



REVIEW OF AVA'S FOOD SAFETY & BIOSECURITY PROGRAMMES – 3rd INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS (IACE) MEETING

AVA's International Advisory Committee of Experts (IACE) has concluded its third review of AVA's food safety and biosecurity programmes. The review took place from 27 to 28 July 2005 and considered a range of issues including AVA's risk management approach towards Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Nipah virus and Salmonella Enteritidis. The IACE also considered AVA's biosecurity approaches particularly those relating to HPAI, rabies and its Biological Safety Level 3 (BSL3) facilities.

2 The IACE concluded that AVA's approaches are science based and comprehensive, and thus comparable to the best in the world. AVA's risk management approach provides a high level of confidence in the safety of imported animals and products. The contingency plans that AVA has in place are also comprehensive and well developed. The IACE also expressed confidence in AVA's BSL3 facility and is of the view that the laboratory will be able to operate at the required standard.

3 Although AVA's risk management approaches are sound, the IACE advised that AVA must determine its own acceptable level of protection for imports, consistent with the World Trade Organisation trade obligations. AVA must also determine the level of investment deemed necessary for emergency planning. In addition, AVA must ensure the effective implementation of its risk management policies and practices and continually review such policies and practices.

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4 Notwithstanding that the IACE was generally impressed with AVA's risk management approaches, some recommendations were made to improve the already good systems. For instance, in view of the emerging and re-emerging diseases in the recent years, the IACE urged AVA to continue to keep abreast of emerging threats by utilising new technologies and working closely with other countries, particularly those in the region, to assess risk and take preventive action. The IACE commended AVA on what was done with Malaysia to establish buffer and disease free zones and recommended AVA to build on the strong ties as well as extend such strategic alliances to other countries.

5 The IACE also noted that the threat of bioterrorism cannot be underestimated. AVA must thus work closely with other Government agencies and like-minded countries to combat this threat.

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Annex A

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS (IACE)

AVA's International Advisory Committee of Experts comprises of experts in the fields of veterinary epidemiology, food safety and hygiene, and biosecurity, from Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

2 The first IACE review was conducted in 2002 with the emphasis on AVA's integrated approach to food safety. The second review, which took place in 2003, focused on AVA's biosecurity programmes on food safety as well as animal and plant health. The IACE were impressed with AVA's systems and approaches during the first two reviews and the current review builds on the knowledge gained during the previous meetings.

3 The three-member team of experts who undertook the third review are :

- i. Dr Gardner Murray
Australian Chief Veterinary Officer & Special Adviser
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Australia;
- ii. Dr Thomas Ksiazek
Chief, Disease Assessment Section
Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, USA; and
- iii. Professor Dirk Pfeiffer
Head, Veterinary Epidemiology Division
Veterinary College, University of London & Visiting Professor at
the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UK.

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