



Sheepmeat Council of Australia met in Canberra on 22/23/24 February for their first Council meeting of the 2010 year.

Major Issues discussed by Council follow.

NVD funding

SCA has agreed to continue the distribution of NVD books without charge for another three years. Sheep NVD booklets are currently provided to producers without a charge, supported with funding from National Residue Survey levy receipts. The agreement to fund the booklets in this way will end in the middle of this year and was up for review. The SCA decision will now provide certainty on the funding arrangement for another three years.

MLA Marketing Activities

MLA presented information on forthcoming priorities for levy marketing funds, in both international and domestic markets. Councillors provided direction on trends, market share, opportunities for expansion, supply limitations and priorities for funding.

Live Exports

A report was provided on recent activity in the Middle East, especially the excellent results in Bahrain and Qatar around Eid Al Adha. This work continues to change behavior and improve animal welfare outcomes in these markets.

Animal health and welfare

The Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep were discussed. A resolution was passed that **SCA does not support mandatory training or certification as a pre-requisite to demonstrate producer competence in the implementation of the Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep**. This motion came about in response to members increasing frustration at regulators inability to provide guidance on how the Standards might be implemented. SCA continues to work for practical and cost effective outcomes for all sheepmeat producers and for standards backed by science.

OJD

Increasing prevalence across a number of Prevalance Areas will require change in some areas. SCA has requested a technical options paper in this regard from AHA, and will continue to seek a national approach to controlling OJD.

EAD Planning

SCA is involved in the development of a framework for biosecurity farm plans to be potentially included in Quality Assurance schemes. An update was also provided on the Industry Liaison Officer (ILO) training model with South Australia being the first state to pilot the model.

FMD Vulnerabilities Project

SCA supports the FMD Vulnerability Project, which involves doing research overseas under similar conditions and on similar animals to those found in Australia. The project is about exotic animal disease preparedness and to ensure maximum use of the industry/government investment in the FMD antigen bank held in the UK.

AHA Program Funding

SCA agreed to seek a more formal arrangement with AHA regarding consultation on annual program budgets.

Sheepmeat Industry Strategic Plan

SCA will provide leadership to the sheepmeat industry in the development of the SISP (2010-2015) within the framework of the Meat Industry Strategic Plan. SCA identified and discussed the SISP themes around issues of supply, quality, climate, ethics and welfare, and animal health and biosecurity. It is anticipated that an updated plan for the period 2010 to 2015 will be released in early August this year.

Risk Management

Council is examining the development of risk management tools for sheepmeat producers. MLA will provide a report to the May meeting on options for development of such tools. Council is approaching this issue with caution given the history of such mechanisms.

TriLamb

The TriLAMB meeting in November 2009 in the USA was successful with the MoU re-signed for 3 years, providing a solid foundation for the maintenance of trade into the US. Australia will be hosting TriLamb in Australia later this year.

Climate change

SCA worked with the National Farmers' Federation in response to the Coalition's climate change policy. Whilst the issue remains clouded, work will continue with the NFF in responding to climate change policies.

Research & Development Issues

SCA:

- endorsed the National Sheepmeat Production RD&E Strategy;
- provided input into the survey from the Rural R&D Council;
- will input into the Productivity Commission inquiry into the rural research and development corporation arrangements in conjunction with MLA;
- discussed the format and content of the upcoming R&D Taskforce meeting.

Ian Johnson provided an outline of current work through the Invasive Animals CRC on feral animals, especially wild dogs. AWI have indicated a priority for ongoing funding of wild dog work.

Code of Practice for Intensive Sheep and Lamb Feeding Systems

Council will work with MLA to revisit the terms of reference for the development of this Code, to ensure that it meets the needs of producers.

NLIS

An update on NLIS (Sheep & Goats) was provided, especially in relation to the ongoing development of the business rules. Progress at the last meeting of the Advisory Committee was very positive. It is hoped that a coordinated communications effort in the middle of this year will provide producers with certainty about the arrangements for NLIS.

Media and Communications

Ideas were explored relating to social media and the Council communicating with members and grass roots producers. Sheepmeat Council's newsletter has been well received.

Future SCA Meetings

SCA will meet in Canberra in May, Perth in August in conjunction with LambEx, and in Launceston in November in conjunction with the MLA AGM.

Further detail/clarification is available from your SCA Councillor, or the SCA Office, see www.sheepmeatcouncil.com.au