



File No. (00/3169)

19 August 2003

ANIMAL BIOSECURITY POLICY MEMORANDUM 2003/22

REMOVAL OF THE 30-DAY POST-SLAUGHTER REQUIREMENT FOR MEAT IMPORTED FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (USA), CANADA AND MEXICO

This Animal Biosecurity Policy Memorandum (ABPM) advises stakeholders of the decision to remove the requirement for meat imported from the USA, Canada and Mexico be stored for no less than 30 days after the slaughter of the animals, before release from quarantine in Australia. This change takes effect immediately.

Biosecurity Australia consulted stakeholders on the proposed removal of the requirement in ABPM 2002/49 of 26 November 2002. Ten stakeholders responded and their positions were divided, some supported the change while others were opposed. Those opposing the change were concerned about foot and mouth disease (FMD) and rinderpest risks, food safety issues and traceability. Biosecurity Australia has written and, in some cases, met with these stakeholders to address their concerns.

In addressing disease and food safety concerns, an important factor is that meat is traded throughout the world, from disease-free countries/zones, without post-slaughter requirements. In addition, the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) International Animal Health Code does not recommend a post-slaughter requirement for meat imports of fresh meat from any country free from the major diseases which can be transmitted in meat. A significant proportion of Australian beef is exported chilled and most is retailed less than 30 days after slaughter.

The risk of importing FMD in meat from a previously free country is exceedingly low in terms of exposure and release pathways, ie the low likelihood of an outbreak, low numbers of infected animals at the beginning of an outbreak, the slaughtering, inspection and notification requirements combined with the need for an infective amount of the meat to be consumed by susceptible species in Australia.

In terms of traceability, imported meat must be accompanied by a health certificate that includes certification as to the origin and destination of the meat. This ensures the meat can be readily traced back to the abattoir at which the animals were slaughtered. Also, it is a legal requirement, under the Food Standards Code for manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors and importers of food, to have in place a written recall plan.

Next Steps

The new conditions take effect immediately.

Please pass this notice to other interested parties. If those parties wish to be included in future communications on this matter they should get in touch with the contact officer (details below).

Confidentiality

Respondents are advised that, subject to the Freedom of Information Act 1982 and the Privacy Act 1988, all submissions received in response to ABPMs will be publicly available. Comments may be listed or referred to in any papers or reports prepared on the subject matter of the Memoranda.

The Commonwealth reserves the right to reveal the identity of a respondent unless a request for anonymity accompanies the submission. Where a request for anonymity does not accompany the submission the respondent will be taken to have consented to the disclosure of his or her identity for the purposes of Information Privacy Principle 11 of the Privacy Act.

The contents of the submission will not be treated as confidential unless they are marked 'confidential' and they are capable of being classified as such in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

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