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26 February 1999

ANIMAL QUARANTINE POLICY MEMORANDUM 1999/14

Chief Veterinary Officers, all States and the NT
Animal Programs Section, AQIS Operations
National Office of Animal, Plant Health

Australian Livestock Exporters' Council
National Meat Association of Australia
Chief Veterinary Officer, MAF RA, NZ

Veterinary Counsellors, Washington, Brussels & Seoul
Agricultural Counsellor, Tokyo

International Racehorse Transport
Australian Jockey Club
Victoria Racing Club
Instone Air Services
NZ Bloodstock Limited

Australian Horse Industry Council

EU Delegation, Canberra
CSIRO Division of Animal Health
National Farmers' Federation
Quarantine and Animal Health Task Force, NFF
Australian Animal Health Council
Australian Veterinary Association

Aushorse
Crispin Bennett International Transport
Stock Air Export
Franz Venhaus Competition Teams Manager SOCOG
Denis Goulding Australian Olympic Team Vet
Equestrian Federation of Australia
Australian Harness Racing Council

IMPORT RISK ANALYSIS: IMPORTATION OF HORSES FROM COUNTRIES IN WHICH SURRA IS ENDEMIC

COMMENCEMENT AND CONSULTATION ON APPROACH

This AQPM advises the commencement of a generic import risk analysis (IRA) to review quarantine policy on the importation of horses from countries in which the trypanosome disease 'surra' is present, with particular reference to the temporary and permanent importation of horses from Malaysia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and seeks public comment on AQIS's proposed approach.

Access requests have been received from Ministry of Agriculture, Malaysia (1997) and Ministry of Agriculture, UAE (1996). AQIS has also received inquiries from a number of people in Australia interested in importing horses from Malaysia and UAE.

The generic IRA will include assessment of the risk that surra may be introduced to Australia via the importation of such horses, and risk management options, which may include restrictions on the type of horses, pre-export quarantine, testing, and post-entry quarantine.

Risk management strategies which may be developed for the disease surra could be applied to all countries with surra which seek access, as appropriate to their equine status.

Current quarantine conditions

Horses can currently only be imported from approved countries under country specific conditions, which includes regional freedom from surra.

Horses from non-approved countries may be permitted into Australia provided they have undergone a minimum period of two months residency in an approved country and meet all the import requirements specified for that approved country.

Conditions for the permanent importation of horses from Peninsular Malaysia were finalised in January 1996 after consultation with industry, scientific organisations and State agriculture departments. One consignment of horses was imported from Peninsular Malaysia after the conditions were finalised without incident. In light of information presented at a symposium on surra, conditions for permanent importation of horses were suspended in August 1996. Horses can still be imported from Malaysia via Singapore, provided they have undergone at least two months residency in Singapore. Surra has never been reported in Singapore and a serological survey conducted in 1992 did not detect any evidence of the disease.

Horses were permitted entry from the UAE for many years, as the country is considered free of major horse diseases. In 1996, quarantine conditions for the permanent and temporary importation of horses from the UAE were suspended following the confirmed diagnosis of surra in an Arab horse and serological evidence of the surra in other horses. The UAE certifying authorities were unable to provide certification of freedom from surra.

Quarantine requirements for the return of Australian horses competing in the Dubai Cup were amended following the clinical case of surra in the UAE. Additional risk management measures included restricting the length of time the Australian horse could be in Dubai and enhanced insect protection.

International obligations

As a World Trade Organisation Member, Australia must consider access requests in a timely manner. International obligations demand that the development and application of quarantine policy, and AQIS' decisions on access requests are based on sound science. Quarantine restrictions should clearly reflect the magnitude of risks presented by a particular access proposal, and the quarantine measures imposed should be no stricter than necessary to achieve the level of protection (in terms of animal health) acceptable to Australia.

Proposed approach to the IRA

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 a '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 analysis 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 approach 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.

The Animal Quarantine Policy Branch of AQIS proposes to take a routine approach with regard to the IRA on the importation of horses from countries in which the disease surra is present.

The proposal to choose a routine approach is based on the previous import risk assessment and approval of Malaysia, the lack of problems with surra in Malaysian horses since they have been imported via Singapore, and the time elapsed since surra was diagnosed in a Malaysian horse in 1991.

In the case of the UAE, horses were imported for many years without problems prior to the suspension imposed in 1996 when the surra was diagnosed in a single riding horse. There has been no recurrence of clinical disease in horses.

AQIS has received additional technical information from Malaysia and the UAE and from international experts, and during the IRA process will continue to consult with scientific experts.

Your comments are invited

We welcome your advice on the proposed routine approach to this IRA. Following receipt of public comment, I will confirm 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 31 March 1999 would be appreciated.

We would be grateful if you would pass details of this notice to other interested parties, who should advise AQIS if they wish to be included in future communications on this matter. Inquiries should 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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STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK TO AQIS

AQIS's new import risk analysis process and associated consultative arrangements are well into their first year of implementation. We would appreciate your feedback on those arrangements and would be grateful if you would take a few minutes to fill in this survey and mail it to AQIS.

The form is self addressed and does not need a stamp if posted in Australia. Simply fold at the dotted lines and staple so that the "reply paid" face is on the outside.

1. Are you receiving all the information on animal quarantine policy that you wish to see?
(please circle) Yes No

Comment:
.....
.....

2. Is the information you receive from AQIS generally clear, complete and accurate?
(please circle) Yes No

Comment:
.....
.....

3. How could AQIS improve arrangements for providing information on
animal quarantine policy to clients?

Comment:
.....
.....

Name:
Company/Organisation:

(fold).....

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