

Fertile eggs for hatching – review of import policy – scope

General scope

Using the existing import conditions for hatching eggs for chickens, ducks and turkeys as a basis, this review will assess the biosecurity risks associated with the importation into Australia of fertile eggs for hatching (hatching eggs). It will consider the import of chicken, duck and turkey eggs for both commercial and hobby (fancy breed) enterprises. Because they are already on the *List of Specimens Taken to be Suitable for Live Import* (live import list) and the department is aware of commercial interest in importing them, we will also consider the import of goose eggs for hatching. Additionally, quails and pheasants are on the live import list and may be included in this review if the department becomes aware of sufficient commercial interest in importing these species.

The review will account for advances in scientific knowledge and industry practices, and it will recommend biosecurity measures to ensure imports of hatching eggs meet Australia's Appropriate Level of Protection (ALOP) in the least trade-restrictive manner.

The current import conditions can be found on [BICON - Import Conditions](#).

Some stakeholders have already advised the department of issues that they would like considered during the review. Where those issues are within the scope of the review they will be considered. As a guide, the scope of the review is planned to include (but not be limited to) assessment of the following areas of policy:

- Hazards (i.e., pests and diseases) relevant to each imported species (chickens, ducks, turkeys, geese, and potentially quails and pheasants).
- The most appropriate testing, treatment and risk-management methods for relevant hazards (including both what is justified scientifically and what is practicable in real-world scenarios).
- The role of accreditation programs, and disease-free zones and compartments as potentially equivalent to country freedom from certain hazards.
- The role of vaccination.
- Timeframes for sampling/testing, quarantine and egg collection.
- Packaging and transport requirements.
- Age and circumstances of the donor flock.
- Suitable disinfectants and their application.
- Testing laboratory approval/accreditation.

If you have comments about any of these issues that you would like us to be aware of, or if you have additional issues you believe should be included in the review scope that you have not already informed us of and that are not captured in the list above, you can provide these to us by emailing animal@agriculture.gov.au.

Fertile eggs for hatching – review of import policy – scope

Please be concise when providing issues and comments at this stage. You only need to include a **short description of the issue, what change you would like to see and the reasons for the suggested change**. We will assess all issues and decide whether to include them in the scope of the review and we may contact you to discuss issues in more detail if required.

There will be an opportunity for stakeholders to comment on the findings of the review before these are finalised and before any changes are made to the current import conditions. The final draft will also be distributed widely for comment under the World Trade Organisation's processes consistent with the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement).

Comments on this initial draft scope will be accepted for **4 weeks, ending Friday 22 October 2021**.

The review will not include the potential addition of new species to the live import list. Changes to the live import list are regulated by different legislation and are managed separately within the department.

Fertile eggs for hatching – review of import policy – scope

Following is a summary of some feedback the department has already received in relation to hatching egg import conditions. It is provided to prevent unnecessary duplication and facilitate early and concise feedback. As a stakeholder, if you would like to provide any initial feedback on these issues, you can put your comments in the right-hand column and send them to us at animal@agriculture.gov.au. Similarly, if you would like to raise additional issues that are not already in the table for consideration, the table below gives an indication of the expected level of detail at this stage of the process. We may contact you directly to discuss issues in more detail if required.

Feedback/issue	Rationale for inclusion	Stakeholder comments
<p>Minimum age of source flock.</p> <p>Update all cases to reflect 32 weeks of age when eggs are collected.</p> <p>Policy requires the youngest bird to be 35 weeks. Import conditions state either 32 weeks (not vaccinated) or 35 weeks (vaccinated).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update policy to factor industry practices into scope if biosecurity outcomes can still be achieved. 	
<p>Review terminology for clarity</p> <p>e.g. References to the OIE definition, country disease freedom, avian diseases, poultry, official/approved/supervising veterinarians etc</p> <p>e.g. assessment of competent authority systems and clarify who can sign certificates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback received outlines issues with clarity and consistency with definitions, including the use and acceptance of OIE definitions. To include set definitions and terminology in the policy review that are considered acceptable for Australia 	

Fertile eggs for hatching – review of import policy – scope

Feedback/issue	Rationale for inclusion	Stakeholder comments
<p>Review zone/compartement agreements or consider alternatives to entire country freedoms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been changes to some health certificates over time and the different wording should be reviewed and reflected in the new policy. 	
<p>Clarify any wording about the establishments that source flocks are housed on, i.e. source flock health status vs other ‘high health status’ flocks on the same breeding establishment. i.e. the ‘400m’ rule.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous enquiries about whether this is referring to other flocks on the same site • Has been corrected in the import permit wording. • Consider stating in policy. 	
<p>Interpretation of serology is difficult for vaccinated flocks.</p> <p>Laboratories report serology in many different ways and with differing levels of detail.</p> <p>For testing coming from different countries and different labs, regional VOs are being asked to make highly technical assessments, sometimes without knowing for example whether the HIT was diluted against 4 or 8 units of antigen.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be helpful to have expectation for certification of serology clearly stipulated. • Interpretation can also be difficult for rises in the paired post collection tests. Consider if there are any better or equivalent options. 	

Fertile eggs for hatching – review of import policy – scope

Feedback/issue	Rationale for inclusion	Stakeholder comments
<p>Rising titre serology and double handling of birds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback received claims that looking for titre rises is poor animal welfare because it means double handling of birds to collect blood, i.e. find and catch from flock, and bleed twice. • Double handling may still be required regardless of the testing method used, however for some testing methods a swab sample instead of blood collection may be sufficient • Swab sampling would be a better animal welfare outcome • A review into alternative testing methods is to be undertaken 	
<p>Review whether agent ID test such as PCR, or other tests (e.g. virus isolation), could be used for pre-export testing, as per some OIE protocols. Review what other tests are suitable for pre-export and other testing.</p> <p>Review whether pooled testing is suitable for some disease tests (e.g. APMV-1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback received requesting an updated list of acceptable testing methods • To review alternative testing methods and their suitability for the pre-export and post-arrival testing for various diseases. 	

Fertile eggs for hatching – review of import policy – scope

Feedback/issue	Rationale for inclusion	Stakeholder comments
<p>Exporting countries – laboratory testing:</p> <p>Lab approval</p> <p>Test type approval</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback received seeking clarity for lab testing • To specify in policy the conditions for international laboratory testing requirements including testing approval 	
<p>Consideration of availability/capability of diagnostic testing both pre-export and post-arrival</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback outlines the difficulty with some testing requirements and obtaining necessary components to run these tests (antigens/reagents etc). • To review and consider availability/capability of diagnostic testing for both the pre-export and post-arrival period. 	
<p>Testing for Duck virus hepatitis type 2 (duck astrovirus 1) and Duck virus hepatitis type 3 (duck astrovirus 2) is not available/difficult to come by due to the very localised nature and discrete outbreak episodes of these diseases.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capability of exporting countries to conduct testing for these diseases needs to be considered if testing for these agents still required in the new policy. • Variation to conditions has previously been given to allow country freedom certifications instead. • To review known disease distribution for these viruses and assess the risk of importation through hatching eggs. 	

Fertile eggs for hatching – review of import policy – scope

Feedback/issue	Rationale for inclusion	Stakeholder comments
<p>Correct terminology relating to Duck Virus Hepatitis and the different types for testing – Astrovirus vs Picornavirus.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review and update current terminology and keep consistent within the policy • To try and keep consistent with international standard terminology (OIE Code) 	
<p>Maternal antibody and IBDV. This issue originally encountered in post-entry quarantine but could equally apply to source flock testing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback about the need to consider maternal antibody implications if risk agent testing is done by serology. • To consider the general principles of this issue as individual technical assessment will still be required in some instances 	
<p>Review and revise sample sizes required for each test/disease.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample sizes have been revised on health certificates • To review and update in policy 	
<p>Review the list of accredited salmonella schemes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback received for equivalence requests against certain schemes • Current conditions/certificates include schemes that are not listed in the policy • To review and update the list of accredited salmonella schemes 	

Fertile eggs for hatching – review of import policy – scope

Feedback/issue	Rationale for inclusion	Stakeholder comments
<p>Review the requirement for salmonella samples to be obtained from floor litter</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback claims some establishments do not use floor litter making obtaining samples difficult. • To review options to be consistent with a range of industry practices. 	
<p>Review the requirement for solid-sided aircraft containers and official sealing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback about the requirement for travel in solid sided air containers, claiming it is route limiting, expensive, and damaging to eggs. • Reasons to keep the solid sided air containers and official sealing of those air containers are to improve product integrity, range of transit/transshipment options, ability to disinfect outside of container. • Australian importers have expressed a preference for the solid-sided containers 	

Fertile eggs for hatching – review of import policy – scope

Feedback/issue	Rationale for inclusion	Stakeholder comments
Review the wording used for packaging of eggs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback received about what is or is not acceptable for packaging of the eggs (shrink wrap, type of boxes, plastic bags etc), whether egg flats have to be new or can be cleaned and disinfected. • Note wording of certificates regarding disinfection of egg flats is different to the original policy. 	
Review accepted transit ports and consider adding the basis on which new transits or transshipments can be considered to the new policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transit ports have been updated since the last policy review 	
Review disinfectants and provide clarity on policy – on what basis (i.e. what factors are considered)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback suggests using a list of disinfectants approved by their EPA as active against Newcastle disease and Avian Influenza • Need to cover all agents of concern to Australia to meet ALOP • To consider this across the full range of species in the review 	

Fertile eggs for hatching – review of import policy – scope

Feedback/issue	Rationale for inclusion	Stakeholder comments
<p>Consider adding sampling numbers for large consignments across multiple units at Mickleham to the policy</p> <p>Post-arrival sampling numbers at Mickleham and management of large consignments that are housed in multiple containment units at Mickleham</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider formalising in the policy 	
<p>Review the current practice of sentinel placement to ensure best practice for contact and animal welfare.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentinel placement and management needs to vary depending on the species of imported poultry, the breed/type within the species and the particular setup of the facility. • Options to assure the welfare of the sentinels as well as ensure sufficient exposure to the imported birds and their waste have been operationally developed as necessary. • To consider including post arrival quarantine management of sentinels in policy 	
<p>Clarify Sentinel numbers – numbers required at different stages of quarantine.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To include parameters in policy 	

Fertile eggs for hatching – review of import policy – scope

Feedback/issue	Rationale for inclusion	Stakeholder comments
Consider whether conditions for non-commercial turkeys and ducks should be added to the policy (e.g. 'fancy' breeds). And if so, the differences in policy clearly articulated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="720 264 1213 375">• Intermittent queries about importing ducks and turkeys that are non-commercial.	