



HORSE INDUSTRY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Meeting 27

Monday 14 November 2022

09:30 to 11:30am

**Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Teleconference**

Department

Wayne Terpstra (Chair)	Animal and Biological Imports
Chris Parker	Biosecurity Animal Division
Michelle Blowes	Animal and Biological Imports
Danni Davis	Animal and Biological Imports
Kaylene Jones	Animal and Biological Imports
Emma McGrath	Animal and Biological Imports
Kym Russell	Animal and Biological Imports
Emmerson Oreb	Animal Biosecurity
Kate Usher	Animal Biosecurity
Tania Ware	Animal Biosecurity
Caroline Martin	Exports Division
Kanu Partha	Exports Division
Tamara Nolan	PEQ Operations
Felicity Tessier	PEQ Operations
Melissa Henson	PEQ Operations
Ben Wilson	PEQ Operations
Rachel Iglesias	Animal Health Policy
Eunice Chuah	Live Animal Exports
Joffrid Mackett	Live Animal Exports
Timothy Naylor	Live Animal Exports
Paul Douglas	Finance Division
Leah Wells	Veterinary and Export Meat Group
Clare O'Shannessy	Veterinary and Export Meat Group
Claudia Lin	Veterinary and Export Meat Group
Mikala Welsh	Veterinary and Export Meat Group
Nicole Heberle	Veterinary and Export Meat Group
Sandeep Kaur	Veterinary and Export Meat Group

External

Jane Bennett	NSW Department of Primary Industries
Cathy Bunter	Agriculture Victoria
Chris Burke	First Point Animal Services/International Racehorse Transport (IRT)
Cameron Croucher	Equine International Air Freight (EIAF)
Peter Curl	Racing NSW
Karen Day	Racing Australia
Paul Eriksson	Racing Australia

Grace Forbes
Ross Kendall
Kathleen Mullan
Josh Murphy
Rachel Ratini
Jeffrey Wilkinson

Racing Victoria
Horse Industry Consultant
Harness Racing Australia
New Zealand Bloodstock
Equestrian Australia
Equine Veterinarians Australia

APOLOGIES

Internal

Peter Finnin
Dennis Way

Animal Biosecurity
Veterinary and Export Meat Group

External

Cameron Bell
Paul Bloodworth
Graham Cooke
Andrew Kelly
James Gilkerson
Diana Miller
Fiona Thompson
Andrew Small

Agriculture Victoria
Racing Victoria
Agriculture Victoria
Harness Racing Australia
Australian Veterinary Association
Primary Industries and Regions South Australia
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries QI
Racing NSW

Meeting commenced at 09:30am

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the 27th meeting of the Horse Industry Consultative Committee (HICC) by teleconference, and provided an Acknowledgement of Country. The Chair acknowledged apologies from those who could not attend.

The HICC Terms of Reference update was raised, and as no concerns were shared the 2022 version was accepted.

The Chair welcomed new member Paul Eriksson, Chief Executive Officer of Racing Australia. Dr Chris Parker was introduced to HICC, as replacement for previous First Assistant Secretary of Animal Division, Dr Robyn Martin. Dr Martin is on extended leave pending retirement. Dr Parker is a veterinarian who worked for many years in mixed practice, then farming in mixed wool and cropping in South Australia. Other previous roles include Advisor to the Agriculture Minister under the Howard government, four years in an Agriculture Posting in Washington, and former CEO of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA). More recently Dr Parker managed the response to Foot and Mouth Disease and Lumpy Skin Disease detections in ruminants in Indonesia, before accepting the role of First Assistant Secretary. Dr Parker noted the importance of the horse industry as a component of Australian agriculture and advised that a recent divisional review has provided input to a strategic plan for the division, which will be operationalised by the end of the year. A key focus will be achieving what has been committed to within the timeframes specified, or providing transparency if it isn't possible to achieve. The department must continue to meet legislative and regulatory requirements, and must provide outputs to the best of our ability and best benefit of our clients.

2. Minutes from Meeting 26 and outstanding Action Items

The Chair called for comments on the minutes for the 26th HICC meeting. No comments were received, and the minutes were accepted.

Action Item 1 from HICC 26, relating to the Cost Recovery Implementation Statement, was moved to Agenda Item 9.

Action Item 2, relating to Japanese Encephalitis (JE) import conditions for horses from the UK, was moved to Agenda Item 8.

Action Item 3, relating to reviewing JE import conditions for horses from all approved countries, was advised as being due to commence soon. Once the review of the Import Risk Analysis chapter on JE is complete, Animal Biosecurity Branch (ABB) will advise overseas countries of changes to agreed health certificates.

Action Item 4, relating to investment options for surplus from horse import cost recovery, was moved to Agenda Item 9.

Action Item 5, relating to horse transport agents providing Equine Viral Arteritis (EVA) testing data to ABB, was not completed. Horse transport agents may provide this information to Dr Ware or close out this action item.

Action Item 6, discussing EVA import conditions within the department, is still in progress. It was noted that there are EVA positive results reported in the AHA (Animal Health Australia) surveillance quarterly and the NAHIS (National Animal Health Information System) statistics. The department will need to review any industry data provided against these publicly available reports as part of the discussion on reviewing EVA import conditions.

Action Item 7, relating to representation of relevant departmental branches at HICC, was completed.

Action Item 8, relating to the discovery report for NEXDOC 'live animals excluding livestock', was moved to Agenda Item 3.

Action Item 9, relating to surgery contingencies for horse transport agents using Mickleham quarantine facility, was completed.

Action Item 10, relating to future expansion plans for Mickleham, was moved to Agenda Item 5.

Two outstanding action items from Meeting 25, relating to export conditions at regional European Union (EU) ports and the finalisation of the glanders review, were completed. Horse transport agents noted they continue to work closely with individual ports in Europe, with ongoing difficulties in interpretations of export conditions. The EU port vets are working with agents as best they can. Animal and Biological Imports Branch (ABIB) advised this can be raised with overseas Counsellors to seek additional support if required.

The final outstanding action item from Meeting 25, relating to the draft policy for laboratories performing official testing for animal diseases, will be updated out of session when it is finalised.

3. Update on release schedule for NEXDOC

Caroline Martin was introduced as the Assistant Secretary for Digital Clearance Service Branch, leading a number of key digital reform activities within the Agriculture Trade Group, including projects on

export legacy systems and reform associated with clearance activities. Kanu Partha was introduced as the product manager leading the non-livestock aspect. The action item from the last HICC meeting was to share the discovery report that arose from communications with stakeholders around live animals excluding livestock, and the report is now available and will be sent out after the meeting. The department spent time considering options for the most appropriate system for export documentation, and it was decided to use NEXDOC to build on for live animal exports. NEXDOC is the most modern platform we have, and the main question now is how to integrate non-livestock into this system which is already used by other commodities. The starting point is the less complex commodities and countries. Lab mice to the USA will be developed first, then hatching eggs to a particular market. These will be used to build our technical capability, ensuring the system has time to mature sufficiently to handle more complex commodities and country combinations like horses to the EU. Like all IT systems, it is expected there will be issues to resolve during development. Breaking it down incrementally and building a close working relationship with regional colleagues who deal with the industry on a day-to-day basis will help the team to ensure delivery on the things that matter most.

Horse transport agents were interested in the platform NEXDOC runs on and the timeline for finishing the mice and hatching eggs. It was advised that NEXDOC works on the Oracle IT platform, and the initial commodities have implementation planned for 30 March 2023 and 30 June 2023 respectively. There were some concerns from industry that insufficient consultation during the planning could result in presentation of a finished product that doesn't work well for the horse industry and cannot be remediated. The department understands that industry's main concern is having their own mature systems working well for them, rather than trying to retrofit data into a less mature system and ending up with multiple repetitive data input points. The department acknowledges this and part of the reason not to start with horses was to allow development of the system first, hopefully streamlining the process of onboarding for horses in future. Industry advised they have been working with Veterinary and Export Meat group (VEMG) in the background on identifying documents both parties need and streamlining export documentation, which may help the NEXDOC process. Kanu and the team are working with Live Animal Export Branch and VEMG to implement the new systems. These areas of the department will work closely with industry to keep them informed with progress and ensure close consultation once work commences on horse related certification.

ACTION ITEM 1: HICC Secretariat to circulate discovery report to members with the meeting minutes, closing out action item 8 from meeting 26.

4. IV injections by nominated grooms as emergency first aid in post arrival quarantine including tele-vet consultations and prescribing for horses subject to biosecurity control (paper)

Michelle Blowes, Director of the Horse, Livestock and Birds Imports Program, was introduced to discuss the paper on IV injections by nominated grooms, circulated to HICC before the meeting. It was noted that in February 2021, the department moved from private veterinarians seeking permission to treat horses to notifying as soon as possible after treatment. This change in policy has been working well, and the department is looking to implement an addition to the emergency treatments policy to allow nominated grooms to provide emergency IV injections. This would only be allowed if directed by the private veterinarian, in accordance with Victorian telemedicine requirements.

During their minimum 14 days in quarantine, horses have regular oversight by their nominated private veterinarian. There are a minimum of three visits during this time, including a clinical examination on arrival in Australia, and visits on day 5 or 6 and again on day 10 as a minimum for sample collections. Blood testing for health profiles, unrelated to biosecurity purposes, is often also performed during this time. The grooms work closely with the private veterinarians, ensuring they are kept up to date about changes in behaviour and other clinical signs of potential illness. The private veterinarians monitoring the horses may not always be on-site immediately if the horse becomes unwell. It is known that horses with acute illness or injury, particularly colic, may recover better from administration of drugs within first 30 minutes of displaying clinical signs. Under the Veterinary Practitioners Registration Board of

Victoria, non-veterinarians can perform IV injections under the direction of a registered veterinarian. Veterinarians can also prescribe medications remotely. Therefore, the department considers that it is appropriate to allow trained grooms nominated by the private veterinarians to administer emergency IV injections when directed to do so by the veterinarian.

Notice to Industry (NTI) 5, which is published on the department's website, was attached to the background paper to demonstrate the department's requirements for veterinarians treating horses at Mickleham, including the storage and dispensing of medicines in accordance with Australian requirements for s4 and s8 drugs. As medications can be stored in the fridge or otherwise outside of the locked medicine cabinet if they have been labelled and dispensed for specified horses with written instructions on how to administer, the department proposes to have a single dose of emergency anti-inflammatory and/or sedative treatment prescribed and dispensed and left where nominated grooms can access them. New doses would need to be dispensed for each consignment. The nominated groom/s would need to have been previously trained in IV injections and have a letter provided to Mickleham staff stating their competence. They could then inject the dispensed dose under direction by the private veterinarian. Their permissions could be revoked at any time if the department or private veterinarian has concerns about practices carried out.

So far, the proposed emergency medications are flunixin, dexamethasone, buscopan and dormosedan, but the department is open to discussing additional medications if required. Industry agreed to the policy update, noting that the horses are not able to move as freely within the horse compounds at Mickleham as they would in their normal environments, which may increase the likelihood of colic. It was suggested that the policy add a requirement for the private veterinarian to attend the horse as soon as reasonably practicable after directing the one-off emergency treatment. It was noted this would most likely have happened anyway if a horse was sufficiently unwell to require emergency treatment but including it in the policy would be valuable. Industry also noted that the NTI had less detail than the background paper, and that the offsite treatment form attached to the background paper included other medications. As the department uses the offsite treatment form for other purposes, such as routine treatment with altrenogest or omeprazole, the other medications will remain on the form but it will be updated to reflect the emergency injections policy.

It was also noted for industry's convenience that sometimes searching google for the Notice to Industry documents can yield an old version of the PDF. Entering via the department's website at [Importing live horses - DAFF \(agriculture.gov.au\)](https://www.daff.gov.au/importing-live-horses) is the safest way to ensure the current version is used.

ACTION ITEM 2: ABIB will add the requirement for veterinary attendance to the emergency injections policy, update the NTI and offsite treatment forms with additional detail, and notify industry when it is implemented.

5. Future expansion plans for horse post entry quarantine at Mickleham Quarantine Facility

It has previously been advised that a parcel of land at the back of Mickleham Post Entry Quarantine (PEQ) Facility was kept for the expansion of animal facilities. As industry is already aware, that area has since been used to create the Centre of National Resilience. The department is aware that animals are diverting to New Zealand for clearance first, before importing to Australia where they won't need quarantine due to their New Zealand health status, and that this is occurring due to lack of facilities here. There are other commodities with similar space constraints, but horses are a key commodity to consider for expansion.

Earlier this year, the department had internally discussed the feasibility of a second PEQ site, especially in relation to the development of the new Western Sydney airport. For numerous reasons, this is not currently being considered as an option, and the department is now planning how best to manage land at the existing facility, noting there's plenty of space, but horses do have restrictions on distance

between facilities. The ruminants compound is unused and is considerably smaller, but may be able to accommodate a small consignment in future with some adaptations. The lack of truck wash capacity and plumbing to the facility makes this more difficult than first thought, but it is still on the cards. PEQ Operations will need to put forward a business case demonstrating the need for increased volume, and this is in its early stages now. The department is aiming to move this as quickly as possible, however, it does take significant time to have approval put in place and then develop necessary infrastructure.

The department is comfortable we can fit a smaller compound for horses on-site even with the distance restrictions. Industry providing information on the current need and future need would help inform the business case to put forward to secure funding for updating facilities.

Industry advised that over the last 20 years the number of horse imports has continually increased. This year they've diverted more than 100 horses to NZ, due to lack of space in MQF. Industry requested a timeline for any new facilities, as they need to make commercial decisions on using private facilities here or in New Zealand, or if there's a way to ensure expansion at Mickleham occurs. It would be most helpful to get a commitment and timeframe from the department around additional facilities, and if that is not possible, industry needs to be informed so they can seek alternatives.

The racing industry advised that it has grown 45% in the last 10 years in Australia, and that less foaling here, the rules against artificial insemination in the industry, and increasing prize money over time should attract more horses to Australia to compete. It was also noted that improving Australian genetics by importing more horses contributes to making Australia a relevant export market for horses to Asia and New Zealand. The racing industry is happy to contribute data on the economic impact of importing more horses to inform the business case.

ACTION ITEM 3: PEQ Operations will take the business case for expanding the horse quarantine capacity at Mickleham forward as soon as possible. As part of this, staff will contact Racing Australia, IRT and EIAF to gather data to include.

6. Japanese encephalitis – situation update and vaccine application status

Rachel Iglesias, a veterinary epidemiologist working in Animal Health Policy (AHP), was introduced to update HICC on the status of Japanese encephalitis (JE) in Australia. The national JE surveillance working group, which reports to Animal Health Committee, has been implementing activities out of the surveillance plan. The plan was developed within 6 weeks after the first diagnosis of JE in Australia, and focussed largely on the pig industry, as this industry is most impacted. Most of the information from the initial surveillance activities will be summarised in a report, and there are no confirmed cases in horses to date. A serological survey in domestic pigs was completed and the results are on track for publishing in the first half of 2023. So far, there is no evidence that JE virus was circulating in south-eastern Australia before detections late in 2021. There has been some evidence it was already present in northern Australia as early as late 2020. The surveillance plan is under review to focus more on the next few years, as the original plan focussed on the early months after the initial cases of JE. The working group is therefore checking the objectives and purpose are still appropriate moving forward and considering the activities that need to be supported this summer and in future years.

The lack of confirmed cases in horses is due to difficulties interpreting serological testing in this species, associated with potential cross-reactions with related viruses that were already present in Australia. It was noted that horses are long lived animals that have opportunity to be exposed over many years to similar viruses. As the surveillance plan is reviewed, available options to improve diagnostic tests available for horses will be explored.

A research symposium will be held later this year to identify research priorities and attempt to attract funding. The funding pool is currently limited and more will likely be needed to support all the high priority activities.

The department also continues to work closely with the APVMA on the emergency use permit application for an inactivated JE vaccine for horses. Detailed technical dossiers have been provided and it is expected the application will be ready to lodge soon. The import permit application to meet the requirements of the Biosecurity Act 2015 is being completed concurrently. The preferred vaccine requires 2 injections approximately 1 month apart, ideally from 5 or 6 months of age, then a single annual booster to maintain lifetime protective immunity.

Industry noted that horses that have been exported to Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan and returned to Australia could already have JE antibodies, which may impact on serological testing. Industry was interested in whether there could be further cases this summer, given the vaccine presumably won't be available yet. The department advised transmission is a risk this summer, particularly where there has been flooding, as it will result in increased mosquito numbers. It was noted that in addition to JE, other mosquito-borne disease like Kunjin or Murray Valley encephalitis are also a risk. It would be ideal for horse owners to protect their horses from mosquito bites as much as possible.

Industry also asked if the distributor of the vaccine was known, and if it is possible to find out what the minimum order quantities required might be, including cost. It isn't known if any of that information is currently available for release, but if it is the HICC Secretariat can distribute any information provided by AHP.

ACTION ITEM 4: AHP to provide information to ABIB about the distributor for the JE vaccine for horses and any minimum order quantity requirements and cost for distribution to HICC, if it is known and acceptable for the department to release.

7. Export/import testing for piroplasmosis – currently no testing capability in Australia

Industry advised that the laboratory in Western Australia that had been doing their export piroplasmosis testing doesn't have the plates or kits required to do that testing, and there is no estimated timeframe for these to arrive. Hong Kong exports cannot proceed without the testing. As we currently have no onshore testing options, samples must be sent overseas. Horse transport agents cannot use the World Organisation for Animal Health laboratory in Japan as it is not set up for commercial quantities of piroplasmosis testing. The alternative is to send the samples to Hong Kong for testing. However, state Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) need to approve the sample movement outside of Australia, and they require a Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) to be signed to prevent the samples being tested for other diseases and/or results being released to other parties. The laboratory in Hong Kong, which is a private company, is not prepared to sign this. They believe the MTA should be government to laboratory or laboratory to laboratory, and while they are prepared to accept the sample, they are not prepared to sign the MTA. The NSW state government has been working with one of the horse transport agents to resolve this issue for a horse due to export to Hong Kong on 28 November 2022. A further 120 horses due for export to Hong Kong and 60 to Macau may also be impacted in the next three months.

ABB advised that Hong Kong had changed their export protocol to include piroplasmosis testing in 2021. The Vet Path laboratory had advised they could do the testing so it went through, but ABB can write to Hong Kong if there is difficulty with testing now. They may not agree to alter the conditions, particularly as they've offered to facilitate the testing, but ABB is prepared to write if industry advises it's an approach they'd like to take.

Industry advised that the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP) advised they could look at an MTA and receive the samples then dispatch on the exporter's behalf, but it would take several weeks and would add expense.

It was agreed that a domestic solution would be most ideal as it would negate the need for the MTA, however, industry advised that the kits are from the USA and Vet Path hasn't been able to access the reagent from the same laboratory. However, the reagent may be accessible from Japan, and industry had been hoping Vet Path would source them separately and make their own kit, but this hasn't been the case. There may be an ongoing global issue with access to kits and reagents for any laboratory trying to perform the testing.

The Chair advised that the biologicals area of ABIB may be able to help regarding importing kits and reagents, and that it could be discussed offline with horse transport agents. ABIB could gather information and assist with determining if our domestic testing capability can be improved.

ABIB noted that the department has a guidance document on the website regarding sending biological samples overseas. It describes the need to go through ACDP if there was suspicion of an exotic disease, but export testing is a different case. This document has since been available at: [Policy for the transfer of biological specimens to overseas laboratories - DAFF \(agriculture.gov.au\)](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/policy-for-the-transfer-of-biological-specimens-to-overseas-laboratories)

Industry also noted a broader preference for Australia to build capacity to test for all the diseases of biosecurity concern locally.

ACTION ITEM 5: ABB can reach out diplomatically to Hong Kong about the difficulties with testing export horses for piroplasmiasis if needed, and will engage with the state and territory CVOs about the MTA difficulties.

Note: ABB discussed with colleagues in the department and State CVOs, exporters and ACDP after the meeting. An interim process was used to facilitate recent offshore testing for trade purposes. The department will continue to assist with work to:

- update the policy on sending samples overseas for testing; and
- develop domestic testing ability at ACDP.

8. Animal biosecurity branch updates

- Removing Australian import conditions for JE

ABB is currently undertaking a review of the JE chapter in the current horse Import Risk Analysis (IRA). The review will provide a robust and defensible replacement to the existing JE chapter over the next few weeks. Once this review is considered and approved, ABB can commence negotiations on changes to import health certificates for horses.

There is continuing engagement with the United Kingdom on JE conditions or equivalences for export horses, but progress is slow. There is little impetus for them to change as there is no impact until the first confirmed case of JE in a horse in Australia.

Additionally, ABB has been working with New Zealand, Canada, the United States of America and the United Kingdom to pursue an amendment to the JE chapter of the WOA code, to recognise that horses as a species do not transmit JE and potentially amend import requirements accordingly.

- EVA

ABB has not received any data from horse transport agents about EVA testing under action item 5 from the last HICC meeting. Any work on EVA testing protocols or declaring disease freedom would need to be prioritised in the overall work program, and other areas may be higher priority for some time.

- New Zealand horses en route to other countries

There has been work with New Zealand on the attestations Australia requires for horses travelling on to other countries after spending some time in Australia. There are various country freedom or premises freedom attestations that our certifying officers need for those horses to be able to move on after isolating in Australia. This information has sometimes been placed into the import certificate, which is not the department's preference and the work to resolve this is ongoing. ABB will update HICC when this is complete.

- Glanders review

The glanders reviews has been published online, replacing the previous chapter in the IRA, and the link was made available to HICC members by email before the meeting.

ACTION ITEM 6: ABB to update HICC out of session when the JE chapter has been reviewed.

ACTION ITEM 7: ABB to update HICC when there is resolution of the method for receiving country and premises freedoms for horses from New Zealand en route to other countries.

9. Update on finance and Biosecurity Cost Recovery Arrangement

Finance Division advised that cost recovery in the department is incredibly complex, and policies require time to amend. The last price update was in 2015, following the introduction of the Biosecurity Act 2015 and the Biosecurity Regulations 2016. The discussion paper for the current cost recovery impact statement (CRIS) should be out by late November. It will include an overview of what has changed since 2015, the benefits that are being provided to industry and impacts any changes may have on industry. Details of costings, volume estimates and prices will be included. Prices are most likely going to change. Operational areas will be driving the discussions with industry after the paper comes out late November.

There is also a paper currently out for discussion, relating to the development of a sustainable funding and investment model for biosecurity. It is titled 'making national biosecurity funding sustainable' and is available on the department's website for comment at: [Have Your Say - Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry](#). HICC members are encouraged to provide input for the department to take into account while developing the long term sustainability model.

There was no finance paper provided for this meeting, but the division would like to be able to provide meaningful and valuable reports on biosecurity cost recovery. As revenue is what the division looks after, they can provide information on how much money and volumes of imports, but the department is aware that industry already knows the volumes and this may not be valuable. Finance division can put together simple to detailed reports on the costs against the revenue raised and our reserves, but would appreciate industry input on the types of reporting that would be most meaningful. HICC members are invited to provide any feedback on finance division's reporting to horses@agriculture.gov.au to pass on to Finance Division.

The main concern industry has is that future importers may be expected to pay for shortcomings by current importers. At the last meeting it was advised that horse imports were heavily in surplus, but at this meeting it was suggested prices may go up. Industry's main interest is how the program is running financially, if it is in deficit or surplus, and how to manage this. Industry is not interested in taking surplus back as profit even if that is possible, as that amount would have been charged on to clients already.

HICC members were advised that the department runs on a cost recovery reserve, which balances items year on year in terms of either deficits or surpluses. This reserve balancing accounts for volume changes which may mean we over or under recover, and allows management of the department's inability to change prices quickly. Changes in the expense base can also affect recovery, for example,

a disease response in one year might affect the expected expenses. The reserve is there to buffer out over and under recovery years so the prices don't need to be regularly adjusted up and down. Future importers won't be charged for past deficits because of this reserve that provides the balancing of over and under recovery years. In the event that there were a number of under recovery years, the department would have to wear that, but the reviews that are run by the department may discover that the prices are out of alignment with the effort expended to provide the services, and adjust the prices accordingly. While surprise deficits are not good, in the overall context of the ongoing timeline and the cost recovery reserve, it does balance out.

Other reasons prices may go up is the change over time in items that were not previously cost recoverable but are now, or items that have been discovered as chargeable that haven't been charged out in the past. Such items will be reflected in any adjusted prices in the current review, which has the consultation paper due late November and open until January, with price changes expected in March 2023.

Industry noted that the recent surpluses are only in the last few years, probably because of increased volumes combined with the sudden large increase in fees after the EI outbreak from \$1300 to \$3800 per horse, which the department had cited was to recover past debt. Industry understands this may not be the way under the current cost recovery model, but industry needs as much information as possible and as early as possible to avoid sudden pricing issues to clients. For example, agents are currently taking bookings for horse imports for April 2023, and ideally need at least 3-6 months lead time on price increases to ensure appropriate charging on their end. Industry's preference would therefore be that price changes occur at the start of the next financial year if possible, and noted this could help the department with reporting. The justification for the price increases from the current to the new price was also noted as being important, so agents can provide this information to clients.

HICC members were advised that the consultation paper aims to provide all this information and explain any changes with examples of the cost increases and the benefits to industry as part of the effort expended. Finance Division noted industry's concerns over the proposed date for price changes. Additionally, advice was provided that the sustainability paper (linked above) and the CRIS paper (to be released soon) will have strategists interacting to ensure all bases are covered, so feedback can go into either paper. However, increasing the size of horse compounds or making improvements would fit better into the CRIS process, and discussion of investing surpluses into improving diagnostic testing capabilities for import or export could be raised in either paper.

Industry noted that the investment in diagnostic testing could have more impact than just for import and export, as it could create quicker diagnoses in the event of a new disease incursion, allowing government and industry to respond quicker.

Industry also raised cost efficiency as an issue, such as the difference in price between opening Mickleham for one horse vs 40 horses. Additionally, policies like the implementation of appendix B documentation take up a lot of effort for horse transport agents as well as the department. If improvements can be made to cost efficiency, that would benefit the whole industry.

ACTION ITEM 8: HICC Secretariat to advise members when the biosecurity CRIS paper is available for public consultation.

10. Close and next meeting

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting, advising that minutes would be circulated to HICC for comment in the coming weeks. The next meeting is due in May 2023. The department is moving to a new building in Canberra this month, and staff will look

forward to meeting there. A range of dates will be provided closer to the time.

Meeting finished at 11:40am.

Summary of Action Items

ACTION ITEM 1: HICC Secretariat to circulate discovery report to members with the meeting minutes, closing out action item 8 from meeting 26.

ACTION ITEM 2: ABIB will add the requirement for veterinary attendance to the emergency injections policy, update the NTI and offsite treatment forms with additional detail, and notify industry when it is implemented.

ACTION ITEM 3: PEQ Operations will take the business case for expanding the horse quarantine capacity at Mickleham forward as soon as possible. As part of this, staff will contact Racing Australia, IRT and EIAF to gather data to include.

ACTION ITEM 4: AHP to provide information to ABIB about the distributor for the JE vaccine for horses and any minimum order quantity requirements and cost for distribution to HICC, if it is known and acceptable for the department to release.

ACTION ITEM 5: ABB can reach out diplomatically to Hong Kong about the difficulties with testing export horses for piroplasmiasis if needed, and will engage with the state and territory CVOs about the MTA difficulties.

Note: ABB discussed with colleagues in the department and State CVOs, exporters and ACDP after the meeting. An interim process was used to facilitate recent offshore testing for trade purposes. The department will continue to assist with work to:

- update the policy on sending samples overseas for testing; and
- develop domestic testing ability at ACDP.

ACTION ITEM 6: ABB to update HICC out of session when the JE chapter has been reviewed.

ACTION ITEM 7: ABB to update HICC when there is resolution of the method for receiving country and premises freedoms for horses from New Zealand en route to other countries.

ACTION ITEM 8: HICC Secretariat to advise members when the biosecurity CRIS paper is available for public consultation.