



- SUBMISSION -
QUARANTINE AND BIOSECURITY REVIEW
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Cattle Council considers this a most important Review. The recommendations from the Review, more importantly those recommendations that are implemented, may have a far reaching effect on the Australian cattle industry.

Cattle Council of Australia Inc (CCA) is the Peak Industry Council representing cattle producers. The Council's Mission Statement is "Creating an environment for the sustained profitability of Australian beef cattle producers."

The Council is a member of the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) and its Quarantine and Animal Health and Welfare Sub-committee and provides the Committee's Chairperson. The current chair is Mr Bill Bray, President of CCA. Cattle Council fully endorses the NFF submission to this enquiry.

The NFF submission to your Review will propose 26 principles as agreed by the sub-committee. CCA strongly endorses those principles.

Rather than address each of NFF's 26 principles in turn, this submission will highlight issues that are particularly important to our industry.

Risk

Risk and the assessment of risk are high on our agenda.

- We agree that zero risk is unattainable and impractical. Minimal risk, or as low a risk as possible, is the acceptable requirement.
- Australia has the sovereign right to conduct its own Import Risk Assessment, both desktop and on-ground, to ensure the suitability of product destined for Australia.
- We consider that in-country inspections are essential for those seeking to export beef and beef products to Australia. To fund this approach we suggest the current requirement to security test some 81% of passengers entering Australia could be reduced to say 50% freeing up funds to address this and other important issues.
- The relationship between AQIS and BA with regard to import protocols requires a new trigger mechanism to ensure that instances such as the importation of Brazilian beef and its subsequent disposal at Wagga Wagga tip as well as the incursion of Equine Influenza do not occur. Such a trigger mechanism would need to ensure that the process for applications for import, as clearly exemplified by the Brazilian beef incident, was able to disaggregate the regular or standard applications to irregular, potentially problematic applications. In the instance of Brazilian beef, this application should have been removed from the regular 'stream' of applications and assessed at a higher level within Government. It is imperative that adequate resources are deployed to conduct in-country inspections. Furthermore, in the instance of

beef imports, applicant countries must be able to demonstrate robust systems, as we have in Australia, that ensures product integrity and traceability.

- States play a vital role in post border response. Recently the interaction between AQIS and the States seems to have lost the positive and constructive interaction that used to exist.
- States also appear to be dedicating insufficient staff to surveillance programs, hence increasing the potential for risk. Similarly, States' response to exotic disease incursions suffers through insufficient staff.

Exotic Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA)

- Equine Influenza has shown how important the EADRA is to the animal industries. As an outcome, there may be moves to make a number of changes to the EADRA. Industry will be monitoring this process carefully and will be reluctant to make changes unless deemed absolutely necessary.
- The Plant Response Agreement is supported.
- In the case of an animal incursion, all people represented on the National Management Group should ensure they have been through NMG/CCEAD training so they know the details of the EADRA.
- Stock Standstill is an essential part of an incursion. If implemented successfully it can save millions of dollars. Industry has concerns with the effectiveness of the current stock standstill arrangement. More work must be done to ensure National consistency in Stock Standstill. CCA supports a Stock Standstill exercise.
- The Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) is an essential part of an exotic incursion response. The Government must ensure that AAHL is suitably resourced to effectively perform its role.
- A similar response agreement for exotic weeds would be difficult to garner support from industry as it is open ended.

General

- We support an independent Review every five years as quarantine and biosecurity is critically important to our industry's future.
- Communication and consultation between Government agencies and Peak Industry Councils must be improved. It would be fair to say this has occurred in recent years on a piecemeal basis. AQIS in particular should have a more direct information channel to affected industries during the implementation of import protocols.
- We consider that Government's historical approach to filling high-level management positions in this area with multi-skilled staff who have little to no knowledge of this specialised field is worthy of reconsideration.
- We understand that the quarantine facilities in Victoria are privatised and subject to AQIS audit and are successful. We could support privatising all animal industry quarantine facilities; however, significant consultation would be expected if Government was to proceed down this path.
- Specific concern has been raised within our membership regarding the Government's response (through AQIS and NORFORCE) to illegal entry into Australia with northern regions not having adequate personnel and budget to investigate and control illegal activity (eg. fishing) with the potential for incursion extremely high.
- We do not support a Statutory Authority to replace AQIS, Biosecurity and the Product Integrity Animal and Plant Health Division for the following reasons:

- The quarantine system must ultimately be accountable to a Minister and the Parliament given the regulatory framework under which it necessarily must operate.
- The Australian Government is required to fulfil its international obligations under the World Trade Organisation Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement.
- Nationally consistent legislation for animal health and welfare is essential to an effective and efficient quarantine system in Australia. Quarantine processes should operate within a regulatory framework and within a structure where there is effective governance processes in place to ensure quarantine and IRA activities and outcomes are managed independently with minimal political interference.

Regards



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Cattle Council of Australia