

11 June 1999

ANIMAL QUARANTINE POLICY MEMORANDUM 1999/41

Chief Veterinary Officers, all States and the NT
Animal Programs Section, AQIS Operations
Office of the Australian CVO
Animal and Plant Health Branch, NOAPH
Veterinary Counsellors, Washington, Brussels & Seoul
Agricultural Counsellor, Tokyo
Australian Dairy Industry Council
Meat and Livestock Association

Australian Alpaca Association
Australian Dairy Industry Council
Australian Egg Industry Association
Australian Horse Council
Australian Ostrich Association

Australian Trout and Salmon Farmers Association
Tasmanian Salmonid Growers Association Ltd
Australian Seafood Importers Association
Australian Fisheries Management Authority

Division of Marine Research, CSIRO
Australian Seafood Industry Council
Australian Institute of Marine Science
ACIAR Fisheries Coordinator
PIJAC
Tuna Boat Owners Association
Standing Committee on Fisheries & Aquaculture
Aquaculture Committee
Wildlife Australia, Environment Australia
Wildlife Protection Section, Environment Australia
Chief Veterinary Officer, MAF RA, NZ

CSIRO Division of Animal Health
National Farmers' Federation
Quarantine and Animal Health Task Force, NFF
Australian Animal Health Council
Australian Veterinary Association
Australian Livestock Exporters' Council
National Meat Association of Australia
Australian Registered Cattle Breeders' Association

Australian Poultry Industries' Association
Australian Registered Cattle Breeders' Association
Deer Industry Association of Australia
National Poultry Association
Pork Council of Australia

Fisheries and Aquaculture Branch, AFFA
Fisheries Research & Development Corporation
Fishing Industry Advisory Committee
Australian Recreational & Sport Fishing Confederation
Aquaculture CRC Limited
Australian Prawn Farmer's Association
Australian Aquaculture Forum
Food and Beverage Importers Council
WA Fishing Industry Council
Health and Environment Committee
Aquatic Animal Disease Experts
Scientific and Research Organisations
Fishing, Industry and Community Organisations
EU Delegation, Canberra

GUIDELINES FOR THE APPROVAL OF COUNTRIES TO EXPORT ANIMALS (INCLUDING FISH) AND THEIR PRODUCTS TO AUSTRALIA.

1. INTRODUCTION

Where generic conditions for the importation of animals or animal products are developed as a result of a generic risk analysis, it will generally be appropriate to specify as part of the conditions that permits will only be issued for importations from countries that have been specifically approved by AQIS. Approval would normally be based on an assessment of the ability of the certifying authority of the country to provide informed and reliable certification that Australia's quarantine requirements have been met. The 'approved country' approach provides a mechanism for rapid introduction of new controls on importations from a particular country in the event of a change in the animal health status of that country or where AQIS detects breaches of quarantine requirements, such as fraudulent certification.

AQIS takes into account the following criteria when considering the approval of countries to export animals/products to Australia:

- . the effectiveness of veterinary services and other relevant certifying authorities,
- . the animal health status of the country,
- . legislative controls over animal health, including quarantine policies and practices,
- . the standard of reporting to the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) of major contagious disease outbreaks,
- . effectiveness of veterinary laboratory services, including compliance with relevant international standards,
- . effectiveness of systems for control over certification/documentation of products intended for export to Australia.

The import conditions will identify the key risk management issues that should be considered in the approval of countries.

This paper provides a framework, based on guidelines as specified in section 1.4.3 of the OIE International Health Code for the assessment of a country for approval to export to Australia. Although some countries may be able to provide quantitative data, in most cases AQIS's assessment will be based on qualitative information.

Where import requirements include pre-export processing as part of the risk management measures, AQIS may restrict the issue of permits to product prepared in plants that have been formally approved by the exporting country authority and/or AQIS. Guidelines for the approval of plants for the processing of animal products for export to Australia are also included in this paper.

These guidelines refer to terrestrial, aquatic and avian species and their products.

2. CRITERIA FOR THE APPROVAL OF EXPORTING COUNTRIES

AQIS considers that exporting countries are responsible for the sanitary standard of goods exported to Australia. Where product is sourced in one country and exported from another, AQIS holds the exporting country responsible for the health certification that accompanies those goods. In this context, it is the exporting country and its official certifying authority that must be approved.

In some exporting countries, AQIS may assess several competent authorities, including the relevant authority for animal health, fish health and human health. These authorities may operate at a Federal, State or provincial level.

2.1 Countries with an established export trade in animals/products to Australia.

This section deals with countries that regularly export to Australia items such as live animals, genetic material and animal products in commercial volume. It does not include countries that export items such as laboratory specimens, artefacts and samples for evaluation, ie non-commercial exports or countries that export products that are exempt from quarantine control.

AQIS would normally approve without formal assessment those countries that have a history of exporting animals/products in compliance with Australia's sanitary requirements. All

approvals remain under review and can be suspended on an emergency basis at any time. Such action may be taken, for example, if AQIS were to detect serious non-compliance, such as the provision of false certification by a regulatory authority.

AQIS monitors the performance of approved countries in reporting OIE listed diseases, and notifying Australia of changes in disease status, including any incursions of disease that might affect bilateral trade in animals/products. On the basis of formal bilateral agreement, exporting countries may undertake to directly notify Australia of changes in status for diseases other than those listed by the OIE.

AQIS will monitor the performance of approved countries via routine collection of intelligence on disease, including from scientific literature and internet postings, through the conduct of visits and inspections and by liaison with other veterinary authorities (including chief veterinary officers of Australian states/territories). If AQIS becomes aware that unreported serious disease is present in the country of export, approval may be suspended pending clarification of the situation.

2.2 Countries with no established export trade in animals/ products to Australia

AQIS's formal assessment of a country for approval to export to Australia, may include:

- . examination of information supplied by the country,
- . consideration of the results of an assessment by Australia's major trading partners to the country as an exporter of like commodities (such assessment will take into account the extent to which the regulatory requirements of trading partners are consistent with those of Australia)
- . formal evaluation of the country's veterinary services and/or certifying authority (this may involve country visits by AQIS or AQIS authorised officers).

a) An effective veterinary/fish health service

An approved country should have national veterinary and fish health authorities, which are responsible for animal health, quarantine, export certification and international reporting of the country's animal disease status.

- . Where non-government veterinarians provide export services, they should be Official Veterinarians as defined in the OIE Code. The national veterinary authority must be responsible for the overall system of control of the export-related activities of private veterinarians, including arrangements for training, auditing and compliance.
- . The performance of the certifying authority should be subject to independent audit and a satisfactory level of competency must be maintained.

b) Animal health status of the country of origin/export

The country should be free from or have effective zoning of diseases as appropriate to AQIS's quarantine requirements. This should be supported by legislative controls such as mandatory notification of disease outbreaks and official control programs.

c) Quarantine measures

AQIS will consider the disease status of neighbouring countries and the effectiveness of border measures and buffer zones in preventing disease incursions in assessing countries for approval to export to Australia.

d) Animal health controls

An approved country should be able to demonstrate mechanisms for official notification and control or eradication of diseases identified in the import risk analysis as important in relation to the animal species/product in question. Animal health controls should include arrangements for animal health surveillance, regulatory controls for specified diseases and a formal system of response to animal disease events. AQIS will take into account the country's policies with respect to outbreaks of diseases of concern.

Border controls should be effective in preventing the entry and establishment of significant exotic disease agents relevant to the animal species/product in question.

There should be legislative provisions covering movement controls and inspection procedures in relation to the prevention, control and eradication of disease.

e) Performance in reporting disease

AQIS will take into account the performance of approved countries in reporting OIE listed diseases and significant new or emerging diseases and of notification to Australia of incursions of disease relevant to the bilateral trade in animals/products. If AQIS becomes aware that serious disease is present, unreported, in the country of export, the country's approved status may be suspended, pending clarification, or withdrawn.

f) Access to laboratories that can conduct recognised diagnostic tests to an international standard of competence.

It is accepted that not all countries are able to perform all the necessary tests to definitively diagnose all diseases. Countries should, however, have access to laboratories that meet the OIE Standard for the diagnosis of diseases that AQIS identifies (in an import risk analysis) as being of concern. They should also have competence in the collection, preservation and transport of specimens to these laboratories.

g) Appropriate arrangements for certification/documentation.

Countries should be able to demonstrate:

- . legislative controls over the process of export of animals and animal products, to provide for enforcement of Australia's import requirements. This includes supervision by the official veterinary (or other competent) authority of the export certification process;
- . legislative arrangements that provide for the approval/registration of export premises and provide powers to deny or withdraw registration for premises or certification for commodities as the case may be;

- . arrangements to ensure that certifying officers performing official duties have no conflict of interest;
- . a system of control that provides for reliable correlation of the results of inspections with the documentation provided for export consignments and
- . a system of audit and review of official and private certifying procedures.

3. CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL OF EXPORTING FACILITIES

Where there is an appropriate Australian standard (for example, relating to inspection requirements) the exporting country would be expected to follow a standard that would provide an equivalent outcome to that provided by the Australian standard.

Where the certifying and/or veterinary services in the exporting country have previously been assessed and approved, AQIS will normally base approval of processing plants on advice from the certifying authority that the plant meets AQIS's requirements.

In cases where the certifying authority in the exporting country has not previously been assessed, AQIS may conduct an on-site assessment of a plant.

The processing plant will normally be required to demonstrate, as appropriate:

- . suitable separation of raw and processed product;
- . reliable compliance with minimum processing requirements for the product;
- . auditable records of information required by AQIS, for example on the source of raw materials and ingredients, processing records and test results;
- . controls to prevent post-processing contamination; and
- . standards of hygienic construction and operation that provide equivalent public health safeguards to those provided by relevant Australian standards.

CONSULTATION

The Chief Veterinary Officer of State/Territory Departments of Agriculture in Australia, the Commonwealth Chief Veterinary Officer and his counterparts in New Zealand, Canada and the United States of America have been consulted in the preparation of this Memorandum. Comment should be provided to the contact officer whose details appear below by 9 July 1999.

Confidentiality

Respondents are advised that, subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* and the *Privacy Act 1982*, all submissions received in response to Animal Quarantine Policy Memoranda will be publicly available and may be listed or referred to in any papers or reports prepared on the subject matter of the Memoranda.

The Commonwealth reserves the right to reveal the identity of a respondent unless a request for anonymity accompanies the submission. Where a request for anonymity does not accompany the submission the respondent will be taken to have consented to the disclosure of his or her identity for the purposes of Information Privacy Principle 11 of the Privacy Act.

The contents of the submission will not be treated as confidential unless they are marked 'confidential' and they are capable of being classified as such in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

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