



FINAL REPORT

Processing Industry Awareness Tour

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Australian Meat Processors Corporation (AMPC) funded two industry awareness tours in 2017. These tours were presented by Food and Veterinary Services Pty Ltd. The tours were aimed at giving Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) officers the opportunity to observe the processing environment first hand, as well as further developing their understanding of commercial considerations and requirements. The tours included lectures from Food and Veterinary Services Ltd and AUS-MEAT Ltd and visits to two processor sites. Feedback from DAWR indicated participants appreciated being able to see what it is like in the field. This in turn gave them a better perspective on their roles and a broader appreciation of the meat industry. It is recommended that an industry awareness tour be conducted annually to allow regulators who are new to the industry, or new to the regulation of the industry, the opportunity to develop their understanding of the industry and their role within the broader Industry.

This project initiative, if conducted regularly/annually, has the opportunity to avert the growing disconnect between departmental officers and the Red Meat Industry. This will be important as DAWR encourage rotation of staff through various operational and policy in agriculture and across department (especially for senior staff) and therefore a continuation of this initiative builds corporate knowledge of the Red Meat Industry throughout government regulators.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Australian Meat Processor Corporation funded the development and delivery of two Industry Awareness Tours for 2017.

Development and delivery of the two workshops on Industry systems and practices (including food safety and meat quality) for regulators included:

- Identification of key regulators for inclusion on the workshops
- Provision of training on industry systems and practices where greater regulator awareness and capability would be beneficial to the industry.
- Site visits to raise the awareness of on-plant environment and practical implications

3.0 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The objective of this project was to address awareness of the Australian Red Meat Industry's systems and practices:

- To build regulatory awareness of the Australian Red Meat Industry's practices and systems (including in the area of food safety) and the operating environment.
- To facilitate regulators to make policy decisions that are practically viable, not cost prohibitive and complementary to existing industry and commercial requirements, systems and practices.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Tour Development:

During the development phase of the project, industry representatives were approached to provide feedback on the areas they believed needed to be addressed. These topics were incorporated into the presentations and information provided during the tours. Where appropriate, these topics were also discussed during site visits. Topics identified by industry for inclusion in the tour program included:

- Understanding the management structure of Export Establishments and who the appropriate contact is
- Understanding meat export operations
- The commercial reality in terms of cost and yield
- Consistency of approach and interpretation (i.e. ensuring policies and procedures are implemented consistently as well as consistent interpretation of legislation and standards)
- Traceability and product integrity

Industry representatives also identified a number of topics that were important to the industry, but were not suitable for inclusion in an open workshop/presentation environment. For example, establishing communication channels to enable discussion directly between companies and Canberra based staff, or OPVs and Canberra staff to streamline discussions. These topics were discussed with the appropriate DAWR staff independent of the tour.

Food and Veterinary Services Pty Ltd developed a series of lectures, reflection exercises and Q&A sessions during the tours. This was completed through discussions with industry members; the project team used industry knowledge and a review of literature and industry sites, including AMPC. AUS-MEAT Ltd was also approached as a potential presenter and was included on the tour itinerary following confirmation of their involvement.

The itineraries were developed to accommodate visits to two different processors as well as a lecture schedule of approximately 8 hours (covering topics identified by industry representatives) over the course of three days. The final itinerary included two processors – one processor was a multi site company with the site visit conducted at one of their single species plant, the other processor was a single site multi species processor. This allowed the diversity of meat processing operations and therefore Industry to be demonstrated to tour participants.

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) nominated participants for each of the tours.

4.2 Tour Delivery:

Two 3-day tours were conducted in 2017. The tours were held 13-15 June 2017 and 23 – 25 August 2017. Four participants from DAWR attended each tour. Each tour was comprised of a series of lectures and presentations as well as two site visits. One site was a single species site operated by a processor that operates multiple sites while the second site was a single site multi-species processor. This gave participants the opportunity to observe the diversity of species, procedures and operations in the industry.

Participants were able to observe different aspects of meat processing at each site. By the conclusion

of the tour participants had observed:

- Pre operational hygiene
- Boning room operation including boning room run on
- Slaughter floor operation and procedures
- Chillers
- Packing facilities
- Load out facilities
- Retail sale

Participants were also able to observe and discuss how areas such as traceability, segregation, inspection and hygiene procedures operate in the meat processing industry. Discussions on site also covered commercial aspects such as commercial audit requirements and frequency.

The tours also included a series of presentation by Food and Veterinary Services Pty Ltd. as well as a presentation by AUS-MEAT Ltd.

Presentations by Food and Veterinary Services Pty Ltd. covered:

- The Australian Meat and Livestock Industry
- Red Meat Industry Peak Bodies
- The Role of the Australian Meat Processors Corporation (AMPC)
- Red Meat Processing (including discussion on supply chain, industry costs, yield and quality)
- MSA Grading
- Meat Quality

Presentation by AUS-MEAT Ltd covered:

- History of AUSMEAT Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between AUSMEAT and DAWR
- AUSMEAT's role in trade descriptions
- The Australian Meat Industry Language and Standards Committee (AMILSC) – the role of the committee and who sits on it
- AUS-QUAL Chiller Assessment
- Beef and Sheepmeat language
- Pricing grids

Participants were given a tour pack at the beginning of each tour that included copies of the presentations. A list of the sources used in the development of the presentations is available in the bibliography. The packs also included industry publications such as a selection of AMPC snapshots and AMCP's sustainability report 'A feast of ideas'.

4.3 Tour Feedback:

All regulatory participants were also asked to provide feedback via completion of questionnaires at three points of the project:

- Prior to attending the tour

- At the conclusion of the tour
- Two to three months after they had attended a tour

5.0 PROJECT OUTCOMES

5.1 Survey results prior to attending the tour

Participants were asked to complete a pre-tour survey that requested information on prior industry experience, their current Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) role and what they would like to learn about the industry that would support their role.

Previous experience ranged from no prior professional experience with the meat industry (prior to their current DAWR role) through to involvement in primary production (i.e. raising cattle and sheep), veterinary practice and/or having been on plant as part of previous studies. DAWR representatives covered a broad range of areas including but not limited to market access, documentation, animal health, food safety and operational integrity.

Participants identified a number of areas relevant to their current roles that they would like to see covered during the tours. These topics included but were not limited to:

- Observe and understand current processing procedures and practices
- Understand interactions between processors, exporters, overseas markets and DAWR
- Food safety
- Animal Health
- Animal Welfare
- Quality Assurance
- Sourcing requirements including HGP requirements

These topics were incorporated into the presentations where possible. Food and Veterinary Services Pty Ltd also endeavored to discuss individual areas of interest with each participant and pointed out areas of production that were specific to their roles during site visits.

Take home messages for participants included the volume of audits that meat processing establishments have, the fact that the DAWR regulatory requirements are only a part of the very big picture of the industry and that yield, quality and market access are key to the success of the industry.

5.2 Feedback at the conclusion of the tour

On the final day of each tour, participants were asked to provide feedback on whether the tours had achieved its aims (increased awareness of the Australian Red Meat Industry) and whether information provided during the site visits and lectures was useful. All participants agreed, with the majority strongly agreeing that the tours had achieved their aims and that the information provided during presentations would be useful upon returning to work. Further all participants strongly agreed that the information provided during site visits would be useful upon returning to work.

Participants were also asked to provide feedback and comment on a number of aspects of the tours including:

What did participants take away from the tours?

Which areas of the tour and lecture topics were most beneficial?

What areas of the tour could be improved for future initiatives?

Any additional feedback they wished to provide on the tour?

Participants reported that the tours allowed them to:

Gain an understanding of the many pressures the industry is under including volume and type of costs incurred and the volume of audits

Increase overall understanding of the industry and also where DAWR sit within the whole of industry picture

Commercial effort required to access and meet importing country requirements

All areas of the tour and topics covered were considered to be beneficial however the topics and activities that participants identified as the most beneficial were:

Site visits – the opportunity to observe operations as well as the information presented on site by processor staff.

AUS-MEAT webinar/presentation

Meat Science and meat quality presentations

Participants suggested further information on the supply chain (e.g. additional information around producers and sourcing), industry bodies and committees and inclusion of additional speakers and organisations on the itinerary as possible improvements for future tours or initiatives.

5.3 Feedback after returning to the workplace

Participants were contacted two – three months after attending a tour and asked to provide feedback on what information provided during the tour had been most beneficial to their role, whether the tour had changed how they approached their role and also whether there were any topics they had identified since the tour that would have been beneficial to have covered during the tour.

From the responses received, all participants reported an increased understanding of the industry and as a result, an increased awareness of competing pressures and priorities for the industry. Participants also indicated that understanding the structure and operation of meat processors had allowed them to be more mindful when setting deadlines and also allowed them to more accurately identify the most appropriate contact for any requests that needed to be made. Participants also reported a greater appreciation and understanding of their own roles in the industry.

Areas that participants would like to see expanded or included should future tours or initiatives be

available included additional information on the supply chain and documentation.

The following feedback was also received from DAWR's Export Meat Program:

'Participants on the tours have all reported back with very positive comments. They felt that it was very worthwhile and really appreciated the opportunity. I think they really appreciate being able to see what it is like in the field. It gives them a better perspective on how their roles here in the office help. A broader appreciation of the meat industry is also very helpful for them to understand some of the issues that the industry is dealing with.'

The feedback received in response to the industry awareness tours has been positive at all points in the process. The tours have been observed to increase understanding of the Australian Meat Industry and are considered to have been of benefit to both the participants and industry.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Two tours were conducted during 2017. These tours were comprised of a lecture program and two site visits. The tours were well received, with DAWR indicating the tours provided participants with a better perspective of their roles as well as a broader understanding of the Australian meat industry. It is recommended that an Industry Awareness Tour or comparable initiative be conducted annually to develop understanding of the Australian meat industry for future regulators. This will allow regulators who were unable to access the current initiative as well as future regulators who are new to the industry or to the regulation of the industry the opportunity to increase their understanding of the industry and their role.

This project initiative, if conducted regularly/annually, has the opportunity to avert the growing disconnect between departmental officers and the Red Meat Industry. This will be important as DAWR encourage rotation of staff through various operational and policy in agriculture and across department (especially for senior staff) and therefore a continuation of this initiative builds corporate knowledge of the Red Meat Industry throughout government regulators.

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8.0 APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix 1: Examples of post tour feedback and comments

'It really demonstrated the breadth of what industry does and is involved with.'

'I have a much deeper overall understanding of the industry as a whole. Learning about the processes from a company perspective is something that will be valuable to me in my daily work.'

'Having a greater understanding of who runs the plant, and how the different parties (i.e. QAM, AAOs, OPV) all fit together on plant, and what their responsibilities are has been immensely helpful.'

'The meat quality/MSA standards was fantastic and something I knew nothing about before this tour but is obviously so crucial to the industry'

'Visiting the plant blew my mind in terms of the size of the plant, the speed in which they carry out their process and the precision and expertise of the men and women on the floor.'

'Having more understanding of the role that auditing plays in the time management on the plant, now that we have become involved in the overseas audits, it really gives us more insight into the additional pressures the plant is under.'

'I think this really helps contextualise the role of the department in the meat industry.'

'This whole experience has been incredibly valuable to me and my career'