to pay careful attention to the ventilation of the transport unit, the speed of travel, the number of planned stops as well as the number, age and condition of the animals being carried. Particular care should be taken with recently shorn sheep in wet cold weather".

The Code of Practice for the Transportation of Cattle in WA, section 9.2 states "In very hot or cold conditions, minimise potential adverse influence by attention to the construction of the transport unit, its ventilation, the speed of travel, the number of planned stops as well as the number, age and condition of the animals to be carried, during planning of the journey".

5. The Government of Western Australia has advised that there was not a General Inspector, Animal Welfare, from the Department of Local Government present for the loading of the Ocean Shearer.
6. Livestock and fodder were loaded at Fremantle Port from 19 to 22 February, and additional fodder was loaded at Kwinana Port (South of Fremantle) on 23 and 24 February. Loading was conducted in this way because of the draft (vertical distance between the waterline and the bottom of the vessel) of the vessel. As such, the vessel can only be fully loaded in a deep water berth. The exporter reported that a deep water berth had been booked in Fremantle Port, but that this was cancelled by the Port one day prior to loading. A decision was taken to load the livestock and some of the fodder in Fremantle Port, where livestock loading facilities are available, and then move the vessel to Kwinana Port, (where a deep water berth was available) to load the remainder of the fodder.
7. Details of the resumption of the live cattle trade with Egypt are covered in the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's press release of 9 May 2008 ([http://www.maff.gov.au/media/media\\_releases/2008/may\\_2008/cattle\\_trade\\_resumes\\_to\\_egypt](http://www.maff.gov.au/media/media_releases/2008/may_2008/cattle_trade_resumes_to_egypt)).
8. In 2010 (to date), 16 460 cattle have departed from Fremantle, 31 353 cattle have departed from Townsville and 8994 have departed from Broome. It is unknown if any other consignments of cattle will be exported to Egypt this year.
9. The *Australian Meat and Livestock Industry (Export of Livestock to Egypt) Order 2008* prohibits the export of livestock to Egypt other than cattle.

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10. No, there are three General Inspectors. The Department of Local Government, Government of Western Australia has advised that it has one permanent General Inspector and another on contract. In addition, the Manager of the Animal Welfare Branch (in the Government of Western Australia) is an appointed General Inspector.
11. There are 2.2 full time veterinary officers employed by DAFF's Live Animal Export Program in Perth, WA. These positions are cost-recovered from industry through fees and charges.

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**Question:** BSG 21

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group – Plant Division

**Topic:** Exotic Pests and Diseases

**Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Nash asked:**

How many exotic pests and diseases have been identified in Australia in the past three years and what were they?

**Answer:**

Plant

Over the period July 2007 to September 2010 Biosecurity Services Group has identified 67 exotic plant pests or diseases and weeds that were not previously recorded in Australia. These are listed in **Attachment 1**.

Animal:

Over the period July 2007 to September 2010 Biosecurity Services Group has identified the following exotic pests and diseases affecting terrestrial and aquatic animals and marine animal pests in Australia.

Exotic pests and diseases of terrestrial animals identified in Australia:

- Equine influenza H3N8 in 2007
- Asian honey bee (*Apis cerana*) detected in Cairns, Qld in 2007
- Pandemic influenza H1N1 of pigs detected in Qld, NSW and Vic in 2009
- Iridovirus infection of green tree frogs detected in NT in 2009 (first detection, may or may not be an exotic disease agent)
- Bluetongue BTV-7 detected in NT in 2007
- Bluetongue BTV-2 detected in NT in 2008

Exotic pests and diseases of aquatic animals identified in Australia:

- Infectious hypodermal and haematopoietic necrosis (IHHN), detected in farmed black tiger prawns (*Penaeus monodon*) in Qld in 2008.
- Enteric septicaemia in catfish (*Edwardsiella ictaluri*), detected in wild sourced native black catfish (*Neosilurus ater*) held in captivity in a licensed ornamental wholesale facility in the NT in 2010. No evidence that the disease occurs in wild populations surveyed to date.

Exotic marine pests identified in Australia:

- *Perna viridis* (Asian green mussel) and *Musculista senhousia* (Asian bag or date mussel), detected in Trinity Inlet, Cairns, Qld in 2007.
- *Varicorbula gibba* (European clam) and *Musculista senhousia* (Asian bag mussel), detected in Shallow Inlet, Vic in 2009.

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**Question:** BSG 21 (continued)

- *Undaria pinnatifida* (Japanese kelp), detected in Apollo Bay Harbour, Vic in 2009.

**[Attachment to BSG 21]**

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**Question:** BSG 22

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group – Quarantine Operations Division

**Topic:** AQIS Inspectors

**Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Nash asked:**

1. Is every international port in the country manned by an AQIS inspector on a 24/7 basis?
2. If not which ports are opened and have AQIS inspectors available 24/7?
3. What are the hours for the other ports?
4. What happens if a ship arrives outside of business hours?

**Answer:**

1. No.
2. Australia has 65 proclaimed first sea ports. There are also a further 20 sea ports that are regularly approved on application as a first arrival port for arriving international vessels. Approval is provided in accordance with Section 20AA of the *Quarantine Act 1908*. Sea ports are not staffed 24/7. AQIS inspectors are available at all proclaimed sea ports as required.
3. AQIS officers are available at other sea ports as dictated by vessel arrivals and industry requirements.
4. Every vessel arriving in Australia from overseas is required to provide a Quarantine pre-Arrival Report prior to arrival. AQIS staff are available to inspect vessels and clear disembarking passengers out of business hours as required.

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**Question:** BSG 23

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group – Quarantine Operations Division

**Topic:** Sea Container Risk Management Policy

**Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Nash asked:**

1. What is the basis of the ‘New Sea Container Risk Management Policy’?
2. How many containers are inspected under the old system?
3. How many will be inspected under the new system?
4. How will a container be considered high risk?
5. Does the Department expect to save money going to the new risk management policy?

**Answer:**

1. The Sea Container Risk Management Policy is an evidence based application of the risk-return principle recommended in the Beale Review of quarantine and biosecurity arrangements. The policy is based on evidence from more than 10 million sea containers inspected externally over the last decade. Less than 1 in 17,500 containers have been found to be externally contaminated with exotic organisms.
2. All arriving international sea cargo containers were externally inspected.
3. Under the policy, all sea cargo containers from high risk pathways and all containers going to or through rural areas are externally inspected before they leave the wharf. Additionally the inside of all containers going to a rural destination are checked. Not less than 30 per cent of containers (including high risk pathway containers) leaving the wharf are externally inspected to validate and refine risk assessments.
4. AQIS has consolidated a number of risk pathway assessments based on records of intervention and pest interception data that have been modelled to identify containers on high risk sea cargo pathways.
5. No

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**Question:** BSG 24

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group – Plant Division

**Topic:** Cotton Mealybug in Emerald Queensland

**Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Nash asked:**

1. What involvement has the Department had with the exotic mealybug in cotton discovered in Queensland around Emerald?
2. What damage is this mealybug doing and or capable of doing to the cotton industry?
3. Is it a fact that it took the Queensland Government three months to identify that this was an exotic bug?

**Answer:**

1. The department has a role in coordinating a national response to incursions of plant pests through the National Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests (CCEPP), as required under the provisions of the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed. The CCEPP agreed that eradication of the mealybug (*Phenacoccus solenopsis*) was not technically feasible and recommended to the National Management Group that no further action is taken under the deed.
2. The mealybug (*Phenacoccus solenopsis*) is usually considered only a minor pest of cotton, but occasionally populations increase and ‘hotspots’ of infestation occur which could result in localised damage.
3. The question should be referred to the Queensland Government for response.

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**Question:** BSG 25

**Division/Agency:** Animal Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division

**Topic:** Bumble bees

**Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator NASH asked:**

In relation to the proposal to Import *Bombus Terrestris* into mainland Australia for Crop Pollination purposes:

1. The Australian Hydroponic and Greenhouse Association was initially informed of the Ministers determination through the publishing of a media statement in the newspaper, rather than from the Department itself. What measures are there to ensure that an applicant is appropriately notified of any decision made?
2. In the minister's reasons for decision, the minister acknowledges the unlawful feral population of *Bombus terrestris* in Tasmania. Is the department engaging in any eradication activities to get rid of this population?
3. Has the department considered the impact of weed pollination already occurring by honeybees?
4. Did the department consider the risk reduction mechanisms and approaches by government's overseas?
5. All submissions received in response to the draft report are distributed to the applicant. Is the department able to get their own independent advice on scientific issues, if so, is such advice shared or kept confidential? Why?
6. Upon the disallowance of an application, what recourse does the applicant face other than costly legal action?
7. Is there an opportunity for an applicant to work with the department to address any issues raised by the department?
8. By what means can the Minister be satisfied under the "precautionary principle"? Could it not be used to refuse every application?
9. On what criteria did the Minister base his view that the risk of bumblebees escaping would be very high?

**Answer:**

Biosecurity Services Group has not received any applications to import bumblebees.

The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) is the responsible agency for the assessment of the environmental risks associated with the importation of bumblebees. Questions should be referred to DEWHA for response.

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**Question:** BSG 26

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group - Quarantine Operations Division

**Topic:** Future of Quarantine Facilities

**Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator BACK asked:**

Minister Burke has said that the Government is examining “the current network of quarantine facilities for plants and animals entering Australia, to better plan for future needs.”

The first step in looking at alternatives given that leases for the current 5 sites expire in 2015 is underway and has been identified as “the two-pass” process in conjunction with the Department of Finance.

In this Budget Estimates, DAFF officers confirmed that the first pass of the “Two pass” process was now complete.

1. Confirm that the first pass of the two pass process has been completed?
2. What steps does the first and second pass consist of?
3. What documentation or reports have been produced outlining the considerations and recommendations of this process and what is this name?
4. If one has been produced can a copy be provided?
5. What were the recommendations of the report?
6. **a)** Does it include assessments of current and proposed locations including business cases and risks around each location?  
**b)** What are these and can you provide a copy of this advice?
7. Does it include identified risks to Australian biosecurity if so, what are these and can you provide a copy of this advice?
8. Who is responsible for resourcing or providing finance for each of these options?
9. If the first pass has been completed, does the second part include consultation?
10. If so, when is this scheduled to take place?
11. Can you identify the names of all the groups that will be consulted and names of their representatives?
12. Will consultation take place only in Canberra or other locations and if in other locations, where will this be?
13. What document will be provided to the horse industry consultation group and can you provide a copy of this?

**Answer:**

1. The first pass of the two pass process has been completed.

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**Question:** BSG 26 (continued)

2. The First Pass Outline Business Case Submission is a proposal to establish the need for government action to resolve the issue. The first pass business case seeks approval for funding to undertake a scoping study to identify a preferred option for achieving the agency's nominated outcome. The submission includes the outcomes being sought, how the proposal meets government property guidelines, how the capital works might be funded, a risk assessment and an estimate of the resources required to undertake the scoping study.  
  
The Second Pass Detailed Business Case Submission is a proposal seeking government approval for funding to deliver the preferred option. This submission builds on the work of the first pass business case and includes a full explanation of the scope of works for the preferred option, a detailed risk assessment, stakeholder consultation, analysis of the options, cost estimates, site investigations, design brief and any necessary approvals.
3. The first pass outline business case.
4. The First Pass Business Case was part of advice to government which was considered by Cabinet, and as such the usual restrictions on release of Cabinet material apply.
5. The first pass business case recommended that in principal approval be given to develop a second pass detailed business case with fully costed options.
6. a) No. The second pass business case will contain this information.  
b) The advice will consider a range of options which are part of the advice provided to government through Cabinet, and as such the usual restrictions on release of Cabinet material apply.
7. Risk consideration forms part of the second pass business case advice provided to government through Cabinet, and as such the usual restrictions on release of Cabinet material apply.
8. The source of finance will vary from option to option potentially ranging from privatisation, to leased government facility, to own and construct. In each option, different cost recovery arrangements will also be explored.
9. Yes.
10. Stakeholder briefings and workshops were conducted from July to September 2010.

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11. A significant number of stakeholders (several hundred) have been identified and have been advised about, and are participating in, the consultation process. Identified stakeholders represent all species that are subject to post entry arrangements and are expected to provide a wide range of views. The identified stakeholders include state governments, industry representative bodies, academic institutions, staff and clients of post entry quarantine.
12. Consultation is taking place in capital cities around Australia including Canberra.
13. **Attached** are copies of existing documents sent to all identified stakeholders (including those in the horse industry). Further documents will be generated and provided to stakeholders as the consultation process develops.

**[3 Attachments to BSG 26]**

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**Question:** BSG 27

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division

**Topic:** Emergency preparedness at Quarantine Stations

**Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Back asked:**

I refer to the response to a question placed on notice at the last estimates about risk mitigation strategies in place at Eastern Creek. I mentioned that the risk could be for any reason and the example of fires in the barns. The response was that emergency plans were in place including for fires but was advised “Emergency plans do not include the evacuation of animals from the stations”.

1. What plans are in place should evacuation be required and preventative measures have not been sufficient and the station and animals lives are at risk?

**Answer:**

The contingency plan for fire or comparable emergencies at the quarantine stations is detailed below. This contingency plan has been reviewed by the Animal Health Committee (AHC), which includes the Australian and state chief veterinary officers, and representatives from the department, the Australian Animal Health Laboratory, and Animal Health Australia. AHC has agreed that this policy is appropriate to address the immediate biosecurity and animal welfare concerns in the event of a fire or other comparable emergency at an animal quarantine station.

**Contingency Plan for Fire at Animal Quarantine Station (includes other comparable emergencies)**

The below points outline the Biosecurity Services Group (BSG) policy in the event of a fire or other comparable emergency at an animal quarantine station.

- BSG policy is that human health and safety is the top priority in any catastrophic event. Human life should not be put at risk in order to maintain either animal biosecurity or animal welfare standards. Animal biosecurity takes priority over animal welfare in an emergency situation at the quarantine station. An exotic disease outbreak would potentially create animal welfare concerns for a larger number of animals than those in the quarantine station.
- In the event of a significant fire (catastrophic or major localised) or other comparable immediate emergency at an animal quarantine station, BSG policy is:
  - Animals undergoing quarantine must not be removed from the quarantine station.
  - If time and circumstances permit, animals may be moved within the quarantine station to reduce their risk of injury from the fire.

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**Question:** BSG 27 (continued)

- In less immediate emergency situations (eg gas leak, floods, significantly damaged quarantine facilities), BSG policy is:
  - Animals whose welfare would be compromised by staying at the station and animals that can no longer be adequately contained, housed and cared for at the quarantine station may be moved to alternative temporary premises. The alternative temporary premises must be constructed and operated to provide a level of biosecurity protection equivalent to that provided at the quarantine station.
  - The means of transport to the temporary premises must ensure there is no reduction in the level of biosecurity protection at any stage.
  - If a state emergency response is underway, BSG will liaise with the relevant lead agency (as per State Emergency Plan) for the identification of suitable temporary facilities and transportation. If the issue is local to the quarantine station, BSG will be responsible for organising the temporary facilities and transportation.
  - BSG will be responsible for developing management plans for these temporary facilities.
  - Where no suitable temporary facilities can be found (especially likely for animals requiring high containment facilities such as birds and bees), euthanasia may be considered.

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**Question:** BSG 28

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division

**Topic:** Equine Influenza

**Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Back asked:**

“Secret fifth scenario” directed to Dr O’Connell at Additional Estimates on 8 February 2010.

Senator Back – can you tell me whether or not compulsory vaccination of horses is being considered as part of this review?

Dr O’Connell – I do not think that compulsory vaccination of all horses is part of any scenario that we have looked at, at all.

Dr Carroll – There is from a Commonwealth perspective, no ability to put in a compulsory vaccination for horses.

Senator Back – It would require co-operation from the states and territories.

Dr Carroll – I am not aware of any scenarios that assume compulsory state-regulated or Commonwealth-regulated vaccination.

Senator Back – Not an option? Not being considered?

Dr O’Connell – It is certainly not flagged in that report that the panel produced.

Senator Back – But it is something that is being considered at all?

Dr O’Connell – I do not think that I have seen it considered at all. It would be certainly extremely expensive.

Dr Carroll – I am not aware of any moves for compulsory vaccination of horses amongst the states.

At the last estimates on the 8 February 2010, Dr O’Connell and Dr Carroll insisted that there was no consideration of another scenario considering vaccination. However on the 9 February, horse industry representatives were presented by the Department of Agriculture with a “secret fifth scenario detailing just that.

1. Can Dr O’Connell and Dr Carroll confirm that they were no aware of this option on the 8<sup>th</sup> February?
2. Were you aware that there was to be a meeting of horse industry representatives consulted on the EI Expert Review Report the next day on the 9<sup>th</sup> February?
3. Did you know that they were being presented with a 5<sup>th</sup> scenario that included vaccination just prior to the deadline for submission of comments to the 4 scenarios outlined in the initial report?
4. Can you advise which scenario was supported by each of the representatives groups?
5. How many were in favour of the 5<sup>th</sup> scenario of voluntary vaccination? Who were they?
6. Which scenario was recommended and advanced by PISC?

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7. What was the response from NZ representatives on PISC to the 5<sup>th</sup> scenario of voluntary vaccination?
8. Did they provide advice on the impact this would have on the free movement of horses between Australia and New Zealand? Can you provide this advice?
9. Despite a widespread lack of support for this 5<sup>th</sup> scenario it was advanced by PISC and subsequently to PIMC – was there a consensus by all Ministers on the resolution outlined in the communiqué?

“In the absence of any funding agreement, Ministers agreed that there would be no nationally cost shared response to any exotic horse disease incursion and steps would be put in place to enable voluntary vaccination of horses against Equine Influenza as a disease impact mitigation strategy.”

10. Given there are 1500 (1473) horse movements from Australia to NZ last year have the implications of this on our current relationship with NZ been established?
11. Are minutes from the Primaries Industries Ministries Council meeting in Darwin on the 23 April 2010 available? If so, can copies be made available?

**Answer:**

1. At the Additional Estimates hearing on the 8 February 2010, Dr O’Connell and Dr Carroll responded to questions relating to the consideration of a potential scenario of compulsory vaccination – no such scenario exists. The fifth scenario assumes that voluntary, pre-emptive vaccination will be available to those horse industry sectors that choose to avail themselves of this option.
2. Yes. There had been on-going consultation with key horse industry bodies throughout the process of examining policy options and a meeting between departmental officials and key horse industry sectors had been planned in advance for 9 February 2010.
3. Yes. The department held a workshop for representatives of key horse industry bodies on 9 February 2010, where a briefing was provided on the range of scenarios considered by the Equine Influenza Expert Panel’s report and the fifth scenario. Industry comment was invited on the fifth scenario in addition to scenarios covered by the report in order to assist Primary Industries Ministerial Council’s consideration of the policy options for responding to the threat of any future EI incursion. The deadline for industry comments was extended at the workshop.
4. Of the industry bodies providing a written response, Harness Racing Australia was the only one directly identifying specific scenarios which were supported, namely Scenario 2 a) and b). Other written responses were broader in nature and did not directly cite numbered scenarios.

**Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 28 (continued)

5. The Australian Racing Board and the Thoroughbred Breeders Association supported options that included the availability of a pre-emptive vaccination as a means of mitigating potential business risks. There was strong support across all sectors for the industry to become a signatory to the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement subject to a levy mechanism being put in place.
6. The Primary Industries Standing Committee (PISC) advice to Ministerial Council covered a range of considerations and did not identify a scenario that enjoyed universal support.
7. PISC, of which New Zealand is a member, considered a range of views. The PIMC communiqué, available at <http://www.mincos.gov.au>, reflects the agreed outcome.
8. PISC, of which New Zealand is a member, considered a range of views. The PIMC communiqué reflects the agreed outcome.
9. The Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC) communiqué represents an agreed position.
10. The New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry would be consulted in advance of any pre-emptive vaccination strategy for equine influenza being implemented in Australia.
11. An overview of the outcomes from PIMC is provided in the communiqué, available at <http://www.mincos.gov.au>. It is anticipated that the resolutions will also be made available at this site, in the near future.

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**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 29

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group/Animal Health Programs

**Topic:** Equine Influenza

**Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Back asked:**

In the absence of a horse industry EADRA by the 1 December 2010, the communiqué following the PIMC meeting in Darwin on 23 April 2010, said it would advance measures to allow voluntary vaccination

1. By what mechanisms would voluntary vaccination be allowed?
2. Does this require legislation at a state / territory / federal level?
3. Who will be responsible for the cost of surveillance?
4. Has advice been sought about what vaccine would be used in the event there was another outbreak of EI? Can you make this advice available?
5. Would it use a killed vaccine – which includes the H3N8 virus; or the genetically modified vaccine – which was used at the last outbreak of EI?
6. Under a voluntary vaccination system how does the Government propose to defend our EI-free status with other countries?
7. What documentation or evidence would it present in defence of our EI-free status?

**Answer:**

1. Several regulatory approvals would be needed, including: approval for importation of the vaccine by the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service; registration by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority; licensing by the Gene Technology Regulator, if the vaccine contained genetically modified organisms; and approvals under applicable state/territory legislation.
2. Those states that prohibit vaccination against an exotic disease have provisions that allow their respective ministers or Chief Veterinary Officers to exempt a vaccine from this prohibition.
3. The extent of any additional surveillance in the Australian horse population for equine influenza that might be implemented, and the attribution of any additional costs, are matters yet to be decided.
4. No. The choice of vaccine will need to be informed by the strain of equine influenza involved with the outbreak.

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**Question:** BSG 29 (continued)

5. Refer to answer provided for question four.
6. Australian authorities would, if required, assure other countries that it continued to meet the provisions of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) standard for an equine influenza-free country. Any change in Australian's current equine influenza-free status would be notified to the OIE in accordance with Australia's disease reporting obligations as an OIE member.
7. In the event of an importing country authority requiring additional assurances, Australian authorities would endeavour to answer the specifics of any such request.

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**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 30

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division

**Topic:** Hendra Virus Vaccine

**Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Back asked:**

With the announcement yesterday, I am delighted that the Minister has listened to the Coalition and finally together with the Queensland Premier announced that they will co-fund a Hendra Vaccine. With another case of Horse Hendra confirmed at a property in southern Queensland, near Noosa on the 20 May – it is a timely reminder of the animal and human biosecurity threats from zoonotic diseases.

1. Will this funding be delivered through the Department of Agriculture?
2. If so, will it be through the Department or to an agency? If so, which one?
3. How will this be spread this budget period and over the forward estimates?
4. Was consideration given to this being partly funded by Health and Ageing given that is in effect a human health preventative measure?
5. Are there any plans to fund a research centre of emerging infectious diseases?

**Answer:**

1. Yes.
2. The funding has been provided to the CSIRO Australian Animal Health Laboratory.
3. This has been allocated from the 2009-10 budget.
4. The Department of Health and Ageing has contributed to the Australian Government contribution to the Hendra virus research.
5. A number of possible models for funding cooperative Australian research into disease agents such as the Hendra virus are being canvassed by stakeholders.

**Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 31

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group - Food Division

**Topic:** Export Certification Reform Package

**Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Colbeck asked:**

Can you please provide a breakdown of projected efficiencies as identified by the 6 industry taskforces for Export Certification reforms. Please include summary of efficiency, level of savings, intended timeframe for achievement of efficiency and other relevant details.

**Answer:**

The expected benefits, including efficiency gains, from export certification reforms are threefold: improved efficiencies and effectiveness in export certification service delivery within AQIS; improved efficiencies for industry along the export supply chain; and potential gains in market access requirements.

Each industry-AQIS ministerial taskforce has prepared a work plan which outlines their respective reform agendas. Each of these work plans will contain/does contain more detailed information regarding the projected benefits and efficiency gains. The work plans are available on the department's web site at [www.daff.gov.au/ecrp](http://www.daff.gov.au/ecrp), except for the meat export work plan which industry has asked not be placed on the website due to the sensitive nature of some of the information it contains.

The benefits of the meat export work plan are summarised as follows:

**Meat Sector**

- savings in the cost of inspection by reducing the number of full time meat inspection staff. This reduction will be achieved by simplifying post mortem inspection procedures, implementation of more efficient verification systems and through identification and management of potentially excess staff
- independent financial evaluation and review of AQIS fees and charges including revised fee options
- updated procedures and training for AQIS personnel to reflect changes to work practices brought about by reform
- improved market access and more rapid response to market access opportunities/constraints.

**Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

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**Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

**Question:** BSG 32

**Division/Agency:** Biosecurity Services Group – Plant Division

**Topic:** Weed Risk Assessments

**Hansard Page:** Written

**Senator Colbeck asked:**

1. How many people process Weed Risk Assessments (WRA)?
2. How many work full time on WRA and how many those people are qualified botanists?
3. Why are WRA not processed in the order they are received?
4. Why is seed approved species not added to the ICON as live plant material of the same species is added?
5. Does AQIS have any objections to this being changed so that seed and live plant material of approved species are added to the ICON at the same time?

**Answer:**

1. Four full time equivalent staff work on weed risk assessments in the department.
2. All staff have tertiary qualifications across a range of disciplines, including botanical expertise, to reflect the expertise required to conduct weed risk assessments. In many cases tertiary qualifications have been supplemented by practical botany and horticultural skills, gained through internships at herbariums and nurseries.
3. Weed Risk Assessments are conducted in the order in which they are received except where a request is received to assess large numbers of new plants at once, such as a plant catalogue. So as not to dominate the assessment work program to the exclusion of others, importers are requested to prioritise the order in which they would like their species to be assessed.
4. After WRA is completed a seed can only be added to Imports Conditions Database (ICON) once Schedule 5 (the 'Permitted Seeds List') of the *Quarantine Proclamation 1998* has been updated. No legislative amendments are required for live plants which means ICON can be updated immediately.
5. The content on ICON reflects the legislation. Seed species that have been assessed through WRA as permitted for entry cannot be added to ICON as a 'permitted species' until the Schedule 5 is amended.