

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Budget Estimates May 2015

Agriculture

Question: 62

Division/Agency: Australian Chief Veterinary Office

Topic: Avian Influenza

Proof Hansard page: 30 (26.5.2015)

Senator RHIANNON asked:

Senator RHIANNON: With regard to Animal Health Australia's newly launched *National Farm Biosecurity Technical Manual for Egg Production*, in the document in section 23 on free-range production operations, page 26, it states: 'Some AI—avian influenza—'of the H5 ... subtypes ... have in the past caused EAD outbreaks in the Australian egg industry'. I was just interested in whether you can supply details of the number of recorded cases of AI in the Australian egg industry.

Mr Glyde: Not off the top of my head. I do not know whether Ms Plowman can help out here or whether we should take that one on notice.

CHAIR: This is on avian influenza.

Ms Plowman: There have been some outbreaks around avian influenza. In my time in the company I know of two—and there might have been some additional ones—where the emergency disease response agreement was undertaken, but we would have to get back to you with the precise amounts.

Senator RHIANNON: I was after how many outbreaks that you have heard. You have said that you understand there have been two, but I gather that could be—

Ms Plowman: I do not think there have been more than maybe one or two more, but I would have to go back and check. I just know of two in my time in Animal Health Australia.

Answer:

There have been a total of ten outbreaks of avian influenza in layer flocks in Australia since 1976. One of the outbreaks was on a mixed farm that also included meat birds and breeders. Avian influenza (AI) can be categorised into highly pathogenic forms (HPAI) that cause high mortalities in chickens and low pathogenic forms (LPAI) that do not. Six of the outbreaks in layers have been caused by HPAI and four by LPAI. The table provides further detailed information on the AI outbreaks in Australia since 1976 including; year, viral strains, number of flocks, states, whether they occurred in layers, breeders or meat birds, and the species involved.

Question: 62 (continued)

Table - Detection of Low Pathogenic (LP) and Highly Pathogenic (HP) Avian Influenza Virus (AIV) in flocks of layers, breeders and meat birds in Australia

Year	Virus	flocks*	State	Layers			Breeders		Meat birds (commercial)			
				MxNC	Com	CMx	C	D	Chickens	Turkeys	Emu	duck
1976	H7N7	3	Vic	HP					HP			LP
1985	H7N7	3*	Vic	HP*			HP*		HP*			
1992	H7N3	2	Vic				HP					LP
1994	H7N3	1	Qld	HP								
1994	H4N8	2*	Vic				LP					LP
1997	H7N4	3	NSW				2HP					HP
2006	H5N?	1	Tas	LP								
2006	H6N4	1	Qld	LP								
2006	H6N4	2	NSW				LP	LP				
2010	H10N7	1	NSW				LP					
2010	H1N?	1	NSW				LP					
2012	H5N3	1-2	Vic				LP?					LP
2012	H4N6	1	NSW									LP
2012	H9N2	2	NSW									2xLP
2012	H10N7	1	Qld			LP						
2012	H7N7	1	NSW	HP								
2013	H5N3	1	WA	LP								
2013	H7N2	2	NSW	2HP								
Total	18	29-30		3	6	1	6	3-4	2	2	1	5
Total in each category				10			9 -10		10			

Key:_* number of different enterprises on the same farm (eg breeders, grower, layers); MxNC – mix non commercial ducks and chickens; C- chickens; D – ducks; CMx - commercial mix ducks & chickens

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Agriculture

Question: 63

Division/Agency: Australian Chief Veterinary Office

Topic: Avian Influenza

Proof Hansard page: 30-31 (26.5.2015)

Senator RHIANNON asked:

Senator RHIANNON: I need to know how many outbreaks have occurred, where they occurred, when, the number of birds involved and how you handled it. Also, can I have details and copies of the research and evidence that informs the statement that there have been avian influenza outbreaks in the Australian egg industry. What I am after here is what you are basing the evidence on that AI has occurred in the Australian egg industry. I understand that at times it is controversial, so I am interested in understanding and seeing research that you have to make that judgment.

Ms Plowman: That judgment is actually made by the Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases, which comprises all of the state chief veterinary officers and the Australian chief veterinary officer. It is technical expertise and it is based on diagnosis from particular certified laboratories. Before a disease response can be initiated, it has to come from a recommendation of CCEAD.

Senator RHIANNON: Is that publicly available—what the tests are and what the tests show?

Ms Plowman: Certainly they would be a matter of record, I imagine. There would be a matter of record about what type they actually diagnosed in order for there to be a response. Behind that would be all of the diagnostic requirements et cetera in order to lead to that conclusion.

Senator RHIANNON: Is that publicly available?

Ms Plowman: I am not sure about whether it is publicly available, but there has certainly never been anything that is hidden, when such a disease response has been going on, from the public. It actually talks about what type of H5, where it is and who is involved.

Senator RHIANNON: Is there anybody here now who can advise if this information is publicly available?

Mr Thompson: I think we would have to take that on notice. We might be able to get an answer later this afternoon or this evening. We would have to go to our people in biosecurity animal. The chief vet or someone would have that information.

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Answer:

Since 1976 there have been 18 outbreaks of Avian Influenza (AI) in Australia affecting a total of 29-30 flocks, which involved layers, breeders and commercial meat birds. There have been five outbreaks in Victoria, three in Queensland, eight in NSW, one in Tasmania and one in Western Australia. All outbreaks and their strain types were confirmed by diagnostic testing at the Australian Animal Health Laboratory, Geelong as per national policy. All AI outbreaks in Australia have been rapidly eradicated, via stamping out (culling of all poultry on the affected property). Detailed information on AI outbreaks are publically available on the Animal Health Australia website via the annual 'Animal Health in Australia' report. Avian influenza can be categorised into highly pathogenic forms (HPAI) that cause high mortalities in chickens and low pathogenic forms (LPAI) that do not. Table 1 provides relevant details on all AI outbreaks, Table 2 includes the number of birds in the first infected farm for Australia's HPAI outbreaks, and Table 3 provides the number of birds in the infected farms for Australia's LPAI outbreaks.

Table 1 - Detection of Low Pathogenic (LP) and Highly Pathogenic (HP) Avian Influenza Virus (AI) in flocks of layers, breeders and meat birds in Australia

Year	Virus	flocks*	State	Layers			Breeders		Meat birds (commercial)		
				MxNC	Com	CMx	C	D	Chickens	Turkeys	Emu
1976	H7N7	3	Vic	HP					HP		LP
1985	H7N7	3*	Vic	HP*			HP*		HP*		
1992	H7N3	2	Vic				HP		LP		
1994	H7N3	1	Qld	HP							
1994	H4N8	2*	Vic				LP		LP		
1997	H7N4	3	NSW				2HP		HP		
2006	H5N?	1	Tas	LP							
2006	H6N4	1	Qld	LP							
2006	H6N4	2	NSW				LP	LP			
2010	H10N7	1	NSW				LP				
2010	H1N?	1	NSW				LP				
2012	H5N3	2	Vic				LP?		LP		
2012	H4N6	1	NSW						LP		
2012	H9N2	2	NSW						2xLP		
2012	H10N7	1	Qld	LP							

Question: 63 (continued)

2012	H7N7	1	NSW	HP							
2013	H5N3	1	WA	LP							
2013	H7N2	2	NSW	2HP							
Total	18	29-30		3	6	1	6	3-4	2	2	1 5
Total in each category				10			9 -10		10		

Key: * number of different enterprises on the same farm (eg breeders, grower, layers); MxNC – mix non commercial ducks and chickens; C- chickens; D – ducks; CMx - commercial mix ducks & chickens

Table 2 - HPAI outbreaks and flock size on the first affected farm

Year	Virus	State	Size
1976	H7N7	Vic	25 000 (Intensive)
1985	H7N7	Vic	120 000 (Int)
1992	H7N3	Vic	17 000 (Int)
1994	H7N3	Qld	22 000 (Int)
1997	H7N4	NSW	128 000 (Int)
2012	H7N7	NSW	50 000 (Free Range)
2013	H7N2	NSW	160 000 (FR) 275 000 (Int)

Table 3 - LPAI outbreaks, species and flock size on the affected farms

Year	Virus	State	Size	Species
1976	H7N7	Vic	16 000	Ducks
1992	various	Vic	5700	Ducks
1994	H4N8	Vic	Large multi-age	Ducks
2006	H5	Tas	300	D + C
2006	H6N4	Qld	100	D + C
2006	H6N4	NSW	Very large (breeder)	Chickens
2006	H6N4	NSW	Large multi-age	Ducks
2010	H10N7	NSW	Very large (breeder)	Chickens
2010	H1	NSW	Large multi-age	Ducks
2012	H5N3	Vic	24 000	Ducks
2012	H4N6	NSW	2500	D + C
2012	H9N2	NSW	40 000	Turkeys
2012	H9N2	NSW	40 000	Turkeys
2012	H10N7	Qld	6100	C + D
2013	H5N3	WA	95	D + C

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Agriculture

Question: 64

Division/Agency: Australian Chief Veterinary Office

Topic: Free Range Egg and Poultry Australia

Proof Hansard page: 32 (26.05.2015)

Senator RHIANNON asked:

Senator RHIANNON: Coming to the specifics around the eggs: I understand that there was a representative from Free Range Egg & Poultry Australia on this body. But considering that their standards failed to include a maximum outdoor stocking density for free-range layer hens—and you would obviously be well aware of the different tendencies with regard to rearing free-range hens—why was it not more representative?

Ms Plowman: I think we are at cross-purposes here. We have just described to you the process that is set out in the emergency animal disease response group regarding a consultative committee at a very technical end. I think you are referring perhaps to a biosecurity animal health and welfare committee that maybe comprises all of those poultry industries. I think I heard you say there was a representative from the Australian free range—

Senator RHIANNON: Free Range Egg & Poultry Australia. However, that is the body that is actually limited in its definition of 'free range'.

Ms Plowman: From my memory, I do not believe that such a body was involved in the consultative committee that we have been referring to. I just want to make sure that I understand. That is my view at this stage, but if you could provide me with the sources of information I could come back to you around how they might be appointed. I think we will need to go back to the relevant industry members in the poultry industry and ask them what this committee is and how is it comprised.

Answer:

The Australian egg industry representative on the Consultative Committee for Emergency Animal Diseases (CCEAD) is the Australian Egg Corporation Limited (AECL). AECL is represented on CCEAD as part of decision making for relevant disease responses, as it is the egg industry signatory to the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA). This means it has committed to contribute to relevant cost-shared emergency animal disease responses. Free Range Egg and Poultry Australia is not represented on CCEAD as it is not a signatory to the EADRA.