

BUDGET ESTIMATES, 25, 26 MAY 2005 - ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Product Integrity, Animal and Plant Health Division

Question: PIAPH 01

Topic: Accounts: National Cattle Disease Eradication

Hansard Page: 100

Senator O'Brien asked:

I want to refer you to page 22 of this year's PBS and page 30 of last year's PBS. In last year's document, under the heading 'Output 3', there is a reference to the National Cattle Disease Eradication Trust Account of 1991. There was an estimated expense of \$606,000 for 2003-04 and \$604,000 for the current financial year, but in this year's PBS that number is just \$3,000 and there is nothing for next year. Can you explain what has happened to change the numbers so dramatically? ...

Answer:

Estimates included under the Special Appropriation line item for the *National Cattle Disease Eradication Trust Account Act 1991* in the Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS) 2004-05 included an estimate for \$600,000 for the payment of an interest-equivalent earned on the balance of the National Cattle Disease Eradication Special Account. This interest amount was transferred from the Special Appropriation to be included as part of the *Bill 1/3 Appropriation Act*. This took place as part of the Additional Estimates process in 2004-05.

Reporting of this \$600,000 for the *National Cattle Disease Eradication Trust Account of 1991* is identified in PBS 2005-06 on page 20 against Administered Programmes, Table 2.5: Estimates of administered expenses from appropriation bill (no.1).

BUDGET ESTIMATES, 25, 26 MAY 2005 - ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Question: PIAPH 02

Topic: National Biosecurity Strategy

Hansard Page: 102

Senator O'Brien asked:

Can you give me the consultancy details—name, price et cetera?

Mr McCutcheon—Yes. Mr Roger Smith, former head of the Northern Territory Department of Primary Industries.

Senator O'BRIEN—What fee will he be paid?

Mr McCutcheon—I do not have those details here.

Senator O'BRIEN—Do you know if it is a fixed fee or an hourly charge?

Mr McCutcheon—No, I do not know that.

Senator O'BRIEN—If you can get us that information, I would appreciate it.

Answer:

The Consultancy Agreement with Mr Roger Smith provides for a per diem of \$1,100 per day (including GST) not to exceed \$55,000 in total and for reimbursement of costs incurred while undertaking the consultancy.

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Question: PIAPH 03

Topic: Management of exotic diseases expenditure

Hansard Page: 106

Senator O'Brien asked:

Dr Biddle—The Australian Veterinary Reserve has initiated its recruitment of some 100 members, its planned size. The initial pilot training course was held last year and there is presently a redesign process, a bit of engineering around the initial pilot training course, to inform the content of the planned remaining training courses for about 80 officers that have still to be trained. The program is close to commencing the remaining training activity, which is planned to be completed over approximately the next 12 months, subject of course to a variety of factors. That is the game plan.

Senator O'BRIEN—How much has been spent on this in the current financial year?

Mr McCutcheon—We will have to take that question on notice, Senator. We do not have the precise figures of expenditure to date.

Senator O'BRIEN—You are achieving the target number of participants?

Answer:

The Australian Veterinary Reserve programme is delivered by Animal Health Australia. A total of \$189,445.42 has been expended on the pilot induction course for the financial year 2004-05.

The target number of participants has been achieved. Animal Health Australia has been advised on the details of the 100 participants.

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Question: PIAPH 04

Topic: F&MD outbreak human resource capacity

Hansard Page: 112

Senator O'Brien asked:

No. Animal Health Australia is conducting a project to define what normal commitment is for each jurisdiction during an emergency. It would look at what their core responsibilities were and would also do an analysis of their respective sizes, their resource bases and their emergency animal disease risks. Animal Health Australia is also developing performance standards to describe the expected capacities of those jurisdictions. That is one of those works in progress by Animal Health Australia.

Senator O'BRIEN—Any expected time line for finalisation of the work?

Mr McCutcheon—I am sure there is a time line. I do not have that information.

Senator O'BRIEN—Can you get that for us?

Answer:

National Animal Health Performance Standards have been developed by Animal Health Australia for jurisdictions and livestock industries. They are revised on a regular basis.

Version 2 of the Performance Standards was completed in 2003. A review of jurisdictional and compliance against the standards was undertaken in the same year and identified some areas where performance and capabilities could be improved. The assessments also identified opportunities to improve the Performance Standards and the assessment process. A pilot study undertaken in New South Wales and South Australia during the last quarter of 2004 and the first quarter of 2005 demonstrated the value of applying a risk-based approach to the assessment of performance against the Standards.

Version 3 of the Performance Standards is currently under development and is scheduled to be submitted to the Animal Health Committee in July 2005 for endorsement by Primary Industries Standing Committee in October 2005 prior to being used as the basis for a second, risk-based assessment of performance by livestock industries and jurisdictions in 2006.

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Question: PIAPH 05

Topic: Eradication program

Hansard Page: 117

Senator O'Brien asked:

Yes. Perhaps on notice, can you give us an update on what is exactly happening with the eradication programs for branched broom rape, grapevine leaf rust and exotic fruit flies?

Answer:

Three different external reviews by weed experts have confirmed that the branched broomrape eradication programme is on track and making significant progress in decreasing the number of new infestations and that the response programme should be continued. 91 % of the known infested paddocks had no detections of branched broomrape. Branched broomrape has not been detected outside the original quarantine area in the Murray Bridge area of South Australia. The long term survivability of branched broomrape seeds in the soil may require the extension of some response activities up to 2012. Progress of the programme is assessed annually through the Australian Weeds Committee.

The grapevine leaf rust programme is entering its fourth year of operation. External operational and scientific reviews have determined that the programme is making significant progress towards eradication with a potential target of June 2006 to declare eradication. The disease is restricted to the Darwin area. 39,007 properties have been surveyed in the Darwin area with 746 vines on 522 properties. 209 vines were infected with grapevine rust and destroyed. In the period October 2004 to June 2005, there have only been two vines found with grapevine leaf rust. An intensive sampling and vine removal and pruning programme will be conducted in 2005 that will result in a host-free period which will strongly aid the eradication process. Current projections suggest the June 2006 eradication timeline is achievable.

The Torres Strait fruit fly programme is a long term containment programme to prevent the potential incursion of fruit flies exotic to the Australian mainland from Papua New Guinea through the Torres Strait islands. The programme involves cooperative work between the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries which includes regular trapping and treatment of fruit flies in the Torres Strait islands. The programme has been operating as a national cost shared programme since 1996 with an annual budget of up to \$200,000.

The programme is reviewed annually by an external technical advisory panel which has determined that the programme is technically and operationally effective in preventing annual incursions of key fruit fly species such as melon fly and papaya fruit fly from establishing on mainland Australia.

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Question: PIAPH 06

Topic: Food Chain Assurance Advisory Group

Hansard Page: 117

Senator O'Brien asked:

There are no payments to industry involved at this stage?

Answer:

The activities of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry involving the Food Chain Assurance Group, relating to critical infrastructure activities do not involve making payments to industry bodies.

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Question: PIAPH 07

Topic: International convention for chemicals

Hansard Page: 3

Senator O'Brien asked:

Yes, at this point we are. The money that we have allocated under this program for those activities relates initially, to the communication of what those obligations are to relevant stakeholders in the Australian community and, secondly, to putting in place a database which enables us to maintain that information and provide appropriate reports to international organisations.

Senator O'BRIEN—So how often do we report to the international organisations?

Mr McCutcheon—I would have to take that question on notice.

Senator O'BRIEN—Would those reports be published? Perhaps you could tell us that as well.

Answer:

There are different reporting requirements under the Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions.

Under the Stockholm Convention, the following processes apply:

- a. A National Implementation Plan (NIP) needs to be provided to the Convention Secretariat within two years of the Convention entering into force for a party. For Australia, this means that our NIP needs to be submitted by 18 August 2006. Following any amendments to the chemicals that are listed for elimination or restriction, each party has two years to update their NIP and provide it to the Secretariat.
- b. Each party is required to report to the Secretariat regarding their trade and disposal of chemicals that are listed for elimination or restriction. There is also a requirement for the report to include information on unintentionally produced persistent organic pollutants. The first of these reports is due on 31 December 2006, and then another is due every four years thereafter.
- c. If Australia were to request an extension on our current exemption for the use of Mirex, then we would need to provide a report to the Secretariat detailing our need for a continued exemption.

All of these reports will be made publicly available via the Stockholm Convention website (www.pops.int) when they have been submitted.

Under the Rotterdam Convention, there are no annual reporting requirements. However, countries are required to:

- a. notify the Convention Secretariat whenever a final regulatory action has been taken to ban or severely restrict the use of a chemical product. These notifications are made publicly available as part of agenda papers, which are available from the Rotterdam Convention website (www.pic.int);
- b. submit importing country responses to the Secretariat within nine months of the circulation of a decision guidance document. These responses are then included in a circular which is sent to all Parties and made available on the Rotterdam Convention website (www.pic.int); and
- c. notify importing countries when Australia has taken a final regulatory action against a chemical that is not yet listed in the Convention. These notifications are not made public.

Both conventions also encourage the exchange of information amongst parties.

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Question: PIAPH 08

Topic: 2, 4-D

Hansard Page: 8

Senator O'Brien asked:

Do you know what particular products have been applied in the circumstances we have been talking about?

Dr Smith—No, I do not have that particular information.

Senator O'BRIEN—Would the states have it?

Dr Smith—They may have. That is the sort of information we are working with the states to get at the moment. I can check and then provide that detail to you.

Answer:

Trace-back information provided by the States suggests that, where 2,4-D products are involved, they are likely to be certain ester formulations. These are more volatile than other forms of 2,4-D. However, confirmatory analytical evidence is difficult to obtain, at least partly because of the time that elapses between use of the herbicide and the appearance of damage, and the fact that analysis for 2,4-D residues does not distinguish between the different forms.

BUDGET ESTIMATES, 25, 26 MAY 2005 - ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Question: PIAPH 09

Topic: MRLs

Hansard Page: 9

Senator O'Brien asked:

Are our MRLs the same as those which exist overseas for the same product?

Dr Smith—Not always. Generally we are fairly well lined up with places—with things like Codex—in other countries—but there are differences. I cannot tell you specifically how they line up on 2,4-D products. I could check that information and provide that to you.

Answer:

A comparison of Australian commodity Maximum Residue Limits (MRL's) with those of Codex, United States of America and the European Union is contained in the attached table.

2,4-D MRL COMPARISONS

SUBSTANCE	CROP GROUP	COMMODITY	Australian MRL (ppm)	Aust. Notes	Codex MRL (ppm)	Codex notes	USA MRL (ppm)	USA notes	EU MRL (ppm)
2,4-D	BERRIES AND SMALL FRUIT	Table Grapes	0.05		0.1		0.5		0.05
2,4-D	BERRIES AND SMALL FRUIT	Wine Grapes	0.05		0.1		0.5		0.05
2,4-D	CEREALS	Barley	0.2				0.5		0.05
2,4-D	CEREALS	Buckwheat	0.2				0.1	N	0.05
2,4-D	CEREALS	Cereals others	0.2				0.1	N	0.05
2,4-D	CEREALS	Maize	0.2		0.05		20		0.05
2,4-D	CEREALS	Millet	0.2				0.5		0.05
2,4-D	CEREALS	Oats	0.2				0.5		0.05
2,4-D	CEREALS	Rice	0.2				0.1		0.05
2,4-D	CEREALS	Rye	0.2		2		0.5		0.05
2,4-D	CEREALS	Sorghum	0.2		0.01*		0.5		0.05
2,4-D	CEREALS	Triticale	0.2				0.1	N	0.05
2,4-D	CEREALS	Wheat	0.2		2		0.5		0.05
2,4-D	CITRUS	Citrus Fruit Others	5		1	Po	5		0.05
2,4-D	CITRUS	Grapefruit	5		1	Po	5		0.05
2,4-D	CITRUS	Lemons	5		1	Po	5		0.05
2,4-D	CITRUS	Limes	5		1	Po	5		0.05

SUBSTANCE	CROP GROUP	COMMODITY	Australian MRL (ppm)	Aust. Notes	Codex MRL (ppm)	Codex notes	USA MRL (ppm)	USA notes	EU MRL (ppm)
2,4-D	CITRUS	Mandarins	5		1	Po	5		0.05
2,4-D	CITRUS	Oranges	5		1	Po	5		0.05
2,4-D	CITRUS	Pomelo	5		1	Po	5		0.05
2,4-D	DAIRY	Milk	0.05*		0.01		0.1		0.01
2,4-D	EDIBLE OFFAL	Cattle kidney	2				2		1
2,4-D	EDIBLE OFFAL	Cattle, except kidney	2				0.2		0.05
2,4-D	EDIBLE OFFAL	Goat kidney	2		5		2		1
2,4-D	EDIBLE OFFAL	Goat, except kidney	2		5		0.2		0.05
2,4-D	EDIBLE OFFAL	Horse kidney	2		5		2		1
2,4-D	EDIBLE OFFAL	Horse, except kidney	2		5		0.2		0.05
2,4-D	EDIBLE OFFAL	Mammalian edible offal, Other	2		5				0.05
2,4-D	EDIBLE OFFAL	Pig kidney	2		5		2		1
2,4-D	EDIBLE OFFAL	Pig, except kidney	2		5		0.2		0.05
2,4-D	EDIBLE OFFAL	Poultry , edible offal	0.05*		0.05*		0.05		0.05
2,4-D	EDIBLE OFFAL	Sheep kidney	2		5		2		1
2,4-D	EDIBLE OFFAL	Sheep, except kidney	2		5		0.2		0.05
2,4-D	EGG	Eggs	0.05*		0.01*		0.05	0.05	0.01
2,4-D	LEGUME VEGETABLES (FRESH)	Beans (with pods)	0.05*				0.1	N	0.05
2,4-D	LEGUME VEGETABLES (FRESH)	Beans (without pods)	0.05*				0.1	N	0.05

SUBSTANCE	CROP GROUP	COMMODITY	Australian MRL (ppm)	Aust. Notes	Codex MRL (ppm)	Codex notes	USA MRL (ppm)	USA notes	EU MRL (ppm)
2,4-D	LEGUME VEGETABLES (FRESH)	Legume vegetables fresh others	0.05	*			0.1	N	0.05
2,4-D	LEGUME VEGETABLES (FRESH)	Peas	0.05	*			0.1	N	0.05
2,4-D	MEAT	Bovine /cattle	0.2				0.2		0.05
2,4-D	MEAT	Horse	0.2		0.2		0.2		0.05
2,4-D	MEAT	Sheep or goats	0.2		0.2		0.2		0.05
2,4-D	MEAT	Swine /pork	0.2		0.2		0.2		0.05
2,4-D	OILSEED	Oilseed	0.05	*					
2,4-D	POME FRUIT	Pears	0.05	*	0.01	*	5		0.05
2,4-D	PULSES	Beans	0.05	*					0.05
2,4-D	PULSES	Lentils	0.05	*					0.05
2,4-D	PULSES	Peas	0.05	*					0.05
2,4-D	PULSES	Pulses others	0.05	*					0.05
2,4-D	PULSES	Soya bean (dry)	0.05	*			0.02		0.05
2,4-D	ROOT AND TUBER VEGETABLES	Potatoes	0.1		0.2		0.2		0.05
2,4-D	SUGAR CANE	Sugar cane	5		0.05		2		

Key: ppm MRL is expressed as mg/kg or parts per million of the commodity weight
* MRL at the limit of quantification
N Negligible MRL arising from the use of 2,4-d in various situations in the USA
Po Post-harvest

Question: PIAPH 10

Topic: Atrazine and Simazine Chemicals

Hansard Page: 71

Senator Brown asked:

I have no dispute with that, but I am surprised to hear that you say it is not a matter for you to be involved in or interested in seeking answers about. That is what I would have thought would be a reasonable response.

Mr Quinlivan—I have offered to get whatever information we can on this matter from the APVMA, and if there is anything additional that can be added to the conversation that we had earlier today, we will be happy to get that for you.

Senator BROWN—What action has been generated by your department on the matter of these chemicals to date?

Answer:

The Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) is the authority responsible for the regulation of agricultural and veterinary chemicals up to the point of retail sale; beyond that the states and territory governments have responsibility for control of use.

Atrazine (and related products) have been registered for use in Australia and in countries such as the USA, for many years. APVMA actions in relation to atrazine were discussed earlier with this committee – refer to Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport draft Hansard, 26 May 2005, pages 10 and 11.

In summary, the APVMA (then the National Registration Authority) commenced a major review of all approvals and registration relating to atrazine in 1995 due to concerns over carcinogenicity in humans and animals, and the contamination of ground and surface waters.

In 1997, the APVMA released a comprehensive report (over 600 pages) of its findings from the review of all data available at that time (Interim Review report) and took a range of actions to address potential risks identified by the review. The regulatory actions included new instructions for use to reduce chemical handling by workers and reduce drift and runoff into water bodies and cancellation of all home garden uses. The report also called for further water monitoring data in forestry situations and residue data for animal feed commodity minimal risk levels.

Assessment of this additional data led to release of the draft final review report for atrazine for a period of public comment in April 2002. Subsequent to the release of the draft report, the APVMA became aware of new studies regarding the effects of atrazine on sexual development in frogs. Finalisation of the review was therefore delayed pending the assessment of the new studies both from the human health perspective and from possible effects on the environment (amphibians). A second draft final report, incorporating assessments of new information pertaining to the potential for carcinogenicity and endocrine disruption was released for public comment in December 2004. The APVMA and its advisory agencies are currently assessing the public submissions and expect to finalise the report in 2005.

Full copies of the APVMA's reports and associated actions are on the APVMA website at <http://www.apvma.gov.au/chemrev/chemrev.shtml>