

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 280

Division/Agency: Live Animal Exports Division

Topic: Bahrain MOUs

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator XENOPHON asked:

1. Can you advise of the current progress of negotiations with Bahrain in regard to a new MOU and thus when exports may be expected to again be permitted to Bahrain?
2. How does this new animal health protocol differ from the previous arrangements - given that scabby mouth was already **not a notifiable** disease in relation to exports to Bahrain - however scabby mouth was last year used by Bahrain as an excuse to not offload Australian sheep?
3. How does the new MOU provide any greater surety than the previous MOU with Bahrain in relation to the offloading of animals within 36 hours even where there is a suspected disease or other dispute?
4. Why does the Department believe it is now safe to export sheep (or other animals) to Bahrain? What has altered that would give the public any confidence that a similar rejection may not occur?

Answer:

1. The Department of Agriculture is working with Bahraini officials to recommence the livestock trade.
2. Australia has proposed health conditions to reflect current international standards set by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). They are science-based, practical and their intention and interpretation is very clear. The health conditions emphasise that many diseases, including scabby mouth, are endemic worldwide, including in both Australia and Bahrain and that, although exported animals have no visible signs of disease on loading, there may be some animals with signs of illness on arrival which develop during the journey.
3. The Department of Agriculture is working with Bahraini officials to recommence the livestock trade. Health conditions with Bahrain are yet to be agreed.
4. Trade will not resume until the health conditions are agreed.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 281

Division/Agency: Live Animal Exports Division

Topic: Proposal to buy 100 000 head of cattle

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

In May, then-Senator Joyce expressed support for a proposal for the federal government to buy 100,000 head of cattle at a guaranteed minimum price (\$150 million). What work has the department done given the Minister's support? Has a brief been supplied?

Answer:

The Department of Agriculture has not briefed the Minister in relation to this proposal.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

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Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 282

Division/Agency: Live Animal Exports Division

Topic: ESCAS system

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

1. Are there any plans to review, refine or change the ESCAS system?
2. In what way was the Inspector-General of Animal Welfare considered red tape?
3. Did the department provide advice before it was cut?
4. Is ESCAS exempt from the commission of audit?

Answer:

1. As part of the Coalition Government's election commitment, opportunities to streamline the operation of Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) are being considered. The government remains committed to the principles of ESCAS, which make Australian exporters responsible for animal welfare and handling across the supply chain right up to the point of slaughter.
2. Industry would have been required to provide information and assistance for the completion of the Inspector-General's work plan. The Inspector-General of Animal Welfare would have created additional administrative burden for the Department of Agriculture and increased staffing requirements.
3. Yes.
4. No.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 283

Division/Agency: Live Animal Exports Division

Topic: Independent audit of ESCAS

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Has there been a third party independent audit of ESCAS? If not, are there plans for a third party independent audit of ESCAS? Is this a priority for the government?

Answer:

An internal audit of the ESCAS framework was completed by Deloitte, the department's internal audit service provider.

In response to recommendation 13 of the Independent Review of the live export trade by Bill Farmer AO, the Australian Government agreed to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of the Farmer Review recommendations, including the ESCAS regulatory framework, in 2014 and to report to the Australian Parliament by June 2014 outlining initial experience and making judgements about the effectiveness of the approach in delivering animal welfare outcomes and facilitating trade.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 284

Division/Agency: Live Animal Exports Division

Topic: 100 000 head of cattle

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

In May, then-Senator Joyce expressed support for a proposal for the fed government to buy 100,000 head of cattle at a guaranteed minimum price (\$150 million). What work has the department done given the Minister's support?

Answer:

Please refer to the response from QoN 281 from Supplementary Budget Estimates hearings.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 285

Division/Agency: Live Animal Export Division

Topic: Farmer and ASEL review

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator RHIANNON asked:

1. May I please have an update on where implementation of the Farmer Review and the Review of Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) is up to?
2. When is the reporting date?
3. What funding has been allocated for implementation of both the Farmer Review and the ASEL review?
 - a. What has been spent to date?
4. Have the amounts originally allocated changed, or are expected to change, and if so how?

Answer:

1. The department has implemented a number of the recommendations of the 2011 Farmer Review, including the phased implementation of the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS) regulatory framework for feeder and slaughter livestock exports.

The outcomes of the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL) and Livestock Export Standards Advisory Group (LESAG) Review are being considered in conjunction with broader live export regulatory framework reform.
2. The Report to Parliament on the Farmer Review implementation is due by the end of June 2014. The ASEL and LESAG Review Steering Committee provided its final report, recommendations and draft revised standards to the Department of Agriculture on 31 May 2013.
3. No specific funding has been allocated for implementing the Farmer Review. The review of the ASEL and LESAG was allocated \$36,000.
 - a. \$36 000 was spent on the review of ASEL and LESAG.
4. No specific funding has been allocated for implementing the Farmer Review.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 287

Division/Agency: Live Animal Exports Division

Topic: Live exports systems

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Does the Government believe it must do everything it can to protect the integrity of our live exports system, in the interest of farmers, exporters and the welfare of animals.

Answer:

Yes. The Minister has stated that the government is committed to a strong, profitable, humane and well regulated livestock export sector that provides returns to farmers and exporters.

The government recognises that in relation to the livestock export trade no system can guarantee there will never be another welfare incident. The regulation of livestock exports is designed to reduce the risk of adverse animal welfare incidents occurring. The regulatory system provides stability for industry, the communities, and jobs for families that rely on the trade, and protects the welfare of Australian animals.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 288

Division/Agency: Live Animal Exports Division

Topic: Self-regulation for the live animal exports industry

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Does the Minister plan on moving to industry self-regulation for the live animal exports industry?

Answer:

The government supports the current regulatory model for animal exports, where the Department of Agriculture, not industry is responsible for regulating live animal exports.

The Farmer Review recommended (recommendation 3) that in line with the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock, industry develop and implement a through-chain quality assurance system to complement government regulatory compliance programs.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 289

Division/Agency: Live Animal Exports Division

Topic: Chinese interested in live cattle

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

There were reports in the press recently that the Chinese were interested in importing live cattle from Western Australia. This followed a visit by the Western Australian Premier to China. I understand that there was an agreement between the Western Australian Government and one of the provincial governments in China to undertake a feasibility study into the viability of developing the live trade.

- a) Has this department been involved in any discussions with WA officials of Chinese officials about the live trade generally or this feasibility study in particular?

Answer:

On 25 October 2013 the Western Australian Department of Agriculture and Food briefed the Industry Government Implementation Group on Livestock Export Reforms, which is chaired by the Department of Agriculture, on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed at a ceremony attended by Premier Colin Barnett and Dr Xia Baolong, Party Secretary of Zhejiang. This MoU has a schedule titled a 'Joint Study on the live cattle supply chain and beef processing'.

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Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 291

Division/Agency: Live Animal Exports Division

Topic: Live exports consultations

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator RHIANNON asked:

1. According to DoA's 2012-13 Annual Report, the Live Animal Exports Division established in November 2012 consults broadly with Australian governments, industry representatives and animal welfare groups.
 - a) May I have details of which animal welfare groups were consulted by the division and about what specifically?
 - b) What is the current membership on the relevant consultation committee?
 - c) What is the process of determining membership?
2. Which members represent animal welfare interests, and what is the process to ensure animal welfare organisations and specialists are consulted?

Answer:

1.
 - a) The department has had regular discussions with Animals Australia, RSPCA and the World Society for the Protection of Animals. These discussions have covered a wide range of animal welfare issues including livestock exports.
 - b) The Live Animal Export Division utilises the Industry Government Implementation Group to consult on the implementation of the recommendations of the 2011 Independent Review of Australia's Livestock Export Trade (the Farmer Review). Membership comprises industry, state and territory and Australian government officials.
 - c) It was established by the then Minister for Agriculture, the Hon Joe Ludwig.
2. Terms of reference and membership were agreed by the former Minister of Agriculture. Animal welfare organisations are not included in the membership of this group.

Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 292

Division/Agency: Live Animal Exports Division

Topic: ESCAS Breaches

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator RHIANNON asked:

1. Out of the 22 official complaints of alleged ESCAS breaches, how many have resulted in penalties imposed on the exporter?
 - a) What accountability and deterrence measures are available to impose on exporters?
 - b) What such penalties have been imposed on which exporters?
2. May I have an update of what in-country partnership processes or programs that enhance welfare of animals overseas are being developed in each country to which we export livestock?
3. How much Australian funding is being provided to each of these projects, and from which budget?
4. According to DoA's 2012-13 Annual Report, the Live Animal Exports Division consults broadly with Australian governments, industry representatives and animal welfare groups. Which animal welfare groups are or have been consulted by the division? May I have a current list of which industry and animal welfare representatives sit on the consultation committee?

Answer:

1. As at 3 December 2013, the department has investigated 18 possible breaches of the Exporter Supply Chain Assurance System (ESCAS).
 - Five investigations are complete. Non-compliance was identified and regulatory action was taken in two of the investigations.
 - The details of completed investigations are available on the department's website - www.daff.gov.au/biosecurity/export/live-animals/livestock/regulatory-framework/compliance-investigations/investigations-regulatory-compliance.
 - Thirteen investigations are ongoing. Where the department determines sufficient information exists, regulatory action may be applied to an exporter during the investigation.
 - a) Regulatory powers available to the department are:
 - Criminal sanctions

Question: 292 (continued)

- Under the *Australian Meat and Live-stock Industry Act 1997* - notice to show cause, suspend a licence, cancel a licence and apply conditions to a licence.
 - Under the *Export Control (Animals) Order 2004* - vary or revoke ESCAS approval, refuse to approve a Notice of Intention to Export Livestock (NOI), Consignment Risk Management Plan (CRMP) or ESCAS, apply Conditions to NOI, CRMP or ESCAS approval, require further information to be provided about a NOI, CRMP or ESCAS application.
- b) Regulatory action in all cases to date has been in the form of application of additional conditions to ESCAS approvals.
2. The Improved Animal Welfare Program (IAWP) supports improved animal welfare outcomes in Official Development Assistance (ODA) eligible countries that import live animals for feeder/slaughter purposes from Australia. The program (\$10 million over four financial years, FY 2011-2015) was announced on 21 October 2011 as part of the livestock export reforms.
- Indonesia is the main beneficiary of the program as it is Australia's largest live cattle market. Other ODA eligible countries to receive assistance are Vietnam, the Philippines, Jordan, Turkey, Malaysia, Egypt and Mauritius.
3. The Improved Animal Welfare Program is funded from the Official Development Assistance (ODA) contingency reserve.

Projects and amounts funded

- OIE Training in Animal Welfare Standards – train the trainer course for government officials in Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Jordan, Turkey, Malaysia, Egypt and Mauritius. Total value of the project: \$1 million until 30 June 2015.
- Training courses delivered in:
 - Indonesia (January 2013); the Philippines (March 2013), Turkey (July 2013), Vietnam (November 2013)
 - Further training courses will be rolled out in 2014 to other eligible countries including Jordan and Malaysia.

Indonesia

- Alignment of Bogor University's veterinary school animal welfare and public health curriculum to international standards. Total value: \$370 000 until 30 June 2015.
- Review of Indonesia's animal welfare legislation to assist the Indonesian Government to implement its federal animal welfare regulations. Total value: \$28 000
- Workshop - training of abattoir workers by OIE Indonesian Master Trainers. Total value: \$7 000.

Question: 292 (continued)

Malaysia

- Workshop on animal welfare and handling and requirements of ESCAS for Malaysian Government veterinarians and abattoir staff. Total value: \$45 000
- Scoping mission to understand Malaysia's food safety and animal welfare requirements with a view to develop a strategy that would enable more Malaysian abattoirs to meet international animal welfare and food safety requirements. Total value: \$25 000.

Vietnam

- Two workshops on animal welfare and handling and requirements of ESCAS for Vietnamese Government veterinarians and abattoir staff. Total value: \$55 000
- Scoping mission to understand Vietnam's food safety and animal welfare requirements with a view to develop a strategy that would enable more Vietnam abattoirs to meet international animal welfare and food safety requirements. Total value: \$25 000.

The Philippines

- Workshop on animal welfare and handling and requirements of ESCAS for the Philippines' Government veterinarians and abattoir staff. Total value: \$41 300.
 - Review of the Philippines' animal welfare legislation to assist the Philippines Government to implement legislation. Total value: \$45 000.
4. See response to Question on Notice 291 from Supplementary Budget Estimates in November 2013.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 293

Division/Agency: Live Animal Exports Division

Topic: Burden for farmers

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

Did the department draft the media release for former Agriculture Minister Fitzgibbon that said the inspector-general would "not create additional red tape or regulatory burden for farmers or the broader industry?"

Answer:

As is standard practice, the department drafted a media release for consideration by the former Minister for Agriculture. The draft included references to red tape but did not include the specific words "not create additional red tape or regulatory burden for farmers or the broader industry". The final media release was settled by the former Minister Fitzgibbons.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates November 2013

Agriculture

Question: 294

Division/Agency: Live Animal Exports Division

Topic: Funding for the inspector - general

Proof Hansard page: Written

Senator STERLE asked:

What work had the department done to progress the announcement for the inspector-general prior to the start of caretaker? Was funding allocated? had drafting work begun?

Answer:

Funding for the position was approved prior to the caretaker period, however, work was not commenced to establish the position or develop associated legislation that would enable the creation of the position prior to the commencement of the caretaker period.