

South Australian Cattle Advisory Group

Teleconference Meeting Summary

Thursday 4th May 2006

NOTE: At the time of distribution, the Minister has not approved the outcomes listed in this document. Any misuse of information by individuals or associations will cause this service to be withdrawn.

The meeting commenced at 11:49 am.

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed all members and guests to the meeting.

2. Attendance

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| <i>Andrew Withers (Chair)</i> | <i>Beef Industry Representative (SAFF)</i> |
| <i>Tom Honner</i> | <i>Beef Industry Representative</i> |
| <i>Ken Smith</i> | <i>Dairy Industry Representative</i> |
| <i>Sue Young</i> | <i>Dairy Industry Representative</i> |
| <i>Andrew Ogilvie</i> | <i>Intensive Cattle Industry Sector</i> |
| <i>Neil Buchanan</i> | <i>Ministers Representative (PIRSA)</i> |
| <i>Trudi Goodwin</i> | <i>Executive Officer, Livestock Advisory Groups (PIRSA)</i> |

Guests:

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|-----------------------|---|
| <i>John Kassebaum</i> | <i>Program Manager, Rural Chemicals</i> |
| <i>Mark Langman</i> | <i>Animal Health Legislation Advisor (PIRSA)</i> |
| <i>Elena Petrenas</i> | <i>Manager, Livestock Advisory Groups (PIRSA)</i> |

3. Apologies

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|------------------------|--|
| <i>Gary Spain</i> | <i>Dairy Industry Representative (SADA)</i> |
| <i>Sharon Oldfield</i> | <i>Pastoral Beef Industry Representative</i> |

4. Business

4.1 Market Safety Issue – Lead Affected Cattle

On the 2 June 2005, a PIRSA District Veterinary Officer was contacted to investigate a neurological disorder in cattle. Of 103 cows and 23 steers, 13 died or were euthanased at the time of the initial investigation. Thirty surviving animals were seriously affected, with another 4 – 5 subsequently dying over the ensuing 10 months. The remainder of the herd still aren't thrifty, with their body condition declining even though on good pasture (June – November 2005). Several foetuses were aborted and the surviving calves have exhibited poor growth rates. PIRSA Animal Health has routinely inspected the cattle over the 2005/2006 period - by April 2006 some improvement was observed, with none of the animals considered in unacceptable condition from an animal welfare perspective.

The samples tested (collection and testing was provided at no charge), confirmed lead toxicity, with contaminated soil being the most likely source (4 – 10% lead detected). It is believed that the lead affected soil (from an extinct mine) was used to create a base for a now defunct tramline. The cattle were fed hay on this site – the owner had not used this site previously.

Despite being approached with the facts, no nearby rendering plant or abattoir seemed to be prepared to take the risk of purchasing these animals and holding the meat whilst it is tested before release. Likewise, local stock agents advised that the animals would attract no bids in the market place.

This issue was raised with the South Australian Cattle Advisory Group (SA CAG) in order to determine the level of industry support to dispose of the cattle as a preventative measure to ensure that the meat does not enter the human food chain. The project application in no way intended to provide compensation to the owner for stock losses (thereby not establishing any precedent) but purely reflects the estimated cost of humanely disposing of the cattle.

J. Kassebaum (Program Manager, Rural Chemicals) went on to explain that in acute lead poisoning, lead is accumulated preferentially in the bone, kidney and liver (in that order). It is unlikely to be released from bone except during lactation when calcium is mobilised. The situation with offal and meat is less clear, with many conflicting international reports. The NSW Department of Agriculture recommendation (contained in the document called "Managing Lead Poisoning in Stock") is a 14 month withholding period (this is based on a half life of 2 months for lead and no ongoing exposure). N. Buchanan advised that the stock have been placed under Order for a 14 month period (in accordance with the NSW recommendation) until the end of July 2006.

It is unknown when the cattle would be safe for human consumption. The only definitive answer would come by testing each animal over time, which is an expensive exercise. The potential ongoing exposure questions the feasibility of the 14-month withholding period and suggests that the cattle should remain under Order indefinitely.

Members acknowledged that the cattle should not be allowed to enter the food chain, but sought clarification about whether there were any alternative funds rather than the Cattle Industry Fund (CIF) for this exercise.

Mark Langman (Animal Health Legislation Advisor) confirmed that under the *Primary Industry Funding Schemes (Cattle Industry Fund) Regulations 2000*, the Minister can release funds from the CIF for projects recommended by the SA CAG that will benefit the industry. Legal advice (Parliamentary Council) was that the CIF could cover the costs associated with the disposal of the lead affected cattle (if supported by SA CAG) but that it could not be used to provide any form of compensation, as the regulations clearly restrict compensation to Johnes Disease, TB and brucellosis.

Members were further advised that the only way that the CIF could be reimbursed would be if the offer from the Minister included a phrase instructing the owner to reimburse monies back to CIF if compensation is received from any source. The majority of attending members supported the inclusion of this statement in the offer.

Clarification was also sought about whether the owner would be prepared to accept an offer from the Minister and how the process would be undertaken. N. Buchanan advised that based on discussions with the owner it appears that they are likely to accept. It is proposed that the letter of offer from the Minister should occur before personal contact is made to discuss the offer.

Members unanimously agreed that the situation needed to be resolved, and if the CIF is used to remove the cattle, that reimbursement should be sought. In addition, SA CAG would need to ensure that this case does not set a future precedent.

Clarification was sought about whether PIRSA would test any of the cattle to improve its knowledge about lead toxicity. J. Kassebaum indicated that his Group might do some testing.

An estimate suggested that the cost of humanely destroying and disposing of the carcass would be around \$16,000. An investigation by Animal Health Disease Surveillance staff suggests that the best option would be to truck the cattle (\$10 per head) to the Snowtown abattoir for slaughter (\$40 per head) and then remove the carcasses to the Blyth dump (cost currently unknown) for disposal (\$12.25 per adult and \$6.12 per calf). The total cost would be between \$10,000 - \$11,000.

RECOMMENDATION

SA CAG supported in principle the use of the CIF up to the value of \$11,000 for the slaughter and disposal of the cattle, on the condition that the CIF is reimbursed if compensation is received from any funding source.

4.2 South Australian Farmers Federation – Industry Liaison Officer (ILO) Training

The SA Farmers Federation (SAFF) submitted a Cattle Industry Fund (CIF) project application seeking financial assistance to attract 18 beef producers to participate in the up coming emergency animal disease Industry Liaison Officer (ILO) training workshops scheduled for the 8 June 2006 (MT Gambier) and the 9 June 2006 (Naracoorte). The application sought financial assistance to cover attendees time (\$180 per participant) up to the value of \$3,240 and any out of pocket expenses incurred (ie travel and accommodation) up to a value of \$11,772.

Similar project applications were also forwarded to the SA Sheep Advisory Group (SASAG) and the Pig Industry Advisory Group (PIAG).

Several concerns were raised about this application/workshop dates:

- Whether a precedent would be established, given that similar workshops have occurred in the past and will occur in the future;
- The quality of industry participants given that the workshop dates clash with the State bull sales, the Dairy Innovations Conference and seeding or spraying; and
- The practicality of providing a lump sum without knowing the actual number of attendees.

Animal Health Australia (AHA) is committed to holding further training days in South Australia. Depending on industry support, members were advised that 2006/2007 ILO courses may be held in Port Augusta and Murray Bridge.

To increase attendance from beef and dairy industry representatives, members suggested deferring the ILO workshops until the end of June or August 2006.

It was agreed to defer any decision about this project application pending further information about:

- the flexibility of the workshop dates;
- the level of actual, and intended, promotion undertaken by AHA & SAFF;
- how many industry representatives are expected to attend; and
- information about the workshop venues.

OUTCOME

Information to be sourced from SAFF and AHA to the above questions and forward to members for an out of session decision.

5. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for **Monday 29th May 2006** from 10:00pm – 3:30pm in the Seminar Room, Level 1, Primary Industries and Resources SA, 33 Flemington St, Glenside.

Meeting closed at 12:57pm.