

Evaluation of the Meat Industry's readiness to move to hands off examination

May-June 2006

Background

At the MIA Technical Committee meeting of 27th April 2006 with respect to the introduction of hands off examination for lambs, there was general agreement from industry and NZFSA for the new procedures to be introduced this November. This was considered sufficient time to allow for standards to be rewritten, Asure staff retrained, any physical changes to work stations etc.

The offer was made by NZFSA to the meeting for the Senior Advisor (Meat Hygiene) to visit as many lamb processors as practical over the next six weeks to discuss the proposed presentation requirements with company staff and observe processing where possible to gather information about any difficulties that members may have individually or in common.

These difficulties related to both meeting the new presentation requirements and identifying a suitable position for the checking of forequarters for contamination.

Where companies had more than one establishment with the same chain speed and configuration it was agreed to visit only one of each chain speed and lay out.

The proposed presentation requirements for carcass at examination are to include

- Carcass free from visible contamination or identified by company when unable to remove contamination upon detection.
- This shall include:
 - examination and trimming where necessary of ventral aspects of neck after weasand clipping
 - examination and trimming where necessary of Y-cut area for contamination
- Removal of tail prior to examination
- Removal of pizzle prior to examination
- Inguinal incision (s) in abdominal wall (T-cut)
- Brisket split prior to examination

Executive summary

- Twenty three of the thirty establishments visited can readily meet the presentation requirements and accept the need for the changes.

Seventeen already present lamb carcasses for examination with tail and pizzle removed.

Another six can easily meet the requirements by either reallocating processing steps or were intending to increase chain speed and manning levels.

- Five establishments have some reservations about the changes.

Two could present the carcass as requested without extra manning but were not convinced of the need to change.

Two more required extra manning unless lymph nodes can be removed prior to examination at one while the other was considering US listing and would take on the extra labour unit then.

All of this group were willing to accept the changes if the status quo could not continue.

- Twenty eight of the thirty establishments have found the abdominal T-cut to be easily achievable and have identified a suitable position to check the forequarter. Most already include control of contamination (identification and removal) in the relevant job descriptions.
- Two establishments have strong reservations about the proposed changes with union attitudes being a major impediment in both establishments and constraints in space at current chain speed in one.

Recommendations

That the MIA be made aware of the overall general readiness of the NZ meat industry to accept the changes.

That the new examination procedures be made mandatory with an appropriate lead in period for those establishments having difficulty in making the required changes.

That the carcass presentation requirements be amended to include removal of tail, pizzle and inguinal opening of abdominal walls.

That Asure be notified of the changes as soon as possible to allow for the training package to be developed and delivered.

That overseas acceptance of a more pragmatic missing lymph node policy be pursued.