



Our Ref: 05/06/01

Jeannette Radcliffe
Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
The Australian Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Radcliffe

RE: Submission to Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

I refer to the letter dated 4 April 2008.

The Western Australian Meat Industry Authority is a statutory authority under the Minister for Agriculture and Food, Hon Kim Chance MLC. It is governed by a Board made up of livestock producers, livestock processors and a representative of meat industry employees and the Director General of the Department of Agriculture and Food. The Authority offers the following submission:-

Lamb branding

The Western Australian Meat industry Authority (WAMIA) is the responsible regulator for lamb and hogget branding in Western Australia under the *Western Australian Meat Industry Act (1976)* and *Western Australian Meat Industry Regulations (1985)*. Refer Appendix 1 for legislative detail.

Section 16 of the *Western Australian Meat Industry Act (1976)* specifies that a function of the Authority is to

Implement schemes and practices for the branding of any carcass or meat,
As such it is the duty of the abattoir to brand prescribed animals slaughtered for human consumption domestically (Section 24C).

Regulatory requirements are detailed in Part III of the *Western Australian Meat Industry Authority Regulations (1985)*.

Other salient points are:-

- Carcasses imported from other States must be branded prior to human consumption in Western Australia.
- The manufacture and use of branding devices is regulated by WAMIA.
- Inspectors are permitted on meat processing sites to examine the branding operations.

Branding is applicable and mandatory to all domestic lamb processing premises.

WAMIA has the additional monitoring controls in place to ensure accurate product description on the matter of hogget and lamb branding, namely:-

1. A Compliance Division with adequate resources to monitor and audit these requirements;
2. A Compliance Committee which is made up of representatives from the meat processing and retail sector, WAMIA, the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS), Aus-Meat and the Department of Health;
3. A Memorandum Of Understand with the Police Stock Squad.

All of the aforementioned measures have provided the Western Australian Meat Industry and therefore the Western Australian consumer with confidence that lamb sourced in Western Australia is as described.

The Western Australian Meat Industry Authority has prosecuted on the inappropriate use of the lamb brand in the past.

We note however, that there has been some discussion over recent years to remove the requirement for lamb branding. The Western Australian Meat Industry supports branding of lamb carcasses for the following reasons:-

- Consumer protection, is the main benefit of lamb branding. The brand assures customers that the meat (as described) has been slaughtered and processed at a licensed establishment in accordance with hygiene and safety standards and that the food is fit for human consumption.
- It is easily recognizable and easy to regulate and check in retail outlets.
- No alternative system has been found that is better than branding. Any proposed industry system may not have consumer confidence.
- Branding is cheaper than paying for graders and audits.
- The system is simple, similar to the identification of organic bananas.
- Despite the branding system, substitution does occur, but under a system without branding, substitution would be more prevalent.
- Branding assists in tracing the origins of the meat in the event of a food safety incident.
- The benefits of branding (for reasons of traceability and product integrity) benefits the whole of the supply chain.
- Branding can also be used to identify meat that is not fit for human consumption (pet food), which may otherwise be undetectable.

Contact me on the numbers listed below should you have any queries.

Yours sincerely



Renata Paliskis-Bessell
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

29 April 2008

APPENDIX 1: LEGISLATIVE BASIS FOR LAMB BRANDING

24C Duties of owner of prescribed abattoir

- (1) Subject to subsection (3), the owner of a prescribed abattoir shall ensure that every carcass of a prescribed animal slaughtered in that abattoir for human consumption in the State which carcass possesses the characteristics prescribed in relation to the branding of carcasses of that kind of animal —
 - (a) is branded in accordance with the requirements of the regulations; and
 - (b) except with the written permission of the Authority, is not branded in any manner other than or in addition to the manner provided for in the regulations,

before the carcass is removed from the abattoir.

11. Lamb — prescribed characteristics and brand

- (1) The prescribed characteristics of lamb are that it is a sheep that has not cut a permanent incisor tooth.
- (2) Except as provided in subregulations (5) and (7), every carcass of lamb slaughtered for human consumption in the State may —
 - (a) in the case of a carcass of lamb slaughtered at an abattoir that is not accredited by Aus-Meat, only be branded with the design illustrated in Part A of Schedule 1; and
 - (b) in the case of a carcass of lamb slaughtered at an abattoir that is accredited by Aus-Meat, only be branded with a design specified by the Authority.
- (2a) Before branding any carcass as lamb under subregulation (2) the owner shall ensure that —
 - (a) the fatness of the carcass has been determined by or under the supervision of an inspector in accordance with the following tissue depths at a site over the 12th rib and 11 cm from the backbone —

Fat class	Tissue depth (mm)
1	up to 5
2	over 5 and up to 10
3	over 10 and up to 15
4	over 15 and up to 20
5	over 20.

Penalty: \$2,000.

- (3) A brand referred to in subregulation (2) shall be applied in the manner illustrated in Part C of Schedule 1 or in a manner specified in writing by the Authority using a red ink of a kind approved for the purpose by the Authority.
- (4) An owner shall cause all sheep carcasses to be mouthed by or under the supervision of an inspector, before the head of the carcass is removed and as soon as possible after slaughter, to determine whether or not the carcasses are required to be branded under subregulation (2).

Penalty: \$500.

- (5) Subject to subregulation (7), a carcass of sheep presented for inspection under regulation 10 and accompanied by a certificate from a meat inspection service in the State in which the animal was slaughtered certifying —
 - (a) that the carcass is of a sheep that has not cut a permanent incisor tooth; and
 - (b) that the carcass was branded by or under the supervision of a meat inspection service inspector of that State,

may only be branded as lamb with the design approved by that meat inspection service.
- (6) A brand referred to in subregulation (5) shall be applied —
 - (a) in the manner illustrated in Part C of Schedule 1; or
 - (b) where the brand is applied as a stamp —
 - (i) at least once to the carcass where the entire carcass is imported; or
 - (ii) to each individual cut where the carcass has been processed into cuts,

using an approved red ink.