

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH 01

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Strengthening Food Labelling Laws

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

I refer you to the Document 'Labor's Plan for Primary Industries', Election 2007; Page 19 which states;

'A Rudd Labor Government will simplify and strengthen food labelling laws. This will include; A new 'Grown in Australia' label under the Trade Practices Act for products that are not only made in Australia, but also grown in Australia.'

1. What work has been undertaken on developing a new 'Grown in Australia' label?
2. Who within the Department is undertaking the work?
3. What consultations and with whom have they been held in relation to the Grown in Australia' label?
4. When will the label 'Grown in Australia' be introduced?
5. What products will the label apply to?
6. Will it be compulsory for all food retail and wholesale outlets to display the label?
7. What is the expected cost to food manufacturers?

Answer:

1. In assessing the development of a new 'Grown in Australia' initiative, the department is monitoring industry uptake of, and consumer receptiveness to the current voluntary '*Australian Grown*' program being implemented by the Australian Made Campaign Ltd. As agreed by the Minister, this program will be monitored over a 12 month period, and will form the basis for determining any future scheme. In addition, the department is liaising with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) to explore the potential for developing a 'Grown in' scheme within the framework of the *Trade Practices Act, 1974*; and Food Standards Australia New Zealand to assess the appropriateness of amending the Food Standards Code to establish industry compliance with the country of origin labelling requirements through the use of a 'Grown in' statement.
2. The *Food and Product Safety and Integrity* branch is overseeing the potential development of a 'Grown in' initiative while the *Food* branch is monitoring *Australian Grown*.
3. The department has consulted the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) about the potential to include 'Grown in...' safe harbour provisions in Division 1AA of the TPA.
4. This will be determined subject to the outcomes of monitoring the voluntary *Australian Grown* initiative.
5. This will be determined subject to the outcomes of monitoring the voluntary *Australian Grown* initiative.

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6. This will be determined subject to the outcomes of monitoring the voluntary *Australian Grown* initiative.
7. Potential costs to manufacturers of a mandatory *Grown in Australia* label have not been assessed.\

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Question: PIAPH 02

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Food Standards Code

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

I refer you to the Document 'Labor's Plan for Primary Industries', Election 2007; Page 20 which states;

Consideration of amendments to the Food Standards Code to clarify country of origin labelling requirements.

1. What 'Consideration' has the department undertaken to clarify country of origin labelling requirements?
2. What are the current requirements for the country of origin labelling on fresh food and on processed food?
3. Is it currently possible of a consumer to find out where processed food which is labelled 'packaged in Australia from import products' comes from?
4. How would the consumers find out where the imported products came from?
5. Is it possible for the department to find out where the imported products came from?
6. What trace back and trace forward mechanisms are in place to trace imported processed food particularly in light of the melamine in milk scandal in China?
7. Has the department undertaken any work or training exercises on being able to trace back and trace forward ingredients used in processed food?

Answer:

1. The department is developing options to clarify country of origin labelling including the appropriateness of amending the Food Standards Code, the viability of amending safe harbour defences for country of origin statements in the *Trade Practices Act 1974*, and initiatives to dispel consumer confusion regarding the use of 'made in' and 'product of' statements .
2. Standard 1.2.11 of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code requires all packaged food and unpackaged fresh or processed fruit, vegetables, seafood and pork to be labelled with country of origin.
3. A country of origin statement indicating 'Packaged in Australia from imported products' is compliant with the requirements of Standard 1.2.11 of the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code. Further information on specific details can be sought at the point of sale or from the food supplier/importer.
4. As per Q3.
5. The department would have to work with other relevant agencies such as Customs and the importers themselves to accurately determine where the imported products came from if the package is labelled as 'Packaged in Australia from imported products'.

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6. Under the Australian Food Standards Code (Standard 3.2.2) a food business engaged in the wholesale supply, manufacture or importation of food must have in place a system to ensure the recall of unsafe food and this system must be set out in a written document and made available to an authorised officer upon request. As such food businesses must keep records of food distribution.
7. No.

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Question: PIAPH 03

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Strengthening Compliance Arrangements

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

I refer you to the Document 'Labor's Plan for Primary Industries', Election 2007; Page 20 which states;

'Strengthening compliance arrangements'

1. What work has the Department undertaken to strengthen food labelling compliance arrangements?
2. Has the department made any inspections of major retailers to ensure they are labelling country of origin the food properly?

Answer:

1. The department is part of the Australian Government's participation in the Food Regulation Standing Committee and its Implementation Sub-Committee and encourages consistent implementation and enforcement of food standards, including food labelling by states and territories that are responsible for ensuring that all foods, whether imported or locally produced, comply with all requirements in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code.
2. No.

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Question: PIAPH 04

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Foot and Mouth Disease

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

Foot and Mouth Disease

1. What are the current Foot and Mouth Disease serotypes and topotypes circulating in South-east Asia?
2. How endemic is FMD in South East Asia?
3. Which Countries are FMD free without vaccination to OIE standards?
4. In which Southeast Asian countries is FMD endemic?
5. Given the increasing number of Australian visitors to Southeast Asia what quarantine measures have been put in place to stop the spread of FMD from Southeast Asia?
6. Is it a fact that serotype type A has again been found in South East Asia and believed to have originated from Burma?
7. How widespread is serotype A?
8. What agreements does Australia have in place to provide vaccine in the case of a major FMD incursion in Australia?
9. Does this agreement cover all FMD strains currently circulating?
10. Has Australia donated FMD vaccine to any Southeast Asia countries to combat major outbreaks, in particular Cambodia?
11. If not why not?
12. Does Australia have a partnership with the Regional FMD Reference Laboratory in Pakchung, Thailand?
13. What does this involve?
14. What laboratories does Australia have partnerships with in Southeast Asia?
15. Is Australia currently funding any FMD control and eradication programmes in Southeast Asia? If not, why not?
16. Does the Department still support the work of the OIE Southeast Asia Foot and Mouth Disease Regional Campaign based in Bangkok which has previously been funded by AusAid and received extensive technical support from the Department?
17. What sort of support is being provided by the Department and will it continue to be funded by the Australian Government?
18. If not why not?
19. Isn't it a fact that the only way Australia can guarantee to remain free of an FMD outbreak is to globally eradicate the disease?
20. How much would it cost to eradicate FMD globally?
21. How much would an extensive outbreak of FMD cost Australia?

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Question: PIAPH 04 (continued)

Answer:

1. There are three serotypes of FMD that have circulated in recent years in this region; namely type O, Asia 1 and A. With the type O serotype, there are three distinct topotypes known as Southeast Asia, Pan Asia and Cathay.
2. The reporting of disease varies from year to year but is believed to be decreasing as the Southeast Asia FMD (SEAFMD) campaign lowers the prevalence of FMD. The SEAFMD Regional Coordinating Unit states that during 2008, Southeast Asia has seen a reduction in the number of FMD outbreaks as well as in serotypes and topotypes circulating in the region, compared to 2007.
3. Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam and Singapore are countries which are FMD free without vaccination to OIE standards. Malaysia and the Philippines contain FMD free zones (where vaccination is not practiced) recognised by the OIE.
4. Vietnam, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Cambodia, Thailand and Malaysia.
5. AQIS procedures include profiling travellers arriving from high risk countries, questioning passengers and assessing their Incoming Passenger Cards, and using x-rays, detector dogs and manual inspection to screen and inspect goods carried by travellers arriving at Australian ports and airports.
6. Type A is regularly detected in South East Asia (it is considered endemic to this region) with most cases being reported from Thailand and Malaysia. According to the SEAFMD Regional Coordination Unit, the most recent Type A case reported from Burma was in June 2006.
7. The FAO reports that FMD serotype A is found in Asia, parts of South America and Africa, with occasional incursions into marginal areas such as the Middle-East. Between 2003 and 2007, outbreaks of serotype A were reported in several Southeast Asian countries, with most cases being reported from Thailand. Current reporting (2008) indicates that some pockets of serotype A were detected in Malaysia and Thailand.
8. Australia has a Production, Supply and Storage Agreement for FMD vaccine with Merial, a commercial FMD vaccine production company. This vaccine bank, which stores FMD antigen, is held at Merial's production facility at Pirbright, UK. The antigen would be formulated into vaccine as required. There is sufficient antigen to prepare vaccine for 500 000 cattle-equivalent doses for each of the nine FMD strains.
9. No, because vaccines are not available for all strains of FMD virus.
10. No.
11. Donating vaccine without a coherent regional disease control strategy is not considered to be an effective use of resources. Although vaccine can be usefully applied to help control FMD, other components of a robust strategy are required to assist in the overall control of FMD in the region, including in Cambodia.

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Australia has been an active supporter of the SEAFMD Campaign. SEAFMD involves the coordinated control of Foot and Mouth Disease by eight countries in the ASEAN region. These countries are Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. The campaign is coordinated through an OIE (Office International des Epizooties) Regional Coordination Unit in Bangkok with considerable support from the Australian Government's overseas aid program, administered by AusAID.

12. The Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) has a joint project with the Pakchong Laboratory and this involving AAHL, the United States Department of Homeland Security's Plum Island facility and SEAFMD Regional Reference Laboratory (RRL). AAHL and RRL continue to cooperate on regional issues and AAHL supports RRL and the SEAFMD campaign with advice and technical support where possible.
13. This project involves AAHL and the Plum Island facility assisting RRL with molecular studies on FMD virus isolates in Thailand. Also, AAHL will assist RRL in establishing a molecular diagnostic technique for FMD called real-time Polymerase Chain Reaction, or PCR. AAHL has been working with RRL for some time to establish a World Health Organisation (OIE) "twinning" project on capacity building at RRL to help them establish molecular techniques. Such a project would allow AAHL to provide more extensive support to RRL in its capacity as an OIE FMD reference laboratory. Finally, there is a proposed FMD project that would support work needed to mitigate the risks from FMD by working with live FMD overseas. This project contains a component linking AAHL and the RRL in a variety of activities.
14. AAHL has a link to all the National Veterinary Laboratories in SE Asia through an OIE veterinary program with a focus on AI diagnostic tests (a three year project). AAHL has three projects in Vietnam with the national Department of Animal Health laboratories in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. AAHL has a link to the Laos national laboratory through an ACIAR project on Classical Swine Fever. AAHL also has a large AusAID Avian Influenza project in Indonesia supporting capacity building for AI diagnostics.
15. AusAID has been supporting SEAFMD since its inception in 1997 and DAFF has provided (and continues to provide) technical support to the program.
16. DAFF still supports this work and provides some technical support to the program.

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17. Staff of the Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer within the department have been involved in a range of activities supporting SEAFMD including:

- design of surveillance strategies for the Malaysia-Thailand-Myanmar (MTM) zone consistent with OIE standards
- assistance in the development of the 2020 roadmap for the region
- assistance to a number of postgraduate students working on FMD related projects within Southeast Asia
- contributing to the MTM epidemiology network
- contributing to the meetings of the OIE Sub-Commission for FMD in Southeast Asia
- contributing to the meetings of the MTM Tristate Commission for FMD Freedom.

It is expected that this work will continue to be supported by the Australian Government as it is a core part of the overall strategy of capacity building in the region (i.e. part of the pre-border work program) so that disease control strategies can be improved 'at source'.

18. NA – see above

19. Global eradication of FMD would be the only assured way that any country could guarantee long-term freedom. Recognising that FMD remains widespread, Australia continues to focus on actions that manage the risk of entry to this country. For example, Australia assisted Indonesia in eradicating FMD in order to create a disease buffer zone and Australia is also assisting with eradication in Southeast Asia through involvement in the SEAFMD campaign.

20. The department is not aware of any estimates of the cost of attempting to eradicate FMD globally.

21. It has been estimated that an outbreak would cumulatively cost \$2-13 billion (Productivity Commission 2002). The loss of export markets for animal products would be the greatest contributor to this impact, since FMD free countries would not accept product from Australia (or infected zones of Australia) whilst Australia was considered infected.

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Question: PIAPH 05

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Avian Influenza

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus

1. How many cases of the highly pathogenic avian influenza strain H5N1 have been reported in the Asian region this year?
2. What is the global distribution of H5N1 and are cases increasing or decreasing?
3. Does H5N1 tend to be more prevalent in the northern hemisphere winter when human influenza is also at its peak?
4. Is H5N1 or a mutation of it the greatest biosecurity threat to Australia?
5. Is the Government confident that all nations are reporting avian influenza outbreaks following the initial cover ups?
6. Has there been any more cases of humans contracting H5N1 in the past twelve months?
7. What is the mortality rate amongst humans who have contract H5N1?
8. What is the mortality rate amongst poultry which contract H5N1?
9. What is the mortality rate amongst wild bird populations?
10. Are Australia's native bird populations (including emus) carriers of H5N1 and are they at risk of mass mortalities if there was a H5N1, or other strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza outbreak in Australia?
11. How does Australia contribute to the control of H5N1 within the animal population in the Asian region?
12. Are veterinary services in Southeast Asia able to cope with outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza, and do they have the facilities to undertake testing in the event of a large scale outbreak?
13. What is the status of an effective vaccination for H5N1? Have concerns been raised with inferior vaccines being used in the region which may increase the chance of a dangerous mutation of highly pathogenic avian influenza?
14. What quarantine measures are in place to deal with H5N1 and the onset of the northern hemisphere winter where flu strains in humans are circulating and mutating at a rapid rate?
15. What measures are in place to combat an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza within our poultry industry?

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Answer:

1. It is not feasible to quantify the total number of cases reported in the Asian region in 2008 because reports are often unreliable and inconsistent, particularly in countries where H5N1 avian influenza is endemic.
2. In 2008 HPAI outbreaks in poultry and cases in wild birds were reported in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia. A global analysis of the situation in mid to late 2008 indicated fewer outbreaks in poultry, fewer newly infected countries, fewer human cases and fewer deaths compared to the same period in 2006 and 2007. Of the 61 countries that have experienced an H5N1 outbreak, over 50 have successfully eliminated the disease. However, the virus remains entrenched in several countries and the threat of further outbreaks of HPAI in poultry (and sporadic cases in humans) persists.
3. H5N1 outbreaks generally follow a seasonal pattern. The colder weather of the northern hemisphere winter enhances virus survival and contributes to other risk factors such as wild bird migration and increased animal movement with humans during the northern holiday season.
4. H5N1 HPAI is one of a number of serious biosecurity threats to Australia.
5. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) believes that while there has been an improvement in disease awareness, outbreaks/cases of HPAI are still underestimated and underreported in many countries because of limitations in country disease surveillance systems.
6. Fifty-eight cases of human H5N1 were confirmed by the World Health Organisation in the past 12 months.
7. The World Health Organisation has confirmed 387 cases of human H5N1 with 245 deaths since 2003.
8. HPAI is a highly contagious viral disease that can cause up to 100% mortality in poultry.
9. Non-disease causing forms of avian influenza have been isolated from at least 105 species of wild birds worldwide. The effects of the H5N1 strain that originated in Asia are less clear. H5N1 mortalities have been observed in at least 60 species of birds.
10. Avian influenza virus is infective for almost all commercial, domestic and wild avian species. Avian influenza virus subtypes have been isolated from emus. Australian species are known to be sensitive to H5N1 and we could expect mortalities if high pathogenic H5N1 occurred in Australia. Surveillance of wild birds in Australia has not detected H5N1.
11. Australian assistance to combat emerging infectious diseases, including HPAI, is provided through a number of regional and bilateral programs. Regional-level support is provided in conjunction with the major multilateral and regional partners and organisations such as FAO, OIE, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) and the Association of Southeast Asian nations (ASEAN). Bilateral programs include programs to strengthen veterinary laboratory network and animal quarantine systems in Indonesia. The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy

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- undertakes regular collaborative surveys and quarantine capacity building projects with Indonesia, East Timor and Papua New Guinea.
12. In a June 2007 survey by the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank, 26 percent of countries in the Asia-Pacific region reported insufficient veterinary capacity to detect HPAI. A UN World Bank October 2008 report concluded that many countries, including those in the Asia Pacific region, continue to face economic, technical and human resource constraints in effective surveillance, identification and reporting of HPAI. The 2008 report stated four of 26 countries in the Asia Pacific region have inadequate access to laboratory facilities with HPAI diagnostic capacity for animals, three countries reported adequate access at regional or international levels only, while 19 reported adequate access within country. However, the quality and availability of access was not assessed in the report.
 13. A number of countries have indicated that they have sourced suitable commercially available vaccines for controlling H5N1 outbreaks. Australia is aware of concerns with quality control in the region, however, it is the responsibility of each country to establish quality assurance and control for safety and efficacy of vaccines.
 14. AQIS officers at airports, seaports and international mail centres have been on high alert for bird and poultry products since the first cases of avian influenza were reported in Asia in late 2003. Poultry meat and products considered to be an AI risk are not allowed into Australia. All incoming international mail is also subject to quarantine intervention. Additionally, incoming international passengers' baggage may be checked for quarantine risk items. The National Pandemic Influenza Airport Border Operations Plan (Fluborderplan) outlines the processes to deploy and operate border measures at designated Australian international airports in response to the threat, or actual transmission, of pandemic human influenza.
 15. Australia is well prepared to handle an outbreak of HPAI. Contingency procedures are outlined in the Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan (AUSVETPLAN) which describes the response measures that will be used should an outbreak occur. The Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA), ratified in 2002, established partnership arrangements between governments and the livestock industries for rapid and efficient response to emergency animal disease outbreaks, such as HPAI. The EADRA establishes basic operating principles and guidelines, and defines roles and responsibilities. It includes provision for formal consultation and dispute resolution between government and industry on resource allocation, funding, training and risk management, and ongoing biosecurity arrangements.

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Question: PIAPH 06

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Australian Animal Health Laboratory

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

1. How is the Australian Animal Health Laboratory at Geelong funded?
2. How much of its funding comes from the Commonwealth Government, industry, or state governments?
3. Provide a breakdown of individual funding in 2006/07, 2007/08, 2008/09
4. Was AAHL exempt from the government's four percent efficiency dividend?
5. If not why not?
6. What type of work is undertaken at AAHL?
7. What research is being undertaken at AAHL?
8. Is it a fact that work by AAHL scientists and staff has resulted in a new test for influenza being discovered and taken to the commercial stage?
9. Is it a fact that this new influenza test developed by AAHL to be used for Avian Influenza was instrumental in the control of the equine influenza outbreak?
10. When will this excellent work by AAHL be publically recognised?

Answer:

1. AAHL is managed by CSIRO but receives its primary operational funding through the Australian Government Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR) contribution to CSIRO and from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF). The research program is funded direct from DAFF and DIISR but also supplemented through support for specific research projects from industry including primary industry research and development corporations, from the United Nations specialised agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the International Atomic Energy Agency, from pharmaceutical companies and from other specialised research support agencies such as the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID).
2. See table below.

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3. Individual funding in 2006/07, 2007/08, 2008/09:

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Commonwealth Approp (via CSIRO)	8,136	9,534	9,834
Depreciation funding	11,474	11,474	14,114
			(Book entry. Does not represent cash received by AAHL)
DAFF	6,998	7,145	7,145
Other Commonwealth Depts	3,002	3,212	3,285
CRCs	972	920	900
State Govt	486	553	500
Private	3,500	3,200	3,200
TOTAL	34,568	36,038	38,978

NOTE: CSIRO has provided an additional \$24m over the last four years for capital refurbishments at AAHL.

4. No.
5. As a CSIRO-managed national facility, AAHL operates like every other component of CSIRO and as such is subject to the efficiency dividend.
6. AAHL provides a national diagnostic service for the detection and laboratory response to emergency animal diseases and their causative agents. It conducts a range of research activities to underpin this service including improvement of diagnostic tests, improved understanding of host pathogen relationships and improved control options such as vaccines or resistant animals. AAHL provides advice to government and industry through involvement in a range of committees and related national activities.

AAHL also provides a range of training activities both for Australian veterinarians and laboratory professionals. AAHL provides tests and reagents to state laboratories to enhance emergency animal disease detection and laboratory response and also manages the development of a national laboratory network for emergency animal disease diagnosis and response.

In order to effectively understand and mitigate the disease threats from overseas, AAHL has a range of activities outside of Australia. Critically, AusAID now supports projects operated by AAHL in a number of Asian countries that seek to enhance their laboratory capacities and reduce risks to Australia. On a more global basis, AAHL acts as a global reference centre for a number of key diseases such as avian influenza (AI) and SARS, and leads specific research activities such as the Global Foot and Mouth Research Alliance (GFRA).

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7. AAHL operates an extensive research program that underpins its national service role, as well as maximising the use of its high containment facility where any disease-causing agent can be safely held and investigated. The research focus is on mitigating the impact on Australian society and economy of the known livestock plagues, as well as new and emerging diseases, especially those that may affect humans. There is particular focus on the mechanisms of host-switching from animals to humans, such as SARS, avian influenza, and Hendra virus. A new and important area is that of predictive bio-modelling with the aim of moving from the traditional reactive response (“mopping up”) to pro-active outbreak prevention through managing risks from infectious diseases. The particular emphasis here is on insect- and water-borne diseases as the incidence of both is expected to increase as a consequence of climate change.
8. Yes, but not directly. A number of papers published by AAHL have led to the commercial development of range of influenza assays although it should be noted that none of the published work was directly marketable.
9. Yes. All the major assays used to detect equine influenza had originated out of work undertaken at AAHL on avian influenza and AAHL was directly responsible for transferring these assays to state laboratories in Australia.
10. CSIRO recently awarded AAHL the Service to Science Medal (including \$10,000 cash reward) in recognition of their work. This news has been disseminated internally and to all their stakeholders through their newsletter. The Australian Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre has also publicly acknowledged AAHL’s work in various public forums

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Question: PIAPH 07

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Equine Influenza

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

Equine Influenza

1. What advice has the Government received in relation to vaccinating Australian horses against equine influenza?
2. Has anyone in the industry been lobbying the Government to vaccinate horses against equine influenza?
3. How many meetings and with whom has the Minister or Department had with members of the equine industry in relation to vaccinating against equine influenza in Australia
4. How much would it cost to vaccinate the entire Australian equine population?
5. Who would pay?
6. Is vaccinating a viable option – what are the pros and cons of vaccinating?
7. What is the efficacy of equine influenza vaccinations?

Answer:

1. During the Australian equine influenza outbreak, the government received advice from the Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Disease (CCEAD) and an expert working group on a strategic vaccination program on how to protect susceptible horse populations in affected areas. The government has also received advice from a range of interested parties both supporting and arguing against the ongoing use of vaccination now that Australia is free from equine influenza.
2. Parts of the thoroughbred racing and breeding sectors of the Australian horse industry, including the Australian Racing Board and Thoroughbred Breeders Australia, have contacted the government on this issue.
3. During the Australian equine influenza outbreak, technical issues relating to vaccination against equine influenza were discussed at many of the fifty-six meetings of the CCEAD. CCEAD includes officers from the department and industry members.
Department officers and industry personnel are also members of the National Management Group which met 25 times throughout the response to the equine influenza outbreak. Vaccination issues were discussed at many of these meetings. A national government and industry summit held to consider the management of any future outbreak of equine influenza, including the issue of vaccination, included many members from national and state government authorities, including the department, the Australian horse industry and New Zealand authorities. It would be a substantial exercise to collate details of every meeting involving both the department and horse industry participants where vaccination was discussed.

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4. There are a number of variables that need to be considered before an estimate can be calculated. A working group will report to the government early next year on options for responding to a future outbreak including use of ongoing vaccination.
5. If preventative vaccination were to be considered outside of an emergency disease response situation under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement, individual horse owners would be responsible for funding the vaccination of their horses.
6. Any consideration of ongoing vaccination in the absence of disease cannot be done in isolation to the broader question of how a future outbreak of equine influenza would be managed under the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement. Vaccination of horses against equine influenza in the absence of disease would not automatically allow for free movement of horses during a subsequent outbreak. Neither would vaccination prevent a disease outbreak from recurring. Detection of infection in a vaccinated horse population can be delayed and sometimes masked. There would be cost implications for all sectors of the horse industry and these could significantly impact on owners of recreational horses. Vaccination could, however, be of some value to the growing international and domestic movements of horses as it reduces the risk of virus shedding by infected horses. In an outbreak, vaccination could decrease the severity and duration of the disease in individual animals.
7. Although vaccination can prevent disease, the available equine influenza vaccines neither fully prevent infection nor transmission of virus.

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Question: PIAPH 08

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

Abalone

1. What action is and has the Government taken since the Abalone Viral Ganglioneuritis (AVG) was confirmed in tissue taken from abalone in a live holding tank at a southern Tasmanian?
2. What is the impact of this virus on the abalone industry?
3. What support is being provided to the abalone industry in Tasmanian?

Answer:

1. Australian Government actions taken since the confirmation of abalone viral ganglioneuritis (AVG) in Tasmania include:
 - a. National coordination of the response to AVG through the Aquatic Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases (AqCCEAD).
 - b. International disease notification of the disease to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) in line with Australia's reporting obligations.
 - c. Advice on trade through the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service.
 - d. Diagnostic investigations carried out at the Australian Government's Australian Animal Health Laboratory at Geelong.
 - e. DAFF officers prepared a case definition to develop a common understanding of what constitutes a suspect or a confirmed case of AVG.
 - f. The Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer within DAFF offered to send technical personnel to assist but the Tasmanian Government indicated that it did not require further assistance at that time.
2. The major impact of AVG on the abalone industry in Tasmania has been the implementation of emergency control provisions, for example, Control Area and Restricted Area declarations. Direct impacts of the disease in Tasmania are limited to a single site (a processing facility) where the disease was detected. The processing facility was destocked, disinfected and further tested before it could resume operation.

In Victoria, AVG has had a significant impact on abalone farming through the required destocking of affected premises, and abalone fisheries through large quota reductions (to protect remaining abalone populations in affected areas).

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH 08 (continued)

3. The Australian Government has not provided any direct support to the Tasmanian abalone industry with respect to this detection of AVG. State and territory governments have responsibility for the management of animal diseases (including aquatic animal diseases) within their jurisdiction. The Commonwealth is responsible for quarantine or international trade issues, making any necessary international disease notifications, and facilitating national coordination of any disease response.

Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2008

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: PIAPH 09

Division/Agency: Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health

Topic: Equine Influenza Levy

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Williams asked:

The proposed EI levy, to be imposed in the event of another outbreak, is anticipated to be imposed on all animals including eventing, recreational and farming.

1. Has there been a study undertaken to determine in dollar terms what effect exempting horses/owners other than those in the professional racing industries from the levy?
2. If there is to be another outbreak, it is unlikely it will be as a result of actions of those in these non professional areas, so why should they pay for the bad management of others?

Answer:

1. No.
2. Horses imported for the non-professional areas of the industry pose similar risks of bringing exotic diseases into Australia as those in the commercial sector. Of the 515 horses imported to Australia from countries other than New Zealand in 2007, 47 per cent were not from the thoroughbred or standardbred sectors.

All horses, whether part of the commercial or non-commercial sectors of the industry, benefit equally from the containment and eradication of emergency diseases. It is therefore very important to have in place an equitable levy mechanism covering the breadth of horse industry sectors.