

**Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee**

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates February 2016

**Agriculture and Water Resources**

**Question: 33**

**Division/Agency:** Office of the Chief Veterinary Officer

**Topic:** Department's Imported Food Inspection data

**Proof Hansard page:** Written

**Senator XENOPHON asked:**

I refer to the joint report by the Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture entitled "Responding to the threat of antimicrobial resistance – Australia's First National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2015-2019".

Part 3.7 of the report states "A significant knowledge gap exists in understanding the extent to which resistant bacteria are present in the food chain and the risks the presence of resistant bacteria, whether pathogens or indicator organisms pose in food".

Despite this, the report – Australia's First National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy - makes no reference or recommendations in relation to the threat facing us from antibiotic resistance in imported food.

- Please advise why this is so?
- This is our first national strategy – will it be revised before 2019 (when it is scheduled to end) in order to include reference to imported food?
- If not, why not?
- In light of the absence of discussion on antibiotic resistance in imported food in our national strategy, how does the Department intend to manage this threat?
- Will imported foods be discussed in the next national strategy?

**Answer:**

- The National Strategy identifies a knowledge gap in relation to the antimicrobial resistance risks posed by food.
- An implementation plan is being developed to support the National Strategy which identifies priority areas for action. An activity to support one of these priority areas for action includes a comprehensive literature review in 2016 on the role of food in transmitting antimicrobial resistance.

**Question 33 (Continued)**

- It is anticipated that this review, to be conducted by the Department of Health, will establish what threat is posed by domestic and imported foods.
- The implementation plan will take a staged approach over the life of the first National Strategy with the first phase focussed on the first two years. Progress in implementing actions will be reviewed and reported on annually. The National Strategy itself will not be revised before 2019.