Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 01

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Australian Wildlife Health Network (AWHN)
Hansard Page: 24-25 (27/10/2009)

Senator Milne asked:

Senator MILNE—I want to go to the Australian Wildlife Health Network. How is it resourced? How many people are funded? Can you give me exactly how much we are spending on it, how many people are employed and what is its resourcing?
Dr Carroll—I would have to take that on notice. There is some funding through administered programs.
Senator MILNE—That is fine. In the interest of time you can take it on notice. I want to know exactly how well that is resourced.
Dr Carroll—Yes.

Answer:

Funding

Core funding for the Australian Wildlife Health Network **(**AWHN) is provided from the Commonwealth administered Appropriation Bill 2 - Exotic Disease Preparedness Program. AWHN is managed by the Wildlife Health and Environment Program in the Animal Division of the Biosecurity Services Group (BSG). Core funding has been provided at between $134,540 – $200,000 (GST exclusive) each year since 2002, as follows:

2002-03	$159,694.00
2003-04	$134,540.00
2004-05	$138,576.00
2005-06	$150,000.00
2006-07	$155,000.00
2007-08	$161,200.00
2008-09	$161,200.00
2009-10	$200,000.00

Question: BSG 01 (continued)

Additional funds for the AWHN are sourced from other agencies and organisations on a project/contribution for service basis. For example, in the past two years additional funding has been provided as follows:

	2007-08	**2008-09**
Animal Health Australia	$9 000	$10 000
Department of Health and Ageing	$33,000	$38 500
Wildlife Diseases Association Australasian Section	$1 000	$2 000

In addition to specific project budgets, in the past two years DAFF has provided funding to the AWHN for management of the following projects;

- Wildlife health information system technology development: $77 000 and $130 000
- Surveillance for avian influenza virus in wild birds: $45 000 and $16 500.

Resourcing

The NSW government hosts the AWHN office at Taronga Zoo and provides some in-kind contribution to office administration costs.

Staffing

The AWHN has three full-time staff, employed on annual contracts, located at Taronga Zoo, hosted by the NSW Government. AWHN is supported by one full time equivalent in the Wildlife Health and Environment Program in the Animal Division, BSG.

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Question: BSG 02

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Chytrid Fungus in the Tasmanian Frog Population
Hansard Page: 25 (27/10/2009)

Senator Milne asked:

Senator MILNE—You said there was currently a low incidence of some of these diseases. Can you tell me what is the incidence of the chytrid fungus in the Tasmanian frog population?
Dr Carroll—I would have to take those sorts of questions on notice. I do not have the information.

Answer:

Disease incidence within each jurisdiction is a matter for state and territories governments. Advice from the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment is that the disease incidence of chytrid fungus in the Tasmanian frog population is not clearly known.

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Question: BSG 03

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Australian Wildlife Health Network
Hansard Page: 25 (27/10/2009)

Senator Milne asked:

Senator MILNE—Can you tell me how this system with the Wildlife Health Network deals with wildlife health issues that overlap with other government sectors such as health, agriculture and the environment?
Dr Carroll—They would provide information and assessment where it is likely to have an impact on another sector. They would provide that information or the CVOs would provide that information through to the relevant state or federal—
Senator MILNE—How much information has that network already provided of that kind?
Dr Carroll—I would have to take that on notice.

Answer:

Information gathering

1. The three Australian Wildlife Health Network (AWHN) officers maintain strong networks with the designated wildlife coordinators employed by each state and territory government. Coordinators contribute wildlife surveillance and disease investigation information to the national wildlife information system on an in-kind basis. They participate in quarterly teleconferences to discuss wildlife health incidents around Australia.

2. AWHN officers also maintain strong networks with a wide group of information sources such as university researchers, zoo, conservation and private veterinarians, mammal and bird societies, cooperative research centres, Animal Health Australia, counterpart overseas agencies, wildlife carers, field and game groups and private veterinary pathology services, to access information on wildlife health issues.

3. Wildlife animal health information is forwarded to the national animal health information system (NAHIS) as needed, and in accordance with agreed protocols.

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Question: BSG 03 (continued)

Reporting

1. In consultation with the Wildlife Health and Environment Program of the Biosecurity Services Group (BSG), confidential situation reports about wildlife disease outbreaks or die-offs are provided as needed to:
   - The Australian, state and territory chief veterinary officers,
   - The Environmental Biosecurity Program of the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA),
   - The Zoonoses, Food-borne and Emerging Infectious Diseases Program of the Department of Health and Aging (DoHA),
   - The Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases.

2. Quarterly reports on current wildlife disease issues are provided to Australia's Animal Health Committee, to the National Animal Health Information System, to the Wildlife Diseases Association Australasian section and, as needed, to the BSG, for example to assist in meeting our international disease reporting obligations to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

3. Issues digests and newsletters about wildlife health issues are provided to interested stake holders, including government agencies, universities, zoos, Animal Health Australia and private veterinarians.

4. The AWHN also publishes fact sheets about endemic and emerging diseases of wildlife that are potentially of significance to Australian livestock industries.

5. A specific example of the information provided by the AWHN in the September quarter 2009 is:
   - Mortalities of Bent-wing bats South Australia
   - Mortalities in sparrows in Hobart, Tasmania
   - Mortalities in dolphins in Perth, Western Australia
   - Two Animal Health Committee reports (AWHN activities 2008-09, Wildlife disease surveillance)
   - Newsletter
   - Four electronic digests of wildlife health information

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Question: BSG 04

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Australian Wildlife Health Network (AWHN)
Hansard Page: 26 (27/10/2009)

Senator Milne asked:

Senator MILNE—You say that they stay across these diseases, but I have just told you that as far as I know there is no emergency response to the spread of chytrid fungus in the World Heritage area. I doubt that anybody can tell me how widespread mucormycosis is in terms of the platypus in Tasmania. In fact, I will ask: how far has it spread and what has its impact been on the population throughout Tasmania? I know you will have to take that on notice, but it is to illustrate the point that I do not think there is any analysis going on. You say they get information from a wide variety of sources; like who? Where are they getting their information from in Tasmania?
Dr Carroll—The information they get would be from the zoo and wildlife vets. They would not be specifically funding things such as a survey of platypus for disease. That would fall under the responsibility of the environment or the agriculture department depending upon the state. With that sort of specific work, if there were felt to be a disease problem within a jurisdiction, within a state or a territory, then the on-the ground work of that nature would fall to the state or territory.
Dr O'Connell—Senator, given your particular interest in Tasmania, we could ask the relevant Tasmanian department to provide the information and we could get back to you. In terms of the World Heritage area, obviously the environment department has the Commonwealth government level responsibility for the management of the World Heritage area in collaboration with the state World Heritage authority. That has a set of management arrangements that are quite separate from the rest of the land use.
Senator MILNE—I appreciate that, but it is not just Tasmania. I am told that there is a bettong in Western Australia that has had a 90 per cent crash in its population. It is speculated that it could be disease. Where is this Australian Wildlife Health Network in relation to that?
Dr O'Connell—We can take that on notice and provide you with any other specifics.
Senator MILNE—Given what you have said about this predictive capacity—and how they stay across these diseases—can you explain to me why there has been the extinction of eight Australian frog species because of chytrid fungus, if they are so good at keeping across everything?
Dr Carroll—As I said, they act as a monitoring unit. They are not involved in response to incidents of disease. They can only provide information and a lot of that depends on what base information is available through the state jurisdictions or other research. They are networking on what information is available, but they are not necessarily actively gathering information.
Senator MILNE—That is the point I am getting to. They are not actively gathering information. You said that you would be looking at the wildlife or zoo vets. I would like you to take on notice exactly how many of those there are in Tasmania employed by the state government or by the health network, because I think you will find there are none. Is it a concern to you that there is no-one out there actually looking for

Question: BSG 04 (continued)

disease in wildlife, given what we know about the potential biodiversity impacts but also about the spread into domestic and human health?

Answer:

Platypus mucormycosis

There is intensive work occurring on mucormycosis in platypuses in Tasmania led by the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) which employs a dedicated Wildlife Health Officer. Preliminary analysis suggests a significant reduction in prevalence when compared with historical data. Currently only a limited number of catchments is considered infected.

Historical data suggest that mucormycosis has infected Tasmanian platypuses for nearly three decades, however its impacts remain largely unknown. Between 1982 and 2007 mucormycosis-infected platypuses were present in at least 11, and potentially 22, of Tasmania's 48 river catchments. Recent findings of a reduced disease prevalence suggests that mucormycosis is exerting less impact on Tasmanian platypuses now than it was in the mid to late 1990s; however, the individual consequences of infection are poorly understood and require further investigation.

Information on this issue is provided to the Australian Wildlife Health Network **(**AWHN) by the Tasmanian wildlife coordinator, by other officers in DPIPWE, other Tasmanian government biologists and zoologists, university researchers, interested members of the public, wildlife carers and private practitioners with an interest in the issue.

Bettong population decline

The question refers to the Woylie Conservation Research Project: Woylie, which is examining recent woylie (*Bettongia penicillata*) population declines in south-western Australia. (http://www.naturebase.net/content/view/3230/97/). Woylie is the name for the Brush-tailed Bettong, a small marsupial in the kangaroo family.

The AWHN led a small, independent focus group ("the group") convened by the Western Australia Department of Environment and Conservation (WADEC) to review the disease component of the Woylie Conservation Research Project (WCRP). The group membership was the Wildlife Diseases Association Australasian Section (WDAA), an independent wildlife veterinary epidemiologist and an independent wildlife veterinarian.

Question: BSG 04 (continued)

The group provided an independent and critical review of investigations into the cause(s) of the woylie declines, with a particular emphasis on the disease components, and suggested solutions to improve effectiveness and efficiency of the Woylie Conservation Research Project (WCRP) and associated collaborative capital approaches. Recommendations of the report were incorporated into the strategic plan for the program.

In 2009, AWHN also facilitated attendance of the Woylie Program Manager at a meeting of Australia's College of Veterinary Scientists (Chapter of Veterinary Epidemiologists) to discuss and receive advice on the program.

The number of wildlife or zoo veterinarians employed by the Tasmanian government is a state matter.

The AWHN employs two veterinarians, and they are located at Taronga Zoo in Sydney. The Network operates to collate information concerning wildlife disease incidents.

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Question: BSG 05

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Australian Wildlife Health Network (AWHN)
Hansard Page: 27-28 (27/10/2009)

Senator Milne asked:

Senator MILNE—Having said that, do you accept that wildlife disease can be a canary in the coalmine, in terms of emerging disease that can cross species?
Dr Carroll—As I have said, that is one of the reasons why we attempt to monitor what is happening in the non-livestock sector and make assessments of that and also maintain a scanning capacity. We look to see whether anything is happening overseas as well.
Senator MILNE—I shall appreciate the information you can get for me about the incidences of all those diseases in Tasmania and what we can find out about them. I have one other matter, which is different. There was an incidence of an incursion of mainland yabbies into the Great Lake in Tasmania. I understand that these yabbies were brought in on the *Spirit of Tasmania* by mainland anglers. They walked straight through, took them up to where they were fishing in the Great Lake, put them into the lake and they were subsequently found. Firstly, I want to know whether anyone has been charged as a result of that—so what action was taken. Secondly, I want to know how it could occur that you could leave the *Spirit of Tasmania* with yabbies. Were they in an esky? How did this happen?
Dr O'Connell—This is a state issue. We do not regulate that sort of issue.
Dr Carroll—Under the animal health arrangements in Australia, we do not look at introduced species, such as yabbies or invertebrates that might be introduced. Our involvement on the animal side is with diseases.
Dr O'Connell—We can certainly check with Tasmania as to whether anybody has been prosecuted.

Answer:

In relation to the possible introduction of an exotic yabby species into Tasmania, the Tasmanian Inland Fisheries Service is conducting an investigation into an incident where a fisherman had yabbies in his possession. This investigation is not yet complete and is a matter within the administrative competence of the Tasmanian authorities.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 06

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Quarantine Operations Division
Topic: Data entry process – consignments/shipment discrepancies
Hansard Page: 30 (27/10/2009)

Senator Colbeck asked:

Senator COLBECK—What process did we go through to determine that it came from New Zealand, which is where it actually came from? Can you give us any more details about who brought the shipment in and what the process was? What follow-up action has been taken to ensure that you do not have these sorts of discrepancies occurring again?
Dr Parker—There is some difficulty for us: we are unable to change those particular data entries. The system does not allow us to physically change them; they have to be changed by the Customs brokers. The system that we have put in place is one of reminding all our officers who work in that particular area that, when they clear consignments and recognise discrepancies on the documentation, they must get back to the Customs brokers, who then are able to correct that particular data entry on the system.

Answer:

Yes. The importers details and documentation have been provided with BSG 50.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 07

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Horse Importation Program
Hansard Page: 32 (27/10/2009)

Senator Back asked:

Senator BACK—Could you take on notice and advise us, please, of the number of horses that have come into Spotswood and Eastern Creek in the last couple of years, the average length of time they are in there and the cost per animal during their quarantine process? Is it not the case that the lease on Eastern Creek expires in 2015?
Dr McDonald—That is correct.

Answer:

Since 1 January 2007 until 6 November 2009 there have been a total of 1833 horses commence quarantine at the Eastern Creek and Spotswood Quarantine Stations.

Most imported horses undertake 21 days quarantine. In instances where all horses in a consignment undertake pre-export quarantine at the same facility and there is no mixing of consignments at the post-arrival quarantine station, the length of stay is 14 days.

The cost per animal of post-arrival quarantine comprises accommodation costs of $165 a day for thoroughbred stallions and $65 a day for all other horses. In addition to daily accommodation fees there are costs for groom accommodation and AQIS inspection/service fees. These additional costs are variable and depend on a range of factors, including the number of horses in a consignment, day and time of arrival, and the number of grooms accompanying horses.

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Question: BSG 08

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Horse Importation Program
Hansard Page: 32 (27/10/2009)

Senator Back asked:

Senator BACK—Finally, I put on notice: the risk mitigation strategies that you have in place in the event that horses have to be evacuated from Eastern Creek for any reasons- fire in the barns or whatever. I understand that time has run out, chairman. I thank you for your patience.

Answer:

Each quarantine station has emergency plans, including for fire emergencies. Fire emergency plans have been developed in conjunction with the relevant fire authorities and include staff training, hazard reduction measures such as regular mowing and the movement of animals to safer areas of the stations and attendance by the fire brigade in the event of a fire. The stations are equipped with fire hydrants, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers. Emergency plans do not include the evacuation of animals from the stations.

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 09

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Animal Division
Topic: Varroa Mite
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Back asked:

1. Has the Varroa mite been detected in Australia?
2. If yes, what analysis has been undertaken concerning the impact this will have on Australian industry and will you make this available?
3. What economic impact would that have?
4. What measures are in place to detect and manage Varroa mite?
5. What measures are being taken to keep the mite out of Australia and WA?
6. How much has been committed to the National Sentinel Hive Program to date and going forward?

Answer:

1. The Varroa mite is not present in mainland Australia. It occurs on three Australian islands, Boigu, Dauan and Saibai Islands in the northern Torres Strait located close to the Papua-New Guinea mainland. The mite has not spread beyond these three islands in the past 16 years since its first detection.

   AQIS has, over the past 10-15 years, made a number of interceptions at the border and destroyed bees infested with Varroa however Varroa is not currently present in Australia.

2. Not applicable.

3. Cook et al. (Predicting the economic impact of an invasive species on an ecosystem service. *Ecological Applications*: Vol. 17:832-1840, 2007) estimated that the economic costs avoided if varroa mite were to continue to be prevented from entering Australia over the next 30 years would be US$16.4–38.8 million (Aus$21.3–50.5 million) a year.

4. DAFF, together with State and Territory governments, operates a multi-stage system for the detection of exotic bee incursions across the biosecurity continuum. First, as part of AQIS's international vessel clearance process, vessel masters of all ships over seven metres in length en route to Australia are required to undertake Pratique – a process of complying with health regulations or quarantine prior to arrival in port. In practice, the masters must inspect their vessels for insect (including bee) colonies and destroy any colonies located. A declaration that inspection has been completed must then be made to AQIS prior to arriving at an Australian port.

Question: BSG 09 (continued)

Secondly, AQIS inspects the six external surfaces of all shipping containers entering Australia and the interior of a proportion of containers. Break-bulk cargo is also inspected for insect nests. AQIS staff undertake general wharf surveillance as part of their ongoing duties and work closely with port workers to ensure that sightings of bees are reported to AQIS.

Thirdly, the National Sentinel Hive Program (NSHP) operates 35 sentinel hives at 26 ports around Australia and also operates log traps for Asian honey bees at four ports. These hives and traps are inspected quarterly for the presence of Varroa and other exotic pests of bees.

Four states (Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Queensland) operate trap boxes for bees (empty hives baited with honeycomb) as an additional detection technique to support the NSHP.

All states operate domestic honeybee surveillance programs to detect a range of bee pests and diseases in the hives of commercial apiarists.

5. See answer to question 4.

   In addition, the Western Australian state government prohibits entry of domestic managed bees and bee equipment to Western Australia.

6. In November 2008, the government announced funding for the National Sentinel Hive Program of $150,000 a year for 2009-2011. During this time, a report on surveillance for bee pests and diseases conducted by CSIRO and funded by RIRDC will be completed. The future of surveillance for bee pests and diseases and funding for any programs will be guided by the findings of this report.

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Question: BSG 10

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Quarantine Operations Division
Topic: Incorrectly reported beef patties imported from China
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Back asked:

At the last Estimates we discovered that almost 9000 kilos of frozen beef patties were allowed to be imported from China to Australia in March.

1. How this was allowed to occur when beef of Chinese origin is not permitted because of concerns about mad cow's disease?
2. What was the outcome of the review into this terrible breach in AQIS inspection protocols?
3. The Minister appeared to be of the view that it was a clerical procedure. Was it?
4. If there was an error identified, what action has been taken to ensure that this does not occur again?
5. A review has been undertaken into this – what was the outcome?
6. How was this able to occur and can you provide this Committee with the importer's documents?

Answer:

1. The lists provided to the committee's questions on notice (QoN) 55 and 53 in May 2009 included consignments of uncooked beef and lamb. As explained in the Secretary's letter to the committee of 21 September 2009, no such importation of these products from China has occurred. As confirmed by AQIS staff at the time of import, the documentation accompanying the consignments of beef and lamb listed in QoN 55 and 53 demonstrated that the country of origin for these products was New Zealand and that the products were shipped directly from New Zealand to Australia as a single consignment.
2. The review confirmed that there was no breach.
3. Yes
4. Cross checks will continue on country of origin information in the AQIS Import Management System (AIMS) against documents. In addition brokers will be requested to amend information where it is identified that country of origin information does not match. Longer term action to eliminate all broker errors in entering incorrect data into Australian Customs and Border Protection Service Integrated Cargo System (ICS) will require a commitment from Industry and a major upgrade of AQIS IT systems to improve the interface with the ICS.

Question: BSG 10 (continued)

5. The review confirmed that no uncooked beef from China was imported into Australia and there has not been a breach of quarantine/food standards requirements. As explained in the Secretary's letter of 21 September 2009, the country of origin code for this consignment was incorrect. The beef patties were confirmed at the time of import to be of New Zealand origin after verification of accompanying documents.
6. As explained previously, the reason for the data discrepancy was that data entered by the customs broker into the ICS recorded the country of origin of the product as China instead of New Zealand. AQIS is unable to alter this information in the ICS

   Copies of the original documentary evidence that the produce was from New Zealand are attached.

Attachment 1 – BSG 10

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Question: BSG 11

Division/Agency: Bioscurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre - role and staffing
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Back asked:

1. What is the role of Biosecurity CRC?
2. How many staff are currently working at Biosecurity CRC?
3. Has this changed since Budget estimates

Answer:

1. The role of the Australian Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre (AB CRC) is to develop new capabilities to detect, assess and respond to emerging infectious disease threats of animals and humans that affect national and regional biosecurity. The AB CRC aims to equip disease managers and members of the community across Australia and the Asia–Pacific region with the knowledge and skills required to respond to emerging infectious diseases.

2. Nine (9) full time staff currently work at the AB CRC offices. The total number of people involved in some capacity with AB CRC research projects is about 250. This figure includes in-kind contributions from partner organisations.

3. No.

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Question: BSG 12

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division and Plant Division
Topic: Consultation with Equivalent Overseas Agencies
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Back asked:

What is the mechanism/process whereby AQIS/BA communicates with equivalent agencies overseas to assess possible risks of diseases being introduced to Australia and impact on Australian agriculture?

Answer:

AQIS and Biosecurity Australia have formal and informal links with equivalent agencies overseas to exchange information on pest and disease risks associated with the trade in agricultural commodities.

Trading partners also have international obligations (the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures) to report changes to their plant and animal health status. Reporting is in accordance with the guidelines developed by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and Codex Alimentarius.

In addition, Australia has quarantine requirements that include official certification of pest and disease freedom for major pests and diseases of quarantine concern, for example foot-and-mouth disease.

In developing quarantine policy and assessing quarantine risks, Biosecurity Australia undertakes import risk analyses (IRAs) according to the IRA Handbook 2007 that includes consultation steps with stakeholders (includes trading partners) to ensure the quarantine risks are identified and appropriately assessed.

The IRA Handbook 2007 can be downloaded from the following link:

http://www.daff.gov.au/ba/ira/process-handbook

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Question: BSG 13

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre - work and relationships
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Back asked:

1. Does Biosecurity Australia work with or conduct any research with Australian Biosecurity CRC?
2. Are you aware that the Australian Biosecurity CRC put forward their application for new funding beyond 2010 based on the "One Health Initiative" and it was knocked back?
3. Are there any other agencies that are able conduct similar co-operative research between animal health and human health practitioners to ensure better public health outcomes?
4. AB CRC has co-operative multi-institutional relationships with offshore research facilities to assist Australia in research and alert us to emerging threats in the Asian region. Is any other agency in a position to do the same?
5. Can you provide me with information on whether there are plans to continue these relationships?

Answer:

1. Biosecurity Australia participates in shaping the research programs of the Australian Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre (AB CRC) through participation in committees that assess research projects and related education and utilisation of research outputs.

2. Yes.

3. Yes. A number of the agencies that are currently core, associate or international partners of AB CRC have a capacity to do similar cooperative research between animal health and human health practitioners to ensure better public health outcomes.

Core partners include:

- CSIRO Australian Animal Health Laboratory
- Path West Laboratory Medicine WA
- Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Queensland Health Department
- Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries
- Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia
- Curtin University of Technology

Question: BSG 13 (continued)

- Murdoch University
- James Cook University
- University of Sydney
- The University of Queensland
- Animal Health Australia Ltd
- Australian Pork Ltd
- AusVet Animal Heath Services

Associate and International Partners include:

- AGEN Biomedical Ltd
- Australian Wildlife Network Network
- Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing
- Meat and Livestock Australia
- National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health
- New South Wales Department of Primary Industries
- Northern Territory Department of Regional Development, Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources
- Consortium for Conservation Medicine (US)
- National Centre for Foreign Animal Diseases (Canada)
- OIE South-East Asia Foot-and-Mouth Disease Campaign, Regional Coordinating Unit (Thailand)
- The Jerome L. and Dawn Greene Infectious Disease Laboratory, Columbia University (US)

4. Other organisations such as the CSIRO Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) have relationships with a number of international organisations and research facilities overseas that can assist Australian research and alert Australia to emerging disease threats in the Asian region.

5. Further information may be available from Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

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Question: BSG 14

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: International obligations to report new and emerging diseases
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Back asked:

Can you advise what consideration, if any is being given to how we conform to our international obligations and also ensure the safety of Australians from new and emerging diseases that occur through transmission between animals and humans?

Answer:

Under the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), there is an obligation for Member countries to report to the OIE Central Bureau as set out below.

Veterinary Authorities shall send to the Central Bureau:

1. notification from the national Delegate to the OIE by telegram, fax or e-mail, within 24 hours, of any of the following events:

a) first occurrence of a listed disease and/or infection in a country, a zone or a compartment;

b) re-occurrence of a listed disease and/or infection in a country, a zone or a compartment following a report declared the outbreak ended;

c) first occurrence of a new strain of a pathogen of an OIE listed disease in a country, a zone or a compartment;

d) a sudden and unexpected increase in the distribution, incidence, morbidity or mortality of a listed disease prevalent within a country, a zone or a compartment;

e) an emerging disease with significant morbidity or mortality, or zoonotic potential;

f) evidence of change in the epidemiology of a listed disease (including host range, pathogenicity, strain) in particular if there is a zoonotic impact.

The Australian Chief Veterinary Officer is the national delegate for Australia and performs this reporting function to the OIE. Australia provides routine reports to OIE every six months as well as immediate notifications as described above when required. Australia was one of the first countries to report an outbreak of Influenza A H1N1 2009 in pigs, in accordance with these reporting obligations.

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Question: BSG 14 (continued)

The reporting obligations described in 1d, 1e and 1f refer to situations that may affect the safety of Australians with respect to 'new and emerging diseases that occur through transmission between animals and humans'.

In addition, zoonotic potential is taken into account as part of any disease response activity. Within the framework of the Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Diseases (CCEAD), an officer from the Department of Health and Ageing may be invited to CCEAD meetings where such expertise is considered appropriate. Zoonotic and possible zoonotic disease incidents would be examples where the inclusion of an officer from the human health portfolio would be appropriate.

DAFF officers have been heavily involved in increasing the awareness of a range of stakeholders about the growing importance of diseases that occur through transmission between animals and humans.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 15

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Quarantine Operations Division
Topic: Product integrity testing of imported agricultural products
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Back asked:

1. Who in DAFF is responsible for product integrity testing of imported agricultural products?
2. What is this agency's budget?
3. Change over time in budget allocation?
4. Number of samples taken and outcomes of testing?

Answer:

1. The Quarantine Operations Division is the area in the department with the primary responsibility for ensuring that imported agricultural products meet Australia's import requirements. This includes inspecting consignments and checking documentation such as import permits, health certificates and bills of lading.

2. The Import Clearance areas of the Quarantine Operations Division are primarily funded through cost recovery arrangements. The revenue budget for Import Clearance activities for the 2009/2010 financial year is $145,055,683.00.

3. Cost recovered revenue for Import Clearance areas is largely dependent on import trade volumes and activity levels. Budget allocations have remained static at $187,200.00 and $186,200.00 respectively for the 2009/2010 and 2008/2009 financial years.

4. A total of 101,484 agricultural consignments were cleared after confirmation through inspection and/or documentary assessment that relevant import requirements were met.

Note: Agricultural products are products or parts thereof, including food and plants, that are live or have been alive that have not been processed to an extent that renders them safe with respect to Quarantine risk.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 16

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: Labelling of bulk wine imports
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Back asked:

1. Bulk wine imports: whose responsibility is it to check?
2. What are the implications for labelling?

Answer:

1. Both the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) and state and territory food regulators have responsibility to check bulk wine imports for compliance with Australian food standards. Under the Imported Food Inspection Scheme, AQIS inspects bulk wine referred to it by the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service at a rate of 5% of consignments. All consignments are also the responsibility of state and territory food regulators if the product is made available for sale.

2. Under Standard 1.2.2 – Food Identification Requirements in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code, bulk goods do not require labels but must have certain information either on a label or in associated documentation.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 17

Division/Agency: Bioscurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Horse Importation Program
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Back asked:

1. How many horses are currently (and over the lifetime of the establishment of the horse importation program) at each facility?
2. Average length of stay of horses in quarantine?
3. Average cost per animal for Post –Arrival Quarantine?

Answer:

1. As at 6 November 2009 there were 36 horses undergoing quarantine at Eastern Creek Quarantine Station (ECQS) and 8 horses undergoing quarantine at the Spotswood Quarantine Station (SQS). Since the inception of the Horse Imports Program on 1 July 2008, 543 horses have been quarantined at ECQS and 294 at SQS.

2. Most imported horses undertake 21 days quarantine. In instances where all horses in a consignment undertake pre-export quarantine at the same facility and there is no mixing of consignments at the post-arrival quarantine station, the length of stay is 14 days.

3. The cost per animal of post-arrival quarantine comprises accommodation costs of $165 a day for thoroughbred stallions and $65 a day for all other horses. In addition to daily accommodation fees there are costs for groom accommodation and AQIS inspection/service fees. These additional costs are variable and depend on a range of factors including the number of horses in a consignment, day and time of arrival, and the number of grooms accompanying horses.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 18

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Eastern Creek Quarantine Station
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Back asked:

The recommendations from the Callinan Review into Equine Influenza recognised amongst other things that Eastern Creek particularly was poorly-equipped, under-funded and under-resourced.

1. What has been done to address all these concerns and ensure that Eastern Creek is a world-class quarantine facility?
2. How much have the Government invested in re-mediating these problems? Point to where this funding has been drawn.

Answer:

1. Since the outbreak of equine influenza in August 2007, improvements have been made to the facilities at the horse compound at the Eastern Creek Animal Quarantine Station and funding and resourcing have been increased.

   Facility improvements have included:
   - renovations to the showers in a permanent on-site building so that they are 'flow-through';
   - gravel top-dressing in one of the turn-out paddocks where the rain affected clay soil was a potential source of injury for horses;
   - planning to relocate and repair the ventilation shafts in the stables; and
   - discussions to purchase surgical equipment, which is currently provided by one of the horse transport agents.

   Actions to address funding for horse quarantine have included:
   - an increase in the fees for horse quarantine on 1 October 2008 to $165 for temporary imports of thoroughbreds and $65 for all other horses; and
   - a fee review and the implementation of new fees for horse quarantine, shortly, that will ensure the costs associated with horse quarantine are fully recovered.

   Changes in resourcing at Eastern Creek Animal Quarantine Station since the outbreak of equine influenza in August 2007 have included:
   - an increase in AQIS officers working in the horse compound from 0.3 to 4.9 full time equivalents; and
   - the implementation of twenty-four hour security at the station, provided by AQIS officers and/or security guards.

Question: BSG 18 (continued)

2. The cost of AQIS staffing attending the horse compound prior to the equine influenza outbreak was approximately $25,000 a year and has since been increased to approximately $500,000 a year. The cost of improvements to the facilities at the Eastern Creek Animal Quarantine Station has thus far been approximately $50,000. A further $50,000 is expected to be spent later in this financial year and another $100,000 in the next financial year. AQIS is a cost recovered organisation and these costs have been taken into account in the development of the proposed new fee structure for horse quarantine fees.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 19

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Discussions with industry re proposed closure of Spotswood
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Back asked:

Last Wednesday I understand AQIS has entered into discussions with the horse industry regarding the proposed closure of Spotswood in Victoria which would leave only one, dedicated horse quarantine station in Australia – Eastern Creek:

1. Can you confirm these discussions took place?
2. The outbreak of EI was determined to have originated from Eastern Creek and while horses at Spotswood tested positive it did not spread outside the quarantine facility – why when it seemingly had higher quarantine controls in place has AQIS decided to close it down instead of Eastern Creek?
3. What was the basis for this decision? (Did business plan reflect that it was less profitable and fewer horses were being imported through here)

Answer:

1. AQIS discussed options for future daily horse quarantine fees with industry at the Horse Industry Consultative Committee meeting on 21 October 2009. The options discussed included one associated with the temporary cessation of horse intakes into the Spotswood Animal Quarantine Station.

2. Quarantine controls at the stations were not raised as part of the discussion regarding the temporary cessation of horse intakes into the Spotswood Animal Quarantine Station.

3. Cessation of horse imports into the Spotswood Animal Quarantine Station was first raised by one of the horse importers at a meeting of the Finance Sub-committee of the Horse Industry Consultative Committee in March 2009 as a way of reducing Horse Imports Program costs, and thus minimising the future increase in daily horse quarantine fees. Discussion has continued with the Horse Industry Consultative Committee regarding this proposal since that time.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 20

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Savings – Closure of Spotswood Animal Quarantine Station
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Back asked:

AQIS has identified $700,000 in savings that can be gained through Spotswood's closure.

1. How was this figure calculated?
2. Can you provide me with the detail?

This decision is intended to result in the reduction of costs of imports:

3. What overall will this savings result in all levels of applicants for this service?
4. If this hasn't been determined can you tell me when?
5. Are you able to assure industry that there will be a saving and by a minimum of how much?

Answer:

1. The estimated savings identified from the cessation of horse imports into the Spotswood Quarantine Station (SQS) were derived from budget figures for the Horse Imports Program and have been estimated at approximately $611,000.

2. Expected savings include:
   - approximately $240,000 a year in employee expenses;
   - approximately $342,000 a year in property and accommodation expenses;
   - approximately $18,000 a year on technical and field expenses; and
   - approximately $11,000 a year on vehicle expenses.

3. Cessation of horse intakes into Spotswood Animal Quarantine Station is expected to result in savings of approximately $611,000.

4. The savings have been estimated as part of the Horse Imports Program budget process.

5. The expected savings are based on the program financial information available at this time.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 21

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Quarantine considerations
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Back asked:

With regard to quarantine considerations:

1. Was a risk analysis undertaken in formulating this decision and what risks have been identified from a horse quarantine perspective?
2. Has AQIS considered how they will overcome problems arising from co-mingling of horses from places of different health status ie. all being accommodated in one facility? Surely this isn't a desirable quarantine outcome?
3. If improvements have been made to address this can you provide details on current and projected projects?
4. With only one quarantine station what measures would be taken in the event horses had to be moved in an emergency ie. fire – would this not render their quarantine status invalid causing them to be removed to their country of origin to recommence their quarantine program?
5. If there is a quarantine breach where are horses going to go?
6. Are you likely to see more horses being imported via NZ if it becomes a more cost-effective pathway?
7. Is this a concern?

Answer:

1. The discussion regarding the temporary suspension of horse imports into Spotswood Animal Quarantine Station concerned the potential savings to be made by the Horse Imports Program. Quarantine risks are addressed through the consistent application of import conditions and arrangements at all stations receiving horse intakes and were not part of the discussion regarding the temporary suspension of horse intakes into Spotswood Animal Quarantine Station.

2. The import conditions take into account the co-mingling of horses from different countries and different pre-export quarantine facilities.

3. There are no current or projected projects regarding the risks associated with co-mingling of horses.

4. Each quarantine station has plans for emergencies, including fire. Fire emergency plans have been developed in conjunction with the relevant fire authorities and include staff training, hazard reduction measures such as regular mowing and the movement of animals to safer areas of the stations and attendance by the fire brigade in the event of a fire. The stations are equipped with fire hydrants, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers. Emergency plans do not include the evacuation of animals from the stations or the export of horses back to their country of origin.

Question: BSG 21 (continued)

5. Current arrangements at the stations do not allow for quarantine to be breached.

6. Horse import pathways are a commercial matter for industry. The Department is unable to comment on whether more horses are likely to be imported via New Zealand.

7. See response to Q. 6 above. The Department is unable to comment on the number of horses that are expected to be imported via New Zealand.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 22

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Spotswood Quarantine Station ceasing horse importation
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Back asked:

1. An interim arrangement has been made to cease importation at Spotswood for 6 months can you confirm this and what factors will determine future closure of this facility?
2. When is this decision likely to be made and by who?
3. Can you make any assessment on this decision when it is completed available to this Committee?
4. Can you confirm whether Eastern Creek's lease due to expire by 2015?
5. What consideration has been given to quarantine arrangements beyond that date?
6. Is DofD in negotiations to extend this prior to the closure of Spotswood?

Answer:

1. The temporary suspension of horse intakes into the Spotswood Animal Quarantine Station and review after six months is associated with one of the options for future fees for daily horse quarantine. This option was supported by members of the Horse Industry Consultative Committee at their meeting on 21 October 2009. Should the Minister make an amendment to the Quarantine Service Fees Determination for daily horse quarantine fees based on this option, AQIS will put the temporary suspension of horse imports into Spotswood into effect and review the situation in six months, in consultation with industry. A number of factors will be considered in determining whether the temporary suspension will be made permanent, including the impact of the suspension on industry.

2. The Minister is responsible for making amendments to the Quarantine Service Fees Determination and will decide when the instrument is made.

3. The Department will advise the Committee when the Minister has made the amendments to the Quarantine Service Fees Determination concerning horse quarantine fees.

4. The lease on the Eastern Creek Animal Quarantine Station is due to expire at the end of 2015.

5. The Government is reviewing options for future provision of post entry quarantine facilities for animal and plant species that require post entry quarantine, in line with the recommendations of the Quarantine and Biosecurity Review. On 23 September 2009, the Hon. Tony Burke MP Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry announced the initiation of planning work for the future network of quarantine stations.

Question: BSG 22 (continued)

As part of this work, the Government is now commissioning a scoping study to examine options for the provision of future post entry quarantine facilities. The scoping study will assess all options for future post entry quarantine facilities.

6. The Department of Finance and Deregulation is not involved in negotiations about Spotswood quarantine station.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 23

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Food Division
Topic: AQIS Export Certification Fees and Charges
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

1. What is the status of the 6 Ministerial Taskforces with respect to the reform process? Are there any current plans for further meetings?
2. Can AQIS provide a full breakdown, by financial year and by the 6 broad industry groups, of projected fees and charges received over the next 2 financial years?
3. Has AQIS completed any comparisons of export certification fees and charges with other nations? How do Australia's schedule of fees and charges compare with our competitors? What impact does this have on our international competitiveness?
4. What is proportion of billable time for AQIS export inspectors compared with full work hours? (AHEA claim billable time is just 32%) What takes up the balance of the inspectors' hours?
5. What is the level, broken down by industry, of the industry liability accounts?
6. What does AQIS budget to have these accounts at the end of 2009/10 and 2010/11?
7. When does AQIS/DAFF plan to recover these debts?
8. Can AQIS advise what legal advice it received with respect to the collection and retention of 'over-charged' fees following the disallowance motion? Did the Minister approve this action?
9. What is the level of fees that will be returned to industry as a result of the disallowance motion? Can AQIS please provide a breakdown of these by industry and by type of charge, that is, weekly, monthly or annual?
10. What is the value of fees that won't be returned? (that is, weekly or monthly charges paid prior to the disallowance motion)
11. Minister Burke, following the disallowance motion claimed the move would have a significant impact on Australia’s ability to keep pests and diseases out of Australia and to gain access to overseas markets. Is Minister Burke confirming that in fact export inspection programs in some way subsidise border protection and import programs?
12. Can AQIS provide information about the $20 million promised by the Minister as a sweetener to the Greens Party? Was this new money? Or was it money out of additional departmental funds such as underspends?
13. When was this additional funding requested by the Minister? What advice was provided to the Minister regarding this additional funding? When was this advice provided?
14. What advice was provided by other agencies with respect to this additional funding? When was this advice provided?

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 23 (continued)

Answer:

These answers are correct as of 1 December 2009.

1. The Senate decision on 25 November 2009 to rescind its earlier disallowance of new export fees and charges will allow the reform program for export certification to proceed and the ministerial taskforces have recommenced their work. Further meetings of each taskforce will be scheduled as required.

2. The breakdown of AQIS projected fees and charges to be received for the six broad industry groups for 2009/10 and 2010/11.

	2009/2010 Nov YTD Projection	2010/2011
Meat Export Program	43,450,354	38,312,955
Fish Export Program	2,531,560	2,456,410
Dairy Export Program	1,236,229	1,139,237
Grain Export Program	8,540,041	6,934,056
Horticulture Export Program	5,513,825	4,144,261
Live Animal Export Program	3,813,877	3,369,309

3. No. The value of the 40 per cent subsidy to industry has been assessed by ABARE as being insignificant relative to the effects of other factors (such as fluctuating exchange rates) on industry returns. ABARE has confirmed that the previous subsidy of around $30 million to export meat certification amounts to around 0.55 per cent of the total value of beef and veal, lamb and mutton exported. For other industries, fish, dairy, horticulture, grain and live animal exports, the subsidy amounts to a lower percentage of export value than for the meat industry.

4. The on plant time for AQIS export inspectors varies between export activities. For meat inspectors the billable hours are 100 per cent of capacity. For other export programs expectations are that 60 per cent of an inspectors' time is billable. Non-billable time is spent on travel, client queries, program administration and training.

5. The balance of the industry liability accounts at the end of 2008/09 financial year was:

	2008/09
Grain Export Program	$359,784
Horticulture Export Program	$34,823
Live Animal Export Program	$759,973

Dairy Export Program	-$106,881
Fish Export Program	$38,107
Meat Export program	-$3,823,175

6. The projected balance for each export program for the end of 2009/10 and 2010/11 financial years is:

	2009/10*	2010/11*
Grain Export Program	$1,358,487	$1,358,487
Horticulture Export Program	$196,242	$196,242
Live Animal Export Program	$426,505	$426,505
Dairy Export Program	-	-
Fish Export Program	$24,947	$24,947
Meat Export program	-	-

* Projected figures as at September 2009

7. The Export Certification Reform Package, worth $127.4 million, includes a new set of export fees and charges to return industry to full cost recovery.

8. The disallowance does not invalidate fees for services provided in the period 1 July to 15 September 2009. Except as mentioned in points i to iv below, all revenues for services provided during 1 July and 15 September 2009 remain recoverable by AQIS.

    i. The disallowance does have an effect on those annual, monthly or weekly services/charges collected between 1 July and 15 September 2009. These fees and charges are considered to have been collected for services which extend beyond the date of disallowance.
    ii. In the case of annual charges; any revenues recovered against the 1 July to 15 September 2009 rates are invalidated and must be credited. Services are to be recharged at the 'old' rate for the entire annual period.
    iii. In the case of monthly charges; any revenues recovered against the 1 July to 15 September 2009 rates for the month of September

2009 are invalidated and must be credited. Services are to be recharged at the 'old' rate for the entire month of September 2009

iv. In the case of weekly charges; any revenues recovered for services provided in the period 14th September to 18th September are invalidated and must be credited. Services are to be recharged at the old rate for the week 14-18th September.

This did not require the approval of the Minister.

9. A total of $209,000 was returned to the fish export industry as a result of the disallowance motion. These fees were for annual registration charges for fish export establishments. No other fees invalidated by the disallowance had been collected.

10. The additional funds collected from fee increases between 1 July 2009 and 15 September 2009 are listed for each program. This does not include any fees that were refunded as a result of being invalidated following the disallowance.

Export Program	Balance ($)
Meat Export Program	102,373
Fish Export Program	265,487
Dairy Export Program	264,478
Grain Export Program	1,522,371
Horticulture Export Program	386,398
Live Animal Export Program	316,291
Total	2,857,398

11. No.

12. The $20 million for the export certification reform program was new monies to be provided to AQIS by the Department of Finance and Deregulation.

13. This question goes to matters confidential to Cabinet.

14. This question goes to matters confidential to Cabinet.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 24

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Quarantine Operations Division
Topic: The importer of the Beef-Frozen Burgers under tariff code 2023000 – 27/3/2009
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

1. Who was the importer of the 'Beef – Frozen Burgers' under tariff code 2023000 on the 27/03/2009?
2. Has this importer imported any previous products or products since 27/03/2009?
3. What was the nature of these products?
4. Which port did the above products arrive at?
5. When were the above products inspected by AQIS?
6. When did AQIS realise there was an error with the data?
7. Has AQIS found any other errors in all other data contained in the same Excel spreadsheet provided to the Senate?

Answer:

1. Marine Product Marketing Pty Ltd.

2. Yes.

3. Seafood from Thailand, New Zealand and China, and Beef and Lamb Burgers and Rissoles from New Zealand.

4. Mainly Sydney with small numbers at Melbourne and Brisbane.

5. Upon presentation of documentation to BSG regional officers.

6. The data error was identified when the import documentation was reviewed.

7. None have been identified.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 25

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Food Division
Topic: Kangaroo Meat Exports
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

1. What is contained within the 'response package' proposal in relation to the export of kangaroo meat to Russia?
2. What is the anticipated cost of the proposed package to industry including processors?
3. What is the timeline for the presentation of the proposal to Russia?

Answer:

1. The 'response package' developed by AQIS in concert with the kangaroo industry and State Regulatory Authorities (SRAs) has been developed around the implementation of measures necessary to provide a cogent response to Russia to regain market access of kangaroo meat exports to that country. This is a through chain approach and includes all aspects of the export chain from harvest to shipment.

2. Costs associated with this exercise will vary depending on the commercial entity implementing the reform within its Approved Arrangement. The costs are the minimum necessary to meet market access obligations. BSG is not privy to company commercial in-confidence costs associated with these reforms.

3. Once the measures have been fully implemented by industry and verified by the Biosecurity Services Group (BSG) and the SRAs, BSG will provide a final response package to Russia. The timeline will be largely determined by industry and its ability to demonstrate sustained performance against these measures. Based on current progress this is likely to be in the first quarter of 2010.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 26

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Animal Division and Plant Division
Topic: IRAs - Chinese, Russian, Indian, Indonesian, Philippine, Brazilian, Chilean, Argentinean, Uruguayan, South African
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. What Import Risk Assessments IRAs on Chinese, Russian, Indian, Indonesian, Philippine, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and South African products are currently under way?
2. Are they close to being finalised?

Answer:

1.

China

Biosecurity Australia (BA) has commenced import risk analyses (IRAs) on apples and table grapes from China using the regulated IRA process.

Chinese summerfruit and cherries are also on BA's current work program.

Russia and Uruguay

Nil

India, Indonesia, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and South Africa

Although numerous import market access requests have been received from these countries and have been allocated various priorities by the Import Market Access Advisory Group (IMAAG), none are on BA's current work program.

Philippines

Mangoes from additional areas of the Philippines is on BA's current work program and will be considered as a review of the existing policy.

2.

Apples from China

The expanded IRA commenced under the regulated process on 17 March 2008 and must be completed within 30 months. The draft IRA report was released for stakeholder consultation on 21 January 2009. The revised draft IRA report was provided to the independent Eminent Scientists Group (ESG) on 21 September 2009 after consideration of the ten stakeholder submissions on the draft IRA report. The ESG has a maximum of 60 days to undertake its review and report to the Director of Animal and Plant Quarantine on its findings. BA will take the recommendations of

Question: BSG 26 (continued)

the ESG into account in producing a provisional final IRA report, which will be open to formal appeal.

Table grapes from China (regulated IRA)

The standard IRA process commenced on 18 August 2008 and must be completed within 24 months. BA is preparing the draft IRA report.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 27

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Quarantine Operations Division
Topic: List of all new & existing import applications - food/agriculture/fisheries/ forestry products
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Can the department provide a list of all new and existing import applications for food and agriculture/fisheries/forestry products from China, Russia, India, Indonesia, Philippine, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and South Africa?

Answer:

At attachment A is a list of all relevant import permits from the E-permits system.

At attachment B is a list of all relevant manual import permits.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 28

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division and Quarantine Operations Division

Topic: Imported Agriculture and Food Products

Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. What agriculture/food products are currently imported from China, Russia, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and South Africa?
2. Please provide a country by list of all imported food and agriculture products.

Answer:

Agriculture/food products imported from China, Russia, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and South Africa during the 2008-09 financial year are provided at Attachment A.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 29

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: Imported food testing
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Please provide a country by country breakdown in percentage terms and the number of tests conducted on food products (fresh and manufactured) being imported into Australia from China, Russia, India, Indonesia, Philippines, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and South Africa?

Answer:

AQIS import management system only contains data on food referred to the imported food inspection scheme from the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. Food is referred to the scheme at rates varying from 5-100% depending on the food's risk classification and past compliance history. Specific information on total imports of food by country may be available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The table below details the number of tests applied to food under the inspection scheme for each nominated country between 26 May 2009 and 27 October 2009.

Country	**Number of tests**
Argentina	102
Brazil	108
Chile	141
China	3218
India	1737
Indonesia	722
Philippines	640
Russia	43
South Africa	503
Uruguay	6

In the same period, the AQIS Import Management System records that a total of 150 consignments of raw prawns from China (95), India (6) and Indonesia (49) were imported. All consignment s were tested for quarantine purposes.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 30

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Food Division
Topic: Imported food testing
Hansard Page: **Written**

Senator Nash asked:

1. Please update the previous list of all food inspected by AQIS during the 2008/09, and 2009/10 financial year provided in during the last Senate Estimates Committee Hearing from China?
2. Please provide the same list for Russia, India, Indonesia, Philippine, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and South Africa.

Answer:

Please note the two attached reports are produced from the AQIS Import Management System (AIMS). These reports contain data from the Customs and Border Protection Service's integrated cargo system (ICS), which have been entered by customs brokers or importers. AQIS assesses consignments based on accompanying documentation. If data has been entered incorrectly in the ICS, AQIS is unable to correct it in AIMS.

1. Attachment 1 is a report from AIMS listing foods for human consumption from China inspected by the AQIS between 26 May 2009 and 27 October 2009 under the Imported Food Inspection Scheme.

2. Attachment 2 is a report from AIMS listing foods for human consumption from Russia, India, Indonesia, Philippine, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and South Africa inspected by AQIS between 26 May 2009 and 27 October 2009 under the Imported Food Inspection Scheme.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 31

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: Imported food testing
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. How many of the items from China, Russia, India, Indonesia, Philippine, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and South Africa inspected by AQIS were rejected?
2. What were the reasons for rejecting the shipments? Have any prosecutions been launched?

Answer:

1. In the period between 26 May 2009 and 27 October 2009, 2,636 foods were inspected under the Imported Food Inspection Scheme from the above countries, of which 203 failed inspection.

   Attachment 1 identifies the product and reason for failure.

2. There have been no prosecutions for these failures. When an imported food is found to be non-compliant with Australian food standards, it is required to be treated, destroyed or re-exported when under AQIS control.

Attachment 1 – BSG 31

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 32

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Quarantine Operations Division
Topic: Rejected shipments of agriculture products by AQIS last year
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. How many shipments of agriculture products were held up and or rejected by AQIS last year because of breaches to Australia's Quarantine rules in 2008/09
2. What was the nature of these breaches?
3. How many of the breaches resulted in the goods not being allowed into Australia?
4. What happened to the goods?
5. Have any prosecutions been launched?
6. How many of these prosecutions were successful?

Answer:

1. Please refer to AQIS 56 (Budget Estimates May 2009).

2. The consignments were held up or rejected because they did not meet quarantine requirements.

3. Please refer to AQIS 56 (Budget Estimates May 2009).

4. Please refer to AQIS 56 (Budget Estimates May 2009).

5. There have been no prosecutions in relation to these matters.

6. There have been no prosecutions in relation to these matters.

Attachment – BSG 32 (AQIS 56-Budget Estimates May 2009)

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 33

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: AQIS Export Certification Fees and Charges
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. Has anyone from the Department or Minister's office sought to place any pressure on any industry body or exporter to convince the Coalition to support a rescinder motion of the disallowance motion on the increased AQIS Export Certification Fees and Charges?
2. Including but not limited to threats that overtime bans would be implemented which could be extremely costly, especially if demurrage is involved (ie want to load a ship at 4am but have to wait for an AQIS inspector to sign off on the cargo could result in a USD$20,000 plus demurrage charge by the shipping line)?
3. How does the Department justify these outrageous comments?

Answer:

1. No.
2. There are no bans on overtime.
3. See answer above.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 34

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: AQIS Export Certification Fees and Charges
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Since the Senate Disallowed the new fees and charges for AQIS Export Certification what measures has the Government put in place ensure the smooth operation of the program?

Answer:

The Government has agreed to fund the Export Certification Reform Package, worth $127.4 million. It includes a new set of export fees and charges to return industry to full cost recovery.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 35

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: AQIS Export Certification program
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. What is the current budget for the AQIS Export Certification program?
2. Please provide a detailed list of the specific reform items the Government wants to implement in this area for each of the industries, include the indicative initial costs of each of these reforms and the timeframe for implementation of each of the individual reforms?

Answer:

1. The project budget figures for the AQIS export programs for 2009/10.

Total Export Program Financial Positions	**2009/2010 Nov YTD Projection**
Grand Total Revenue	111,162,522
Grand Total Expenditure	110,712,947
Surplus / (Deficit)	449,575
Accumulated Result (Annual Operating Balance)	**449,575**

2. The six joint Industry-AQIS Ministerial taskforces established in April 2009 representing each of the affected industry sectors (meat, fish, dairy, grain, horticulture and live animals) are developing the reform agenda and associated work plans for their respective industry sector.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's submission to the Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Inquiry into the removal the rebate for AQIS export certification functions includes information on the proposed reform agenda and the status of the work plan for each industry sector. The Department's submission is available on the Committee's website.

The Senate decision on 25 November 2009 to rescind its earlier disallowance of new export fees and charges will allow the reform program for export certification to proceed and the ministerial taskforces have recommenced their work. A key activity for each taskforce will be to finalise its detailed work plan.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 36

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: AQIS Export Certification program
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

In relation to the Minister's media statements that he had reached an agreement with the Greens to provide an additional $20 million to implement efficiency reforms with the AQIS Export Certification program, was this $20 million additional funding from Treasury or was it to come from within the existing DAFF budget?

Answer:

The $20 million for the export certification reform program was new monies to be provided to AQIS by the Department of Finance and Deregulation. Subsequently, the Government decided to fund the Export Certification Reform Package, worth $127.4 million.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 37

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: AQIS Export Certification program
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. Is the Government aware of industry concerns that the Department attempted to meet the Government's efficiency dividend demands by transferring departmental administration costs onto industry cost recovery programs such as the AQIS Export Certification Program?

2. Please provide a breakdown of each of the administration overheads for the AQIS Export Certification program for 2006/07,2007/08, 2008/09 and estimate costs for 2009/10?

Answer:

15. All cost recovery for the export programs are in line with the Government's Cost Recovery Guidelines that do not allow cross subsidisation.

16. The breakdown of administrative overheads for the AQIS export programs are been provided for 2006/07, 2007/08, 2008/09 and the budget figures for 2009/10.

AQIS Administration Overheads	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010
Finance	234,428	238,054	269,442	-
Workplace Strategy	249,358	246,426	261,560	-
Regional Support	793,540	794,298	857,165	1,062,547
Business Management	367,686	365,848	342,151	339,097
Software Solutions	298,497	448,251	780,699	-
Corporate Managmnt	76,696	166,346	339,800	171,778
Cost of Capital	70,407	-	-	-
Regional Manager	285,934	261,088	281,679	305,644
Quality Management Systems	-	-	-	866,403
Program Office	-	-	-	332,199
Total	**2,376,547**	**2,520,311**	**3,132,495**	**3,077,668**

* Projected costs as at September 2009

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 38

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: Ernst Young audit – AQIS Export Certification program for the Meat Industry
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

When will the Government publicly release the Ernst Young audit into the actual costs associated with the AQIS Export Certification program for the Meat Industry?

Answer:

This report has not yet been completed. All the projects associated with the export certification reform agenda were put on hold following the disallowance of the AQIS fees and charges by the Senate on 15 September 2009, and have only recommenced following the Senate decision on 25 November 2009 to rescind its earlier disallowance.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 39

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: Ernst Young audit – AQIS Export Certification program
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

What were the major findings of the Ernst Young audit into the actual costs associated with the AQIS Export Certification program?

Answer:

This report has not yet been completed.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 40

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: AQIS Export Certification program
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Please provide a complete breakdown of all individual costs for each industry of the costs to run the AQIS Export Certification program, including the cost of inspection services and AQIS administration costs for 2007/08, 2008/09 and the projected costs for 2009/10 and 2010/11? (where the costs are demand driven and unknown please provide an estimate)

Answer:

The individual costs for each export industry has been provided for 2007/08 and 2008/09 with the budget figures provided for the forward years (2009/10 and 2010/11).

Grain Export Program	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Program Administration	1,489,208	1,746,898	2,085,736	2,148,308
Inspection/Documentation	7,592,782	9,350,229	9,391,816	9,673,570
DAFF Administration	341,903	396,948	630,894	649,821
AQIS Administration	465,141	572,301	523,227	538,924
Total Cost	9,889,033	12,066,376	12,631,673	13,010,623

Horticulture Export Program	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Program Administration	1,229,356	1,261,750	1,382,987	1,424,477
Inspection/Documentation	4,425,452	4,837,289	5,349,663	5,510,153
DAFF Administration	288,961	299,906	431,650	444,599
AQIS Administration	277,222	346,430	311,146	320,481
Total Cost	6,220,990	6,745,375	7,475,446	7,699,709

Live Animal Export Program	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Program Administration	2,185,800	2,240,352	2,164,040	2,228,961
Inspection/Documentation	2,813,615	3,229,508	3,650,086	3,759,589
DAFF Administration	159,162	178,336	317,744	327,277
AQIS Administration	185,630	232,447	218,096	224,639
Total Cost	5,344,207	5,880,644	6,349,966	6,540,465

Question: BSG 40 (continued)

Fish Export Program	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Program Administration	1,364,243	1,253,908	1,520,303	1,565,912
Inspection/Documentation	3,382,073	3,491,520	3,045,756	3,137,129
DAFF Administration	168,892	171,631	92,251	95,019
AQIS Administration	249,719	280,360	56,404	58,096
Total Cost	5,164,928	5,197,420	4,714,714	4,856,156

Meat Export Program	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Program Administration	7,809,365	8,607,566	8,948,949	9,217,418
Inspection/Documentation	64,970,968	67,318,933	67,129,784	69,143,677
DAFF Administration	1,347,064	1,507,847	2,112,826	2,176,211
AQIS Administration	1,277,637	1,624,387	1,933,880	1,991,897
Total Cost	75,405,033	79,058,733	80,125,440	82,529,203

Dairy Export Program	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Program Administration	1,341,908	1,361,920	1,563,085	1,609,978
Inspection/Documentation	365,803	416,368	455,709	469,381
DAFF Administration	54,872	64,872	59,028	60,799
AQIS Administration	62,851	73,165	26,257	27,044
Total Cost	1,825,435	1,916,325	2,104,079	2,167,202

Organic Export Program	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Program Administration	110,062	137,466	115,444	118,908
Inspection/Documentation	65,424	56,328	38,166	39,311
DAFF Administration	7,310	8,002	7,470	7,694
AQIS Administration	2,111	3,405	1,443	1,486
Total Cost	184,907	205,200	162,524	167,400

Non-prescribed Goods Export Program	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Program Administration	-	-	1,459,280	1,503,058
Inspection/Documentation	-	-	1,740,617	1,792,835
DAFF Administration	-	-	22,551	23,227
AQIS Administration	-	-	7,215	7,431
Total Cost	-	-	3,229,662	3,326,552

Total Export Programs	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Program Administration	15,529,941	16,609,861	19,239,825	19,817,020
Inspection/Documentation	83,616,116	88,700,175	90,801,596	93,525,644
DAFF Administration	2,368,164	2,627,543	3,674,415	3,784,647
AQIS Administration	2,520,311	3,132,495	3,077,668	3,169,998
Total Cost	104,034,533	111,070,074	116,793,505	120,297,310

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 41

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: AQIS export fees and charges
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. Has the Government informed industry that it will be seeking to recover the fees and charges which are disallowed by the Senate through the industry liability accounts?
2. Will the Department be seeking to recover any fees and charges via the industry liability accounts?
3. What was the level of debt for each industry in 2006/07, 2008/09, and what will be the projected level of debt for 2009/10 for each industry?

Answer:

1. The Export Certification Reform Package, worth $127.4 million, includes a new set of export fees and charges to return industry to full cost recovery. It also includes a 40 percent offset of the full cost impact on export industries to 30 June 2011 as well as funding to address the revenue shortfall from 15 September 2009 to 30 November 2009 as a consequence of the Senate's disallowance.
2. Please refer to the answer to question 1.
3. Export Program balance of Industry Liability Accounts at the end of each financial year

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10*
Grain Export Program	$1,069,000	$747,212	$359,784	$1,358,487
Horticulture Export Program	-$771,649	-$871,569	$34,823	$196,242
Live Animal Export Program	$249,599	$728,294	$759,973	$426,505
Dairy Export Program	$50,342	-$121,507	-$106,881	-
Fish Export Program	$28,071	$151,054	$38,107	$24,947
Meat Export program	$3,986,744	$2,400,355	-$3,823,175	-

* Projected figures

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 42

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Strategic Projects/BPU Division
Topic: Beale Review
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Does the Department agree with Beale that the costs associated with market access arrangements are a legitimate cost to Government and should be paid for by Government?

Answer:

The government has accepted the Beale Review recommendations in principle. This includes recommendation 80 of the Beale Review which states that "*The Government should enhance Budget funding for activities which support biosecurity-related technical market access for Australian exporters."*

The matter of whether budget funding or cost recovery should be applied for a particular activity was considered by the Review panel. Page 194 of the Review report notes the importance of public versus private good in determining which should apply, and states that *"where there are 'private good' characteristics associated with a government activity, it may be appropriate to recover these costs from users or beneficiaries."* It makes this conclusion in the context that *"the principle that those who create the need for regulation should bear its costs..."* (page 194 of the Review report).

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 43

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: 40 percent rebate – AQIS export fees and charges
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. Are industry groups proposing alternatives to axing the 40 percent rebate which was disallowed by the Senate?

2. If so what are they?

Answer:

1. Yes.

2. Maintain the effect of the rebate offset while progressing the export certification reform agenda.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 44

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: Correspondence & interim reports – AQIS, users and Ministerial Taskforces
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Please table all correspondence and interim reports between AQIS and all relevant users of AQIS export services and the six Ministerial Taskforces.

Answer:

The interim reports for the fish, dairy, live export, grain and horticulture for each AQIS - Industry Ministerial taskforces that identified key areas of reform for their industry sector were tabled by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry at the Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Inquiry into the removal of rebate for AQIS export certification functions. The interim report for the meat industry contains legally confidential information. The department is assessing options in relation to handling the report.

The department is reviewing the correspondence between AQIS, relevant users of AQIS export services as it relates to the six Ministerial Taskforces to identify any personal information under the *Privacy Act 1988*. The department will assess options for the Committee's consideration.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 45

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: Minister's meetings with industry groups – 40 percent rebate
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. Which industry groups has the Minister met with in relation to the abolition of the 40% rebate and on how many occasions has the Minister met with these groups?

2. Please give a date on which the meetings occurred.

Answer:

The department does not have this information.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 46

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: department's meetings with export industry groups
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. How many meetings has the department held with export industry groups in relation to the axing of the 40% rebated?

2. When did these meetings take place?

Answer:

1. 65 meetings.

2. 23 January 2009 to 15 September 2009.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 47

Division/Agency: BSG – Food Division
Topic: all correspondence with industry bodies – disallowed AQIS fees and charges
Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Nash asked:

Please provide copies of all correspondence, (including emails) with industry bodies, and exporters since the regulation allowing the new massive fees and charges was disallowed by the Senate.

Answer:

The department is reviewing the correspondence to determine whether it contains personal information under the *Privacy Act 1988*. The department will assess options for the Committee's consideration.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 48

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: Agreement on AQIS new fees and charges
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Has the Minister or Department given industry groups a deadline to have come to agreement on the new fees and charges as a result of the Senate disallowing the Government's new fees and charges?

Answer:

No.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 49

Division/Agency: BSG – Quarantine Operations Division
Topic: Beef patties from China
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Why did AQIS mislead this Committee, by claiming the beef had come in from China, yet now claim it had come from New Zealand?

Answer:

This was fully explained in the Secretary's letter to the committee on 21 September 2009. A copy of the letter is attached.

Attachment – BSG 49

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 50

Division/Agency: BSG - Quarantine Operations Division
Topic: Beef Patties from China
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. Please provide a copy of all documents in relation to the 8.8 tonnes of Chinese Beef which the Department told the committee was imported into Australia, and subsequently stated via a letter from Dr O'Connell that the Department had mislead the Committee and it was in fact Beef from New Zealand?
2. In particular please provide a copy of the document showing the incorrect country of origin code which the Secretary states was wrongly entered by an Australian customs broker into the Integrated Cargo System (ICS).
3. How often are these types of mistakes made?
4. How many times has a product which country of origin was Chinese mistakenly been entered as coming from New Zealand?
5. What action if any has been taken against the customs broker for using the wrong country of origin code?

Answer:

1. Australian Customs and Border Protection Service Integrated Cargo System (ICS) screens, the importers declaration and the New Zealand Government certificate are attached.
2. Attached.
3. Data entry errors in the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service Integrated Cargo System (ICS) (and therefore, in AIMS) do occur periodically, as a significant amount of information is required to be entered for each consignment. It is difficult to determine the regularity of these types of data entry errors. For this reason, AQIS staff clear higher risk imports on the basis of documentation, not on the ICS data entry alone
4. AQIS is not aware of any instances where a Chinese product has been entered as coming from New Zealand.
5. AQIS has not taken action against the customs broker for using the wrong country of origin code.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 51

Division/Agency: BSG - Quarantine Operations Division
Topic: Minister's Media release – Director of Quarantine to review
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

The Minister stated in a Media release that; 'I have asked the Director of Quarantine to review the quality of our management, training needs, coordination and verification to ensure people have confidence in our biosecurity and quarantine system. '

1. Has this review been completed?
2. If not why not?

Answer:

1. Yes.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 52

Division/Agency: BSG - Quarantine Operations Division
Topic: review – people's confidence in our biosecurity & quarantine system
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. What were the key findings and the review and given the Minister has correctly stated the review was to be undertaken to 'ensure people have confidence in our biosecurity and quarantine system, when will the review be publicly released?
2. If it is not going to be publicly released why not?

Answer:

1. The internal review identified that the key cause of incorrect information existing within the AQIS Import Management System (AIMS) is that incorrect information is transferred from the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service Integrated Cargo System (ICS). The information in the ICS is manually entered by brokers who populate a significant amount of import information related to each consignment.

   The review found that irrespective of the incorrect information in the IT database, AQIS document processing and clearance procedures ensure the goods described in the documents meet quarantine and where relevant, food standards requirements. The review confirmed that no breaches of quarantine/food standards occurred in the clearance of New Zealand food products in question.

   The review found that improvements to minimise incorrect information being transferred from ICS to AIMS centre around IT capability. Until IT systems are upgraded, manual oversight instead of automatic controlling of information is required and errors will occur from time to time. Significant improvements to AQIS IT systems are recognised as a priority.

   The review report will be placed on the DAFF website once normal clearance processes have been completed.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 53

Division/Agency: BSG – Regional and Business Services Division
Topic: Graduate Program
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. How many graduate program positions were employed within all of the Quarantine and Biosecurity division in 2007-08, and 2008-09?
2. What were these graduate program positions and where are they located?
3. Will the division be employing any staff under the graduate program in 2009 -10?

Answer:

1.

2007 - 2008	Australian Quarantine	Biosecurity	Total
2nd Rotation MAY/SEP 2007	5	4	**9**
3rd Rotation SEP/DEC 2007	4	4	**8**
1st Rotation JAN/MAY 2008	5	4	**9**
2nd Rotation MAY/SEP 2008	5	4	**9**
Total	**19**	**16**	**35**

2008 - 2009	Australian Quarantine	Biosecurity	Total
3rd Rotation SEP/DEC 2008	5	3	**8**
1st Rotation JAN/MAY 2009	4	3	**7**
2nd Rotation MAY/SEP 2009	4	3	**7**
Total	**13**	**9**	**22**

2008 - 2009	Biosecurity Services Group*	Total
3rd Rotation SEP/DEC 2009	11	**11**

***** In July 2009 the Biosecurity Services Group (BSG) was formed and the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service, Product Integrity Animal and Plant Health and Biosecurity Australia were integrated in to BSG.

2. The Graduate Program rotations were in policy, project and program management, research and legislation positions. All rotations were based in Canberra.

3. The BSG is part of the department. The department will not be offering a Graduate Development Program in 2010.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 54

Division/Agency: BSG – Strategic Projects/BPU Division
Topic: Budget related paper no. 11 – staff cuts
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

The Budget Related Paper No. 1.1, Portfolio Budget Statements 2009 -10, Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Portfolio, states on page 67; "Outcome 2: Safeguard Australia's animal and plant health status to maintain overseas markets and protect the economy and environment from the impact of exotic pests and diseases, through risk assessment, inspection and certification, and the implementation of emergency response arrangements for Australian agricultural, food and fibre industries.'

1. How does cutting 125 staffing positions possible help deliver Outcome 2?

2. How does the decision to cut 125 staff positions comply with the Beale Review Recommendation to increase annual funding by $260 million per annum?

Answer:

1. The changes in average staffing levels are being managed by efficiencies in support functions without impacting on front line operations.

2. The efficiencies referred to in 1 are a separate exercise to implementation of the Beale Review recommendations. The government has announced expenditure of $14.7 million in 2009-10 for foundation elements of the Beale reforms. Funding for future implementation will be subject to normal budget processes.

   A copy of the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's press release regarding the 2009-10 funding is available at www.maff.gov.au/media/media_releases/2009/september/progress_continues_on_reforms_to_strengthen_australias_biosecurity.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 55

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Strategic Projects/BPU Division
Topic: Beale Review
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Page 202 of the Beale Review states that there is a lack of Senior Executive staff within AQIS and Bio-security Australia which 'has inhibited critical decision making'. What has the Department done to resolve this issue?

Answer:

The government has accepted all Beale recommendations in principle. Implementing these reforms will take some time and will be subject to normal budget processes.

A number of interim administrative arrangements have already been implemented as part of the government's preliminary response to the Beale Review. Establishment of the Biosecurity Services Group within the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry was a key element. The Biosecurity Services Group is a new business unit that brings together pre-border, border and post-border biosecurity functions. As part of creating this new unit, the overall organisational structure was reviewed and five consolidated regions were established to provide the most effective biosecurity services and meet the needs of clients. The Biosecurity Policy Unit and the position of General Manager, Export Reform, were established within the Biosecurity Services Group as part of this process.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 56

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Strategic Projects/BPU Division
Topic: Beale Review
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

On page 205 of the Beale Review it states: 'In addition, the Panel is recommending a remediation investment of approximately $225 million over a number of years to upgrade information technology and business systems for the National Biosecurity Authority.'

1. Have any provisions been made in the budget to upgrade technology and business systems with AQIS and Bio-Security Australia?
2. When will these upgrades begin and how much funding is being provided?

Answer:

On 23 September 2009, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry announced expenditure of $14.7 million in 2009-10 to progress foundation elements of the biosecurity reforms. The $14.7 million includes funding for scoping work on the proposed investment in information and communication technology.

Further investment and timing of future implementation will be subject to government budget processes.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 57

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Strategic Projects/BPU Division
Topic: Beale Review
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Budget Related Paper No. 1.1, Portfolio Budget Statements 2009 -10, Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Portfolio, page 68, Program 2.1: Quarantine and Export Services, Departmental Expenses; Ordinary Annual Services (Appropriation Bill No. 1) the estimated actual expenses for 2008 -09 was $121,049,000 which will be cut to $95,353,000 in 2009 -10.

1. Doesn't this represent a cut to the Governments contribution of $25,969,000?
2. From which program areas is this funding to be cut?
3. Isn't it a fact that the Beale Review into quarantine and bio-security arrangement has cost taxpayers $1,728,067?
4. Isn't it a fact the Beale Review Recommendation 73 states; *The Commonwealth should increase its bio-security investment by an amount in the order of $260 million per annum, subject to a full costing by departments, to meet the recommendations of this report.'?*
5. Is it a fact that the Minister in a media release announcing the release of the Beale Review stated *'the Rudd Government had accepted all 84 recommendations in-principle'?*
6. Why is the Government deliberately ignoring the Ministers 'in-principle' support for an additional $260 million per annum and cutting the Government's contribution by $25.969 million in 2009-10?
7. Does the Government have any intention of adopting Beale Recommendation 73?

Answer:

1. The decrease in Departmental Expenses; Ordinary Annual Services (Appropriation Bill No. 1) revenue is not the result of program cuts. In 2005-06, the then government continued to provide a subsidy for a further 4 years to agricultural export industries of 40 per cent of the AQIS export fees and charges. The measure terminated as scheduled at the end of 2008-09. For 2008-09, this equated to $37.4 million.

2. AQIS contributes to programs 2.1 and 2.2, and the impact of the termination of the subsidy is allocated to both programs. It is the major component in the decrease in Departmental Expenses; Ordinary Annual Services (Appropriation Bill No. 1) for program 2.1.

Question: BSG 57 (continued)

Service delivery for program 2.1 is not impacted by the scheduled termination of the subsidy program. The source of funding is changed from Departmental Expenses; Ordinary Annual Services (Appropriation Bill No. 1) to revenues from independent sources (Section 31). Overall Government spending on departmental outcomes for program 2.1 will increase by $5.0m in 2009-10.

3. No, the review cost $1,743,213. This comprised panellists' sitting fees ($664,449), travel costs and allowances ($302,145), employee expenses for department staff directly supporting the review ($684,275), legal advice (approximately $78,858) and other supplier expenses ($13,486).

   Further detail was provided in Additional Estimates February 2009 Question on Notice, Quarantine and Biosecurity Policy Unit – 5.

4. Yes. Refer to Budget Estimates May 2009 Question on Notice, Quarantine and Biosecurity Policy Unit – 2.

5. Yes. Refer to Budget Estimates May 2009 Question on Notice, Quarantine and Biosecurity Policy Unit – 3.

6. The government has accepted all Beale recommendations in principle. Implementing these reforms will take some time and will be subject to normal budget processes. As noted in the response to Part 1, the decrease in revenue was not a result of program cuts.

7. Refer to Budget Estimates May 2009 Question on Notice, Quarantine and Biosecurity Policy Unit – 4.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 58

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Strategic Projects/BPU Division
Topic: Beale Review
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. What Beale Recommendations is the Government adopting in 2009-10?
2. How much will these measures cost to implement?
3. When is it the Governments intention to adopt implement all of 84 of the Beale Review Recommendations?

Answer:

1. The government has accepted all Beale recommendations in principle. Implementing these reforms will take some time and will be subject to normal budget processes.

2. On 23 September 2009, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry announced expenditure of $14.7 million in 2009-10 to progress foundation elements of the biosecurity reforms. The Minister's press release is available at: www.maff.gov.au/media/media_releases/2009/september/progress_continues_on_reforms_to_strengthen_australias_biosecurity

3. Refer also to Budget Estimates May 2009, Question on Notice, Quarantine and Biosecurity Policy Unit – 5.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 59

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Strategic Projects/BPU Division
Topic: Beale Review
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Page 205 of the Beale Review states; 'It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the agencies are significantly under resourced, putting Australia's economy, people and environment at significant risk.'
Does the Government concur with that view?

Answer:

The government has accepted all Beale recommendations in principle. In its preliminary response, the government noted that resourcing requirements would be considered in budget processes. A copy of the government's preliminary response is available at: www.daff.gov.au/about/publications/quarantine-biosecurity-report-and-preliminary-response.

On 23 September 2009, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry announced expenditure of $14.7 million in 2009-10 to progress foundation elements of the biosecurity reforms. The Minister's press release is available at: www.maff.gov.au/media/media_releases/2009/september/progress_continues_on_reforms_to_strengthen_australias_biosecurity

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 60

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Strategic Projects/BPU Division
Topic: Beale Review
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

When will the Government be implementing the Beale Review recommendations?

Answer:

The government has accepted all Beale recommendations in principle. Implementing these reforms will take some time and will be subject to normal budget processes.

Work has already commenced on several recommendations. For example, an interim Inspector General of Biosecurity has been in place since 1 July 2009 to audit and verify Australia's biosecurity systems. The Eminent Scientists Group has been enhanced through the addition of economic expertise and a Biosecurity Advisory Council is being appointed, replacing the Quarantine and Export Advisory Council, to provide advice to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry on biosecurity matters across the biosecurity continuum.

New legislation is being developed to replace the *Quarantine Act 1908*, and the Commonwealth, states and territories are developing a national agreement on biosecurity, which will help shape an improved national system. Scoping work is also underway on and investment in information and communication technology systems, and future arrangements for post-entry quarantine facilities.

This work is supported through $14.7 million of expenditure announced by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry on 23 September 2009. The Minister's press release is available at:
www.maff.gov.au/media/media_releases/2009/september/progress_continues_on_reforms_to_strengthen_australias_biosecurity

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 61

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Strategic Projects/BPU Division
Topic: Beale Review
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Given the fact that the Beale review states 'Without these additional resources, the National Biosecurity Authority will not be able to deliver the One Biosecurity: a working partnership model envisaged by the Panel.'

Does the Government believe it can implement any recommendations from the Beale Review without increasing funding by $260 million per annum?

Answer:

The government has accepted the Beale recommendations in principle. Implementation will take some time and the resourcing requirements will be subject to normal budget processes. This was highlighted in the government's preliminary response to the review which is available at: www.daff.gov.au/about/publications/quarantine-biosecurity-report-and-preliminary-response.

$14.7 million has already been committed in 2009-10 for foundation elements of the reform process. The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's press release of 23 September 2009 provides further detail. The press release is available at: www.maff.gov.au/media/media_releases/2009/september/progress_continues_on_reforms_to_strengthen_australias_biosecurity.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009
Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 62

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: Zero markets lost
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Budget Related Paper No. 1.1, Portfolio Budget Statements 2009 -10, Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Portfolio, page 71, Program 2.1 Key Performance Indicators states that in
2008-09 'zero markets lost'.

Does the Government stand by this claim?

Answer:

Key performance indicator for Program 2.1 is 'Zero overseas markets are lost as a consequence of failed export certification systems'.

Between 1 July 2008 and 30 June 2009, no markets were lost to Australia's food exports due to AQIS certification.

Access to the following markets was restricted during that period due to changes in importing country requirements:

1. China and Egypt - revised requirements restricting access to fully integrated meat establishments leading to a reduction in establishments able to export meat to those markets.
2. India – revised certification requirements for seafood imports, leading to increased cost of certification until simplified conditions are negotiated.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 63

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: Russian red meat market access
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. Does the Government not consider the disruption during the year to the Russian red meat market as a market lost?
2. Have all companies, including kangaroo exporters who lost markets in Russia again exporting to Russia?
3. What was the reason for the suspension of access for red meat exporting companies to Russia?
4. What impact has the lost market access in Russia had on the Kangaroo industry?

Answer:

1. While the Australian Government recognises the impact on those establishments which have been suspended from exporting to Russia, the majority of meat exports from Australia to the Russian Federation has continued unaffected.

2. On 7 September 2009, the Biosecurity Services Group (BSG) received notification from Russian authorities of the re-approval of six red meat establishments that were temporarily suspended from exporting to Russia. BSG is continuing to work closely with industry and the Russian authorities to gain the re-approval of the remaining establishments which are suspended.

3. Between June 2008 and July 2009, Russian authorities temporarily suspended thirteen Australian red meat establishments from exporting to the Russian Federation due to the detection of consignments that were non-compliant with Russia's import requirements.
   A further five establishments were suspended from 10 July 2009, based on findings that Russian auditors made during an audit of these establishments conducted in February 2009.

4. The suspension by Russia of all kangaroo meat imports from 1 August 2009 has resulted in five of the ten export registered establishments temporarily ceasing operations. This has in turn impacted on field harvesters and those directly employed by the establishments.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 64

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Sevices Group – Strategic Projects/BPU Division
Topic: Beale Review
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

How much did the Beale Review cost?
Please provide a breakdown of all individual costs.

Answer:

Refer to Additional Estimates February 2009, Question on Notice, Quarantine and Biosecurity Policy Unit – 5.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 65

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Strategic Projects/BPU Division
Topic: Beale Review
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

What is the Government's timetable for responding formally to the Beale Review? When will legislation be introduced?

Answer:

The government has accepted all Beale recommendations in principle. Implementing these reforms will take some time and will be subject to normal budget processes.

On 23 September 2009, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry announced expenditure of $14.7 million in 2009-10 to progress foundation elements of the biosecurity reforms. The Minister's press release is available at: www.maff.gov.au/media/media_releases/2009/september/progress_continues_on_reforms_to_strengthen_australias_biosecurity

New legislation, to replace the *Quarantine Act 1908*, is expected to be introduced into Parliament in 2010.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 66

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Strategic Projects/BPU Division
Topic: Beale Review
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Who has the Government consulted within industry on the Beale Reviews recommendations?

Answer:

Refer to Budget Estimates May 2009, Question on Notice, Quarantine and Biosecurity Policy Unit – 10.

An updated list of industry consultations that have been conducted by the department since January 2009 is attached.

Attachment – BSG 66

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 67

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Strategic Projects/BPU Division
Topic: Beale Review
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Has industry welcomed all aspects of the Beale Review? Are there any alternative views within industry on any recommendations, particularly in relation to market access arrangements and establishing new markets, particularly import protocols in relation to quarantine matters including cost?

Answer:

Refer to Budget Estimates May 2009, Question on Notice, Quarantine and Biosecurity Policy Unit – 11.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 68

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Strategic Projects/BPU Division
Topic: Beale Review
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Is the government reviewing it's 'in principle support' for any of the Beale Review recommendations?

Answer:

The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's press release of 23 September 2009 restates the government's in-principle support for the recommendations of the Beale Review. The Minister's press release is available at www.maff.gov.au/media/media_releases/2009/september/progress_continues_on_reforms_to_strengthen_australias_biosecurity.

Refer also to Additional Estimates February 2009 Question on Notice, Quarantine and Biosecurity Policy Unit - 10.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 69

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Strategic Projects/BPU Division
Topic: Beale Review
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

What is the Government's estimated cost of implementing the Beale Review Recommendations? (Please provide a breakdown, including any additional costs and/or savings).

Answer:

Refer to Additional Estimates February 2009 Question on Notice, Quarantine and Biosecurity Policy Unit – 11.

On 23 September 2009, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry announced expenditure of $14.7 million in 2009-10 to progress foundation elements of the biosecurity reforms. The Minister's press release is available at: www.maff.gov.au/media/media_releases/2009/september/progress_continues_on_reforms_to_strengthen_australias_biosecurity

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 70

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: AQIS export fees and charges
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Given the Government's 'in principle support' has it acted on recommendation 79 which states;

> 79 Export certification functions should return to 100 per cent cost recovery as scheduled at the beginning of July 2009, noting that this would require an early decision and announcement by the government to allow businesses to prepare for the additional costs as well as for the necessary consultation on revised fee structures.

Answer:

Yes.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 71

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: Recommendation 79
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Provide a breakdown of what it will cost each affected industry per annum to implement recommendation 79?

Answer:

40 per cent of the full cost recovery estimate for 2009/2010 based on projected revenue is estimated in the table below.

	2009/10
Grain Export Program	4,435
Horticulture Export Program	2,630
Live Animal Export Program	2,282
Dairy Export Program	767
Fish Export Program	1,940
Meat Export Program	34,800
Total	**46,954**

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 72

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: AQIS export fees and charges
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Has the Government received any industry responses to this recommendation? If so what were they?

Answer:

As stated in the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's (the department) submission to the Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Inquiry into the removal of rebate for AQIS export certification functions; the department has received numerous contacts and items of correspondence with differing views in relation to the return of 100 per cent cost recovery and there was little initial support.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 73

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: Increased costs to exporters and international competitiveness
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

How does increasing the costs to exporters increase our international competitiveness in the current financial circumstances, particularly given exports are expected to decline in the foreseeable future?

Answer:

The value of this subsidy to industry has been assessed by ABARE as being insignificant relative to the effects of other factors (such as fluctuating exchange rates) on industry returns:

- ABARE has confirmed that the previous subsidy of around $30 million to export meat certification amounts to around 0.55 per cent of the total value of beef and veal, lamb and mutton exported.
- For other industries, fish, dairy, horticulture, grain and live animal exports, the subsidy amounts to a lower percentage of export value than for the meat industry.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 74

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Strategic Projects/Partnerships Division
Topic: State Government under COAG arrangements
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

What are the current arrangements and responsibilities of State Governments under COAG bio-security arrangements, animal health, plant health, particularly in relation to disease monitoring, and surveillance and cost sharing?

Answer:

States and territories are generally responsible for animal and plant health matters within the Australian border, including monitoring and surveillance activities. However, the Commonwealth also makes some significant post-border program investments to support states and territories as part of taking a national approach to these issues.

There are a number of biosecurity arrangements endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), or the Ministerial Council arrangements under COAG, that further codify responsibilities of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to prevent, prepare for and respond to biosecurity threats.

These arrangements include:

- The *Government and Livestock Industry Cost Sharing Deed in Respect of Emergency Animal Disease Responses* which commenced on 20 March 2002 (http://www.animalhealthaustralia.com.au/programs/eadp/eadra.cfm);
- The *Government and Plant Industry Cost Sharing Deed in Respect of Emergency Plant Pest Responses* which commenced on 26 October 2005 (http://www.planthealthaustralia.com.au/go/phau/epprd); and
- The COAG *Memorandum of Understanding – National Response to a Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) Outbreak*, dated 6 December 2002 (http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/index.cfm).

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 75

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Amalgamations into Livestock Health and Pest Authorities
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Does the Government have any concerns in relation to the botched reforms and amalgamations of the Rural Land and Protection Boards into the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities, which play an integral part in on-the ground animal health surveillance?

Answer:

No. The department is not aware that the process for the New South Wales reforms and amalgamations was flawed nor, of any associated major adverse impact on the national animal health programs, including on–the-ground animal health surveillance.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 76

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Orange Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Does the Government have any concerns about the NSW Government decision that it will close the Orange Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory?

Answer:

The New South Wales Department of Primary Industries has advised the department that it will ensure that the closure of the Orange Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory in New South Wales will not adversely affect the quality of its laboratory services for regional communities. It has advised that it will continue the current close working relationships with those communities. Additionally, it has taken into consideration sample logistics issues associated with using its central laboratory in Menangle.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 77

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Grooup – Strategic Project/BPU Division
Topic: Beale Review
Hansard Page: Written
Senator Nash asked:

Given the failure of the Government to implement its increased fees and charges agenda on industry at a time of Global financial problems can the Department please clarify the following and explain whether the budget papers are still accurate:

1. Budget Related Paper No. 1.1, Portfolio Budget Statements 2009 -10, Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Portfolio, page 69, Program 2.2: Plant and Animal Health Departmental Expenses; Ordinary Annual Services (Appropriation Bill No. 1) the estimated actual expenses for 2008 -09 was $75.674 million which will be cut to $65.493 million in 2009 -10. Doesn't this represent a cut to the Governments contribution of $10,181 million?
2. From which program areas is this funding to be cut?
3. Isn't it a fact that the Beale Review into quarantine and bio-security arrangement has cost taxpayers $1,728,067?
4. Isn't it a fact the Beale Review Recommendation 73 states; *The Commonwealth should increase its bio-security investment by an amount in the order of* ***$260 million per annum****, subject to a full costing by departments, to meet the recommendations of this report.'?*
5. Is it a fact that the Minister in a media release announcing the release of the Beale Review stated *'the Rudd Government had accepted all 84 recommendations in-principle'?*
6. Why is the Government deliberately ignoring the Ministers 'in-principle' support for an additional $260 million per annum and cutting the Government's contribution to Plant and Animal Health programs by $10.181 million in 2009-10?
7. Does the Government have any intention of adopting Beale Recommendation 73?
8. What Beale Recommendations is the Government adopting in 2009-10?
9. How much will these measures cost to implement?
10. When is it the Governments intention to adopt implement all of 84 of the Beale Review Recommendations?

Answer:

Part 1 - The budget papers do not reflect the senate's decision to disallow fees as this was not known at the time of publishing the 2009-10 PBS.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG77 (continued)

The decrease in departmental Expenses; Ordinary Annual Services (Appropriation Bill No. 1) revenue is not the result of program cuts. In 2005-06, the then government continued to provide a subsidy for a further 4 years to agricultural export industries of 40 per cent of the AQIS export fees and charges. The measure terminated as scheduled at the end of 2008-09. For 2008-09, this equated to $37.4 million.

AQIS contributes to programs 2.1 and 2.2, and the impact of the termination of the subsidy is allocated to both programs. It is the major component in the decrease in Departmental Expenses; Ordinary Annual Services (Appropriation Bill No. 1) for program 2.2.

Part 2 - Service delivery for program 2.2 is not impacted by the scheduled termination of the subsidy program. The source of funding is changed from Departmental Expenses; Ordinary Annual Services (Appropriation Bill No. 1) to revenues from independent sources (Section 31).

Parts 3 to 5 and Part 7 – Refer to Additional Estimates October 2009, Question on Notice, Biosecurity Policy Unit – 54.

Part 6 – The government has accepted all Beale recommendations in principle. Implementing these reforms will take some time and will be subject to normal budget processes. As noted in Part 1, the decrease in revenue was not a result of program cuts.

Part 8 to 10 - Refer to Additional Estimates October 2009, Question on Notice, Biosecurity Policy Unit – 55.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 78

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Australian Health Laboratory (AAHL)
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

1. What activities are undertaken at the Australian Animal Health Laboratory, (AAHL)?
2. Has routine diagnostic surveillance for classical swine flu or any other diseases been increased in 2008-09 or will be increased in 2009-10?
3. Has the diagnostic workload of the AAHL increased in 2007-08, and 2008-09?
4. Why has the government failed to recognise the vital role AAHL plays in disease diagnostics and research not only here in Australia, but internationally as well?
5. Why has the government failed to increase its contribution in real terms to the operating costs of the AAHL, with an increase of just $21,000 in 2009-10?
6. How many graduates are employed at AAHL under the Departments graduate program?

Answer:

1. The department funds AAHL to undertake work in nine areas of activity:

    - Diagnostic services: Provision of timely, quality assured diagnostic service for emergency animal diseases, including exotic and new and emerging diseases.
    - Emergency response: In the event of an emergency animal disease, provide a diagnostic service as part of an agreed national emergency response.
    - Technical advice: Provision of expert advice and support on all diagnostic laboratory issues to DAFF and national animal health bodies.
    - Education and training: Provision of specialised training to Australian veterinarians and diagnosticians in emergency animal disease recognition and diagnosis.
    - Research: Undertaking an agreed program of research to support and improve AAHL's diagnostic capability and the understanding of emergency animal diseases.
    - Reagent supply: Provision of specialised diagnostic reagents for emergency animal diseases for those agreed diagnostic activities that will be undertaken in state/territory laboratories and appropriate private laboratories.

Question: BSG 78 (continued)

- Support to international activities: Provision of scientific and diagnostic expertise to support Australia's national interests in the region and beyond.
- Surveillance and molecular epidemiology: Provision of molecular data on emergency animal diseases for epidemiological studies.
- Management of laboratory support services, including engineering services, microbiological security operations, central monitoring services operations, information technology services, occupational, health and safety, and general support services.

Questions relating to other activities undertaken by AAHL should be addressed to the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

2. No. There is no routine diagnostic surveillance program for classical swine influenza (flu). Commonwealth-funded surveillance and program funding for other animal disease is expected to be maintained at current levels for 2009-10.

3. The total numbers of annual sample submissions and tests performed on samples are provided below.

Year	Submissions	Tests
2006–07	3986	41196
2007–08*	4876	46830
2008–09	4511	38333
2009–10**	1637	13363

* The increase in 2007–08 was associated with the equine influenza outbreak in 2007
** Figures to end-October

AAHL's role is increasingly as a reference centre for the national animal health laboratory system, particularly around:

- evaluation of new technologies used in diagnostic testing;
- development of tests based on new technologies such as robotics and real-time polymerase chain reaction (PCR);
- more comprehensive characterisation of pathogens by genome sequencing and analysis;
- meeting of requirements for more comprehensive test validation than was required previously;

Question: BSG 78 (continued)

- development of quality assurance systems for the management of diagnostic tests in a network of laboratories; and
- deployment of IT systems for management of data in a network of laboratories.

These are all essential areas of modern diagnostic laboratory capability.

4. The government continues to recognise the important role that AAHL plays in emergency animal disease preparedness and response. AAHL provides agreed diagnostic and research services in accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding between CSIRO and the department. With the department's support, AAHL has been serving as a World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) reference laboratory for a number of animal diseases (i.e. Hendra and Nipah viruses, bluetongue, avian influenza, Newcastle disease, epizootic haematopoietic necrosis, and yellowhead disease). AAHL has also taken on the role as an OIE Collaborating Centre for new emerging diseases and undertakes a range of collaborative research projects, supported through funding sources such as AusAID, in the ASEAN region.

5. CSIRO manages AAHL. The Department provides funding for operating costs to deliver agreed diagnostic and research services through an ongoing Memorandum of Understanding between it and CSIRO. Each year, AAHL prepares a four-year budget forecast for planning purposes, which is provided to the department in accordance with the government's annual budget timetable. The increase of $21,000 in 2009–2010 reflects the annual funding adjustment to enable AAHL to continue to deliver the agreed diagnostic and research services for the department. Questions relating to AAHL funding overall should be addressed to the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

6. There is currently no graduate employed at AAHL under the department's Graduate Development Program. Questions relating to graduates employed at AAHL under other programs should be addressed to the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 79

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Beale Review recommendation 59
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

Does the Government still give 'in principled support' to recommendation 59 of the Beale Review which in part states; 'The panel's view is that access to positive control samples such as the FMD virus is vital and should be permitted … to approved laboratories and to AAHL (Australian Animal Health Laboratory)?

Answer:

The Government's in-principle agreement to the report, and specifically Recommendation 59, is not an agreement to the importation of any particular exotic disease agent, including foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) virus. Any decision on an importation of any particular exotic disease agent would need to be carefully assessed against the circumstances of a specific emergency animal disease threat after appropriate consultation and be based on a needs analysis, scientific merits and practicality. The Government would only consider the importation of live FMD virus if there was an outbreak of FMD in Australia and the scientific advice was that such importation was the best option to allow effective and efficient vaccine production.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 80

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Regional FMD Lab at Pak Chung in Thailand
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Nash asked:

In previous answers the Government has indicated that it is in discussions with the Thai Government in relation to establishing a formal relationship with Regional FMD Lab at Pak Chung in Thailand.

1. What discussions have taken place with the relevant Thai authorities?
2. Which agency was leading the discussions and how many meeting have taken place?
3. When will there be a formal relationship and in what form will this relationship take?
4. Is it the Government's intention to help ensure that Pak Chung reaches OIE Reference Laboratory status for FMD?

Answer:

1. The Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) has assisted the Regional Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) Laboratory at Pak Chong to achieve recognition by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) as an OIE Reference Laboratory for FMD. The Pak Chong Laboratory has requested ongoing technical support from AAHL. The OIE will consider support for this arrangement through a formal linking arrangement between the two laboratories. A proposal has to be developed and submitted to OIE. The Department will assist AAHL with these matters.

2. The discussions have been led by AAHL. With support from Animal Health Committee (AHC), including the Commonwealth Chief Veterinary Officer, AAHL has had working relationship with the Pak Chong Laboratory for the past 20 years. Staff of the two laboratories meet several times a year while attending meetings of OIE and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO).

3. There is currently no set timeframe for this process. One approach is to develop a formal partnership arrangement with the Pak Chong Laboratory at the reference laboratory level through the OIE process described above.

4. It is the Government's intention that the Pak Chong Laboratory continues to serve as the regional OIE Reference Laboratory for FMD, and for AAHL to provide appropriate technical support to it through a formal partnership arrangement for maintaining such a status.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 81

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group - Animal Division
Topic: Irradiation treatment of pet food
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Siewert asked:

1. Please advise on what basis the level of 50kGy for pet food undergoing gamma irradiation was accepted as
   (a) being an efficient level to achieve the required quarantine outcome?
   (b) being a safe level for the foodstuff/animal eating the foodstuff?
2. On what evidence was the level of 50kGy determined? Practical experimentation or reference to existing published studies? If the latter please provide references.
3. What studies were either undertaken or reviewed to establish the safety of irradiating food at this level?
   (a) Studies on the effects of nutrient content of the food irradiated at 50kGy? Please provide references.
   (b) Studies on the effects on animals of feeding diets irradiated at 50kGy? Please provide references.
4. What are the specific perceived risks in importing pet food that has not been sufficiently heat treated during production to meet quarantine requirements that requires either further heat treatment or gamma irradiation to render it quarantine safe?
5. What particular pathogens are of concern in pet food that are not found in imported food intended for human consumption?
6. For what reasons do these risks/pathogens warrant treatment at a level so much higher than that used on foods intended for human consumption?

Answer:

1. Gamma-irradiation has been used internationally for many years to address a range of quarantine, food and pharmaceutical safety issues. The gamma-irradiation dose required to inactivate microorganisms (including viruses) varies considerably depending on the species and substrate. A dose of 25 kGy has been in place since at least 1985 to address quarantine concerns with pet food. A dose of 50 kGy was implemented by AQIS in the early 1990s to address viruses of animal quarantine concern in imported pet food. The change was made following concerns expressed by scientists at the high biosecurity laboratories of the Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC) in the United States and the Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL). The concerns expressed related to the effectiveness of 25 kGy irradiation against a range of pathogens such as swine vesicular disease, classical swine fever and bluetongue. At that time, facilities in Australia were set up to irradiate product, on a batch basis, at 25 kGy. To achieve a higher dose, product was irradiated twice. By the mid-1990s, the resulting dose of 50 kGy became a *de facto* standard for the use of gamma-irradiation to address

Question: BSG 81 (continued)

animal quarantine concerns. Irradiation facilities are now more flexible and are able to deliver a more specific dose that can be tailored to a particular pathogen or pathogens of quarantine concern in a product.

2. Although the department is not aware of a specific evaluation of the safety of gamma-irradiation for pet food, until recently the scientific community generally accepted that gamma-irradiation was both a safe and effective means to address quarantine concerns associated with pet food.

3. The department does not have records of the studies that were reviewed before the introduction of the 50 kGy dose as an option for the quarantine treatment of pet food. The wholesomeness of food irradiated with high doses (i.e. above 10 kGy) has also been supported by the World Health Organization (WHO). In its report (WHO 1999), WHO concluded that 'food irradiated to any dose appropriate to achieve the intended technological objective is both safe to consume and nutritionally adequate'. WHO also concluded that 'no upper dose limit need be imposed'.

   References:

   i. WHO (1999) High-dose irradiation: wholesomeness of food irradiated with doses above 10 kGy. World Health Organization, Geneva.

4. Pet food is an example of one of the many products that represent a potential quarantine risk to Australia. Imported pet food, although eaten primarily by dogs and cats, may be consumed by backyard poultry, domesticated or feral pigs, wild birds and other wild animals. If contaminated with pathogens of quarantine concern, pet food could introduce exotic animal diseases into Australia. Pet foods usually contain a range of animal ingredients. Before approving importation, AQIS assesses each application to ensure that the final product is not likely to be contaminated with pathogens of quarantine concern. This assessment is based on the country and species of origin of each ingredient and the processing of each ingredient and/or the final product. Alternatively, a pet food ingredient (or the final product) is considered acceptable if it is heat-treated sufficiently to address Australia's quarantine concerns. For products that do not meet these requirements or for which the manufacturer is unable to provide AQIS with sufficient information to complete the assessment, importers have previously been given the option to irradiate product to address outstanding quarantine concerns.

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5. Examples of mammalian disease agents of quarantine concern that occur in many major exporting countries include Aujeszky's disease, transmissible gastroenteritis virus, porcine respiratory and reproductive syndrome virus, classical swine fever virus, swine vesicular disease virus, and foot-and-mouth disease viruses, and the porcine circovirus associated with post-weaning multisystemic wasting syndrome. Examples of avian disease agents of quarantine concern include avian influenza virus, very virulent and virulent variant infectious bursal disease virus and Newcastle disease viruses and the bacteria *Salmonella* Pullorum, *S.* Gallinarum, *S.* Enteritidis and multi-drug resistant strains of *S.* Typhimurium.

6. As noted in the answer to question 1, inactivation by gamma-irradiation of a number of exotic animal pathogens of quarantine concern (e.g. swine vesicular disease and classical swine fever viruses) that could be present in pet food ingredients of animal origin requires a dose of more than 25 kGy to be effective and provide an appropriate level of quarantine confidence. The use of irradiation for the treatment of human food is overseen by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) in the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 82

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: Australian Meat Export Licence
Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Adams asked:

1. How are 'persons of integrity' defined under the Act, in relation to the granting of an Australian Meat Export Licence?

2. Would the directors of a company holding a meat export licence, that;
   a) had defaulted on a multi-million dollar judgement awarded against them by a State Supreme Court;
   b) who then proceeded to form a new company with a very similar name;
   c) who all became the directors of the new company;
   d) who then sought to change the name on the meat export licence from the former company to the new company;
   Would these directors be considered persons of integrity under the Act?

Answer:

1. The *Australian Meat and Livestock Industry* Act (AMLI Act) does not define a person of integrity. An export administrative review is conducted by the Compliance and Investigation Unit of Biosecurity Services Group of persons nominated in management or control of the meat export business.

2. The *AMLI Act* requires an applicant for a meat export licence to satisfy a number of requirements. These requirements may vary dependent on the type of applicant (corporation or individual) and type of licence (packer or non-packer exporter).

   The *AMLI Act* does not provide for the transfer of export licences between companies or for the variation of an export licence to replace one company name with another company name. Therefore there would be no assessment of the directors under this scenario.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 83

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Animal Division and Plant Division
Topic: Program 2.2 (Animal & Plant Health) Funding
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

Can the Department please provide an explanation for the cessation of any expenditure on 'Other Services (Appropriation Bill No.2) for Program 2.2 (Plant & Animal Health) - broken down by program?

Answer:

Citrus Canker

The Citrus Canker program finished officially on 23 January 2009 when eradication was declared complete.

Equine Influenza

Australia declared freedom from Equine Influenza on 30 June 2008 after a comprehensive control and surveillance program.

Red Imported Fire Ant

The Eradication of the Red Imported Fire Ant is an on-going program. The Australian Government will contribute $7.5 million through Caring for our Country funding for 2009-10 towards this program.

Exotic Disease Preparedness and Other Exotic Disease Preparedness

From 1 January 2009, funding for the Exotic Disease Preparedness and Other Exotic Disease Preparedness programs is being managed through the Commonwealth Treasury.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Supplementary Budget Estimates October 2009

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 84

Division/Agency: BSG – Strategic Projects/BPU Division
Topic: Beale Review
Hansard Page: Written question

Senator Colbeck asked:

1. Has the Department provided any advice to the Minister on the cost(s) of implementing recommendations from the Beale Review?
2. When was this advice provided?

Answer:

The department regularly provides advice to the Minister on implementation of the Beale Review, including associated costs.

The government's preliminary response indicated that implementation would be subject to normal budget processes. This involves estimation of the costs to implement the reforms.

Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

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Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Question: BSG 85

Division/Agency: Biosecurity Services Group – Food Division
Topic: National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) - Expenditure
Hansard Page: Written

Senator Colbeck asked:

1. Can the Department please provide an explanation of the cessation (following 2009-2010) of any expenditure on the National Livestock Identification System under Program 2.2?
2. Has any advice been developed on continuing this expenditure beyond 2009-2010?
3. What is the nature of this advice?
4. Has it been provided to the Minister?

Answer:

1. The $20 million grant was a one off government grant to assist with the establishment of the NLIS. The funding was due to expire in 2009 but as some projects were still to be completed and there were unspent funds, the program was extended until June 2010.
2. No.
3. Not applicable.
4. Not applicable.