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26 May 1998

ANIMAL QUARANTINE POLICY MEMORANDUM 1998/45

Chief Veterinary Officers, all States and the NT
Animal Programs Section, AQIS Operations
Office of the Australian CVO
Animal Diseases/Incidents Section, LPD, DPIE
Animal and Plant Health Branch, BRS
Veterinary Counsellors, Washington, Brussels & Seoul
Agricultural Counsellor, Tokyo

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
Chief Veterinary Officer, MAF RA, NZ

Pork Council of Australia
Executive Director Pig Research and Development
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Australasian Pig Institute, University of Queensland,
Gatton Qld
Australian Pork Corporation

EU Delegation, Canberra
Veterinary Attache, US Embassy, Canberra

IMPORT RISK ANALYSIS: PIG MEAT

CONSULTATION ON APPROACH

This Animal Quarantine Policy Memorandum (AQPM) requests your comments on AQIS' proposed approach to a review of quarantine policy on the importation of pig meat.

Current quarantine conditions

Under current policy, uncanned pig meat may be imported from the south island of New Zealand, Canada and Denmark. Pig meat from Canada and Denmark must be cooked before release from quarantine in order to address quarantine risk associated with the potential presence in the meat of the disease Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS) which does not occur in Australia (or New Zealand) but is present in Canada and Denmark. Countries which have requested AQIS permission for importation of pig meat into Australia include the USA, Mexico, EU Member States and South Africa. Only canned pig meat may be imported from these countries under current quarantine policy.

International obligations

As a World Trade Organisation Member, Australia must consider access requests in a timely manner. International obligations also demand that the development and application of quarantine policy and the decisions AQIS makes on access requests are based on sound science. We are obliged to ensure that quarantine restrictions reflect the seriousness of risks presented by a

particular access request, and that any measures imposed are no stricter than required to achieve the level of animal health protection deemed acceptable to Australia.

Development of a policy to deal with outstanding access requests

AQIS intends to conduct a quarantine import risk analysis (IRA) which will consider the importation of pig meat from any source, ie a generic IRA. The IRA will include assessment of all potential disease agents that may be introduced to Australia via the importation of pig meat, including human and animal pathogens. Risk management options, which may include cooking and other forms of meat processing, will be considered as to their effectiveness in reducing any quarantine risks presented by particular pathogens to an acceptable level. Generic import conditions which may be developed would be applied to countries seeking access, as appropriate to their pig health status.

The IRA will follow the principles and practices enunciated in the Government Response on “Australian Quarantine- A Shared Responsibility”, published in August 1997. This government policy document explains that the IRA can follow a ‘routine’ or ‘non-routine’ pathway. A ‘routine’ analysis is conducted by AQIS in-house, while the ‘non-routine’ analysis is conducted by a risk analysis panel (RAP) comprising scientific experts from AQIS and other organisations, who have expertise in quarantine risk assessment and the disease agents relevant to the particular IRA. Both approaches are conducted in a manner which is consistent with relevant international standards, including those published by the world animal health organisation known as the OIE. While both the routine and the non-routine approach involve consultation and communication with the public and with affected industries, the non-routine IRA provides for greater external involvement in the scientific assessment of disease risks and the identification of risk management options. AQIS will conduct routine IRAs unless a non-routine analysis is necessary. A decision to use the non-routine approach would depend on the nature of the IRA, particularly the scientific complexity of the issues under consideration and the seriousness of health risks potentially associated with the proposed importation.

AQIS proposes to take a non-routine approach to the generic IRA on importation of pig meat. The conduct of the IRA by the non-routine process will take at least 15 months.

Impact of overseas competition on the domestic industry

The question of how imports from other countries may affect the domestic industry in terms of economic impact, as opposed to disease risks, is an important one but this is not considered in the IRA.. The National Pork Industry Development Group, a ministerial advisory body, has been established to recommend to the Minister for Primary Industries and Energy measures to improve the international competitiveness and export capacity of the pig meat industry under the \$10m structural adjustment package provided by the Australian Government.

Your comments are invited

I welcome your advice on the proposed non-routine approach to the generic IRA on the importation of pig meat. Following receipt of public comment, I will advise of the decision on the approach to be taken. It would be helpful if you would provide names and details of relevant expertise for those scientists whom AQIS might involve in the IRA.

Your response by 29 June 1998 would be appreciated.

I would be grateful if you could pass details of this circular to other interested parties who should advise AQIS if they wish to be included in future communications on this matter. All inquiries should also be directed to the officer whose contact details appear below.

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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