



HORSE INDUSTRY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Meeting 1

**Wednesday 30th July 2008
10:00am – 1:00pm**

Attendees

Ann McDonald	AQIS - Chairman
Kevin Doyle	Australian Veterinary Association
Patricia Ellis	Australian Horse Industry Council
Andrew Harding	Australian Racing Board
Peter Baldwin	Harness Racing Australia
John Peatfield	Thoroughbred Breeders Australia
Franz Venhaus	Equestrian Federation of Australia
Greg Northcott	New Zealand Bloodstock
Josh Murphy	New Zealand Bloodstock
Quentin Wallace	International Racing Transport
Chris Burke	International Racing Transport
Carly Phillips	Melbourne Airport
Brant Smith	Biosecurity Australia
Narelle Clegg	AQIS
Morgan Kiely	AQIS - Secretariat
Scott Channing	AQIS - Secretariat
Murli Baker-Gabb	AQIS - Observer
Helen Walker	AQIS - Observer
Amy Guihot	AQIS - Observer
Gerry Smith	DAFF Corporate Policy - Observer

Apologies

Crispin Bennett Crispin Bennett International Horse Transport

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed members to the first meeting of the Horse Industry Consultative Committee. She then invited each person to introduce themselves and thanked everyone for being able to participate at such short notice.

The Chair advised that her intention was to ensure the Committee was inclusive and looked forward to working with industry and having frank and open discussions on horse quarantine, biosecurity and market access issues.

2. Terms of Reference

The Chair advised that the primary focus of the Committee would be to provide advice to AQIS on the implementation of the Government's response to the Equine Influenza Inquiry Report as well as to consider and discuss broader horse import and export issues.

The Committee agreed that under section 1.0 'Function' of the Terms of Reference and Governance document that the issue of animal health and welfare as it relates to quarantine and biosecurity should be included. Ann also clarified that market access issues related to both imports and exports.

The Committee accepted the 'Aim' and 'Terms of Reference' sections without further amendments.

3. Committee Membership and Governance

It was agreed that the Australian Veterinary Association should be identified as a specific representative of the Committee under the 'Membership' section along with the existing reference to representatives from the Australian horse, horse transport and aviation industries.

The Committee discussed whether other horse representative bodies (breeding societies) should also be invited to join the Committee such as the Arabian Horse Society of Australia and the Australian Quarter Horse Association.

Action:

- a. Quentin Wallace to provide Ann McDonald with a list of horse organisations that regularly import and export horses.**
- b. Patricia Ellis to discuss representation of equine breed societies with Dr Barry Smyth, President, Australian Horse Industry Council and advise the Committee.**

The Committee agreed to allow members to nominate 'alternatives' in circumstances where they are not able to attend meetings.

Under section 5.0 'Terms of Office' the Committee agreed that the term for each member should be three years after which time membership will be reviewed. Further, existing members may have their term renewed.

The Committee discussed several issues relating to section 6.2 'Code of Conduct' mainly relating to issues of confidentiality, representations to the Minister and Secretary, and comments to the media. The Committee agreed to remove sections 6.2.10 and 6.2.11 under the 'Code of Conduct' section and

addwording to section 6.3.1 'Confidentiality' indicating that talking points may be prepared for members on particular issues if necessary.

Members were advised that it was the intention that the minutes of each meeting be made public and posted on the AQIS website. Industry members were encouraged to circulate the minutes of meeting widely to their respective constituents.

The Committee agreed to hold up to three meetings every calendar year, the timing of each would be determined at the prior meeting. The number of meetings and their timing would be reviewed annually. It was also agreed that the venue for meetings would alternate between Sydney and Melbourne.

A quorum of the Committee is to be constituted by attendance of at least five industry representatives.

Finally, the Committee agreed to review their terms of reference every three years.

4. Government's Response to the Equine Influenza Inquiry including progress with implementation

The Chair provided the Committee with an overview of the implementation plan AQIS has developed to give effect to the Government's response to the Equine Influenza Inquiry Report. She confirmed that the Government has agreed to all 38 recommendations and it was her role to ensure each one is implemented. A Project Plan had been finalised by Government and was provided to the Committee for information.

The Government's response to each of the Equine Influenza Inquiry recommendations was discussed and an update on progress with implementation was provided. During the discussion the Committee considered a number of important issues.

Firstly, concerns were expressed regarding the cost of new procedures and infrastructure that is required for horse imports. Clarification was sought on whether industry would be expected to meet these costs. It was suggested that costs may reduce future imports.

The Committee was advised that recommendation 37 of the Equine Influenza Inquiry Report called for a comprehensive fee review to be undertaken and that this process would provide a means to assess the financial impact of the new quarantine and biosecurity measures on industry. Further, there were several reviews to report before a full assessment of activities and costs could be completed including the Import Risk Analysis (IRA) to be conducted by Biosecurity Australia, the assessment of the Expert Group and the report of the Interim Inspector-General of Horse Importation.

With respect to import conditions, members were advised that there was no scope to change these as they reflected the Government's response to the Inquiry. The Committee noted however that the reviews to be conducted may lead to changes to import conditions in the future.

The Committee was advised that inspection of pre export quarantine facilities is currently being completed by Biosecurity Australia and AQIS. The Chair advised that AQIS appreciated the efforts of importers to meet the requirements of recommendation 13.

The Committee discussed the review to be undertaken by the Expert Group and noted that a workshop would be held in Canberra in mid-late September between the Expert Group, Biosecurity Australia and the Interim Inspector General of Horse Importation to agree an approach to the review. The Chair advised that HICC members are also expected to participate in the workshop and proposed that a sub-committee be selected to attend and comment on any review reports. The Committee agreed that IRT, New Zealand Bloodstock, Melbourne Airport and the Australian Veterinary Association would attend the workshop. Crispin Bennett would also be invited to participate.

As part of the post arrival quarantine review the Expert Group will also assess animal health and welfare issues.

Action:

- c. HICC Secretariat to invite Crispin Bennett to the workshop on the post arrival quarantine review.**

The Committee discussed recommendation 17 relating to the establishment of facilities at ports of arrival other than Sydney and Melbourne in the event that a plane is diverted, and agreed to consider options at the next Committee meeting.

The Committee was advised renewal of the leases at Spotswood and Eastern Creek Quarantine Stations is currently being considered by AQIS, in line with the Equine Influenza Inquiry Report recommendation.

In relation to recommendation 22 of the Equine Influenza Inquiry Report, AQIS would not be able to finalise a budget for the Horse Import Program until the fee review outlined earlier has been completed.

An overview of the work that had been completed and which is currently underway to update work instructions (WI) and standard operating procedures (SOP) for AQIS and non-AQIS personnel was provided. In developing WIs and SOPs AQIS would liaise with stakeholders and seek their comments. The Chair mentioned that all major proposed amendments to instructional material in the future would be provided to the Committee for comment and suggested that this issue would be a standing item on the Committee's agenda.

The Committee discussed the two work instructions that have been prepared for non-AQIS personnel, the first relating to freighter aircraft operations personnel and the second on horse importer responsibilities. AQIS advised that the freighter aircraft operations personnel work instruction had been finalised following consultation with horse import agents in both Victoria and New South Wales. The document was forwarded to the above via email along with decontamination instructions. The Horse Importer Responsibilities Work Instruction is continuing to be developed and AQIS would be consulting further with stakeholders before it is finalised. AQIS will circulate the freighter aircraft operations document and importer responsibilities document to committee members after the meeting.

Action:

d. AQIS to circulate the freighter aircraft operations document and importer responsibilities document

The Committee discussed whether any quarantine and biosecurity training would be offered to private veterinarians, along the lines of training provided for APAV modules. AQIS advised that training is occurring and consideration would be given its inclusion in APAV modules.

Action:

e. AQIS to consider the inclusion of quarantine and biosecurity training into the APAV modules.

A number of Committee members raised concerns with Equine Influenza Inquiry Report recommendation 32, the taking of nasopharyngeal swabs. The concerns related to appropriateness of this measure, animal welfare and occupational health and safety issues. Biosecurity Australia advised that this measure would be considered as part of the IRA process.

The Committee noted that there were likely to be changes made to the *Quarantine Act* to give effect to the role of the Inspector-General of Horse Importation. A review of the Act would also be undertaken to ensure AQIS officers had the necessary powers to perform their duties, with further legislative amendments occurring if necessary.

Finally, members were advised that work was underway to increase horse fees to give effect to recommendation 38. The Committee advised that the fee differentiation was unjust and questioned whether it would stand up to a legal challenge. Further, they indicated that most horses, apart from those that are imported for racing, come in to Australia under permanent import conditions. The Chair advised that the term 'temporary' in the recommendation has been interpreted to mean the length of stay not the nature of the import protocols and that the revised determination has defined temporary as 'a period of no longer than 6 months'.

5. Biosecurity Australia Update – Horse Import and Export Protocols

Imports

Biosecurity Australia provided the Committee with a brief overview of its role, highlighting that they provide advice to AQIS on import and export issues and are responsible for completing formal IRAs. In performing their work Biosecurity Australia consults widely with industry stakeholders.

The Committee were informed that Biosecurity Australia would engage and Expert Group for the horse IRA. It was likely to be completed as a non-regulated IRA which would take approximately 12 months. Committee members were encouraged to register as stakeholders on the Biosecurity Australia website.

Biosecurity Australia is working closely with AQIS in implementing the Government's response to the Equine Influenza Inquiry Report and is aware of the difficulties in implementing some of the recommendations. Advice was provided that all measures will be considered during the IRA process.

Biosecurity Australia advised that the interim measures for the importation of horse from the United States of America and European Union had been updated in early July and that interim measures for horses from the United Arab Emirates and Macau were almost complete and are currently being finalised. Singapore and Hong Kong are a priority for future work and interim measures for horses from these countries would be completed over the next few weeks.

Exports

In relation to horse exports, issues with Vietnam had been resolved however there remain further points to be addressed for exports to Malaysia, Taiwan and Thailand. Biosecurity Australia is working with the Department's overseas agricultural counsellors to resolve these.

The Committee raised the issue of showering into post arrival quarantine stations and whether this practice needs to continue given that equine influenza has been eradicated from Australia. Biosecurity Australia will review this requirement. The Department's Product Integrity and Animal and Plant Health Division have sought recognition of Australia's equine influenza freedom from the OIE. This issue was important for trade with New Zealand and technical discussions would be held between the Department and New Zealand MAFF in the near future.

Finally, the Chair advised that the Committee had an important role to play in assisting Biosecurity Australia to identify priorities in their work program.

6. Other Business

The Committee discussed three matters under other business. The first related to consignments whereby horses are imported and exported on the same plane. The Committee agreed that the first consignment in Melbourne under the new procedures had not gone smoothly although subsequent arrivals have been successful. The Committee agreed that there are things that everyone can do to speed up the turn around of aircraft with grooms and air attendants playing a key role. Further, a quick turn around of aircraft is also critical from an animal welfare perspective. The appropriateness of some of the measures at the airport was questioned by some Committee members however Biosecurity Australia advised that all horses are presumed to be a biosecurity risk until they are cleared from post arrival quarantine.

The second issue related to non-AQIS personnel at the airports. The Chair referred to the development of guidelines for industry involved in the unloading of horses at the airport and noted that these were aimed at giving industry a clearer understanding of the biosecurity risks.

Thirdly, the Chair mentioned to the Committee the role of Professor Peter Shergold in providing independent advice to the Minister on implementation of the Government's response. Professor Shergold is keen to speak with industry stakeholders prior to submitting his first report to the Minister in mid-October. Committee members were asked if they had any objections with AQIS providing their contact details to Professor Shergold. The Committee agreed to AQIS to providing their contact details to Professor Shergold.

Next Meeting

The next face-to-face meeting of the Committee was proposed for Wednesday 29 October 2008 at the AQIS office in Melbourne.