



Australian Government

Biosecurity Australia

8 April 2010

BIOSECURITY AUSTRALIA ADVICE 2010/10

COMMENCEMENT OF IMPORT RISK ANALYSES FOR THE IMPORTATION OF BEEF AND BEEF PRODUCTS FROM THE UNITED STATES, CANADA AND JAPAN

This Biosecurity Australia Advice (BAA) announces the formal commencement of concurrent import risk analyses (IRAs) for the United States, Canada and Japan to assess the animal quarantine risks from the importation of beef and beef products intended for human consumption.

The analyses will be undertaken as formal regulated IRAs, requiring completion within 24 months from announcement. The IRAs will also include review by the Eminent Scientists Group (ESG), which is independent of Biosecurity Australia.

Biosecurity Australia will prepare draft IRA reports to be circulated to stakeholders for comment. Stakeholders will have up to 60 days to submit written comments on these reports. The IRA process addressing animal health quarantine concerns will run in parallel with the bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) food safety country risk assessment by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ).

This notice supersedes BAA 2010/02: 'Handling of Market Access Requests and Quarantine requirements for Beef and Beef Products for Human Consumption', issued on 24 February 2010. On 8 March 2010, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry wrote to the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) to request that Biosecurity Australia conduct a standard IRA on the importation of fresh beef and beef products (chilled or frozen) for human consumption from countries other than New Zealand.

Biosecurity Australia will assess the animal quarantine risks associated with the importation of beef and beef products for human consumption that contain bovine tissue (including from cattle, buffalo and bison). This includes meat, bone and offal (chilled, frozen, dried, cured or salted and retorted shelf-stable products), including natural casings and gelatine derived from bones, but excludes milk, dairy products, gelatine and collagen derived from bovine skins and hides (including sausage casings produced from this type of material), and edible bovine fat/tallow comprising less than 30% of a processed product. The products covered will thus align with the FSANZ definition of beef and beef products in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code Standard 2.2.1 Clause 11, available from <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/foodstandards/foodstandardscode/>.

The department's Import Market Access Advisory Group (IMAAG) has accorded a high priority to market access requests for beef from the United States, Canada and Japan that became valid following the lifting on the FSANZ BSE ban on 1 March 2010. IMAAG considered these applications and advised its priorities publicly on 11 March 2010. On this basis, Biosecurity Australia will commence separate and concurrent IRAs for these countries.

Biosecurity Australia will conduct the IRAs according to the *IRA Handbook 2007 (updated 2009)* as formal regulated IRAs. These will take up to 24 months and an expert specialist panel will be formed to assist consideration of scientific issues. A BAA will announce the membership of the expert specialist panel as soon as formal engagement contracts have been concluded. The process will also include, within this timeframe, an additional step of external scientific scrutiny of the IRAs at a draft stage by the independent ESG. This is a formal assessment process with specified timelines for stakeholder consultation and the ESG review. Progressing an IRA within this timeframe will be subject to a number of factors, including timely and comprehensive provision of relevant information from the applicant country. For example, should information essential to completing an IRA not be made available to Biosecurity Australia, the Chief Executive of Biosecurity Australia may use the ‘stop-the-clock’ provision available under the regulated process to pause the assessment pending the provision of such information.

Market access requests from other countries should be made in writing to Biosecurity Australia. These proposals will be referred to IMAAG for assigning priority that is considered by Biosecurity Australia’s Chief Executive in setting Biosecurity Australia’s annual work program.

Regulations under the *Quarantine Act 1908* require the Chief Executive of Biosecurity Australia to formally announce the commencement of IRAs to be undertaken under the regulated process. This announcement triggers the start of the regulated timeframe for these IRAs.

In a separate process to that of Biosecurity Australia’s IRAs, and following the announcement of Australia’s BSE food safety policy for beef and beef products for human consumption that came into effect on 1 March 2010, any country wishing to export beef and beef products (as defined in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code) to Australia will need to apply to FSANZ for an individual country risk assessment to address BSE-related food safety issues. The risk assessment of a country may also include in-country inspection jointly by officers from FSANZ and DAFF.

The BSE food safety assessment process will be undertaken by the Australian BSE Food Safety Assessment Committee that will be chaired by FSANZ. DAFF will work closely with FSANZ during this process and a DAFF officer is a member of the FSANZ BSE Food Safety Assessment Committee. Details of this process are available on the FSANZ website: <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumerinformation/bovinespongiformencephalopathybse/>.

The outcome of the FSANZ BSE food safety assessment will determine whether the beef and beef products from a country represent a risk to the health of Australian consumers and what import conditions would need to be imposed by Australia before beef and beef products could be imported from that country. These import conditions are set out in the policy document ‘Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE): Requirements for the importation of beef and beef products for human consumption — effective 1 March 2010’, available via links on the FSANZ website (above).

The IRA process addressing animal quarantine risks will run in parallel with the FSANZ BSE food safety country risk assessment.

The next step in the regulated IRA process is for Biosecurity Australia, with the assistance of an expert specialist panel, to prepare draft IRA reports. These reports will be circulated to

stakeholders for 60 days public comment. More information on the regulated IRA process is available from the *IRA Handbook 2007 (updated 2009)*, which is available on Biosecurity Australia's website: <http://www.biosecurityaustralia.gov.au/>.

Please pass this notice to other interested parties. If those parties wish to be included in future communications on this matter they should advise the contact officer. Alternatively, if you wish to be removed from the distribution list, please advise the contact officer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin J. Grant', written in a cursive style.

Dr Colin J Grant
Chief Executive

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