

BACKGROUND

The Australian Livestock Processing Industry Animal Welfare Certification System (AAWCS) was launched at the Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) Conference on 19 September 2013.

The AAWCS (which is wholly owned by AMIC) is an independently audited certification program used by Australian livestock processors to demonstrate compliance with the industry best practice animal welfare standards titled the '*Industry Animal Welfare Standards for Livestock Processing Establishments Preparing Meat for Human Consumption*'.

The AAWCS covers all animal welfare activities at a participating livestock processing establishment: from receipt of livestock at the establishment to the point of humane processing.

Livestock processing establishments who choose to participate in the AAWCS choose to comply with the requirements of the following core elements of the system:

- '*Industry Animal Welfare Standards for Livestock Processing Establishments Preparing Meat for Human Consumption*' (the Standards), administered through the Animal Welfare Standards Review Committee (which include representatives of AMIC and the Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC)); and
- '*AUS-MEAT Animal Welfare Certification Program Rules for Livestock Processing Establishments*' (the Rules), administered by the Australian Meat Industry Language and Standards Committee (AMILSC) through AUS-MEAT Limited (AUS-MEAT).

AUS-MEAT manages the certification program, via AMILSC on behalf of the Industry.

Participation by processing Establishments in the AAWCS is voluntary although there are some supply chains for which participation in AAWCS is a pre-requisite.

NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES

For the purposes of the Program's Rules, this **Notification Protocol** means the parameters and procedures established by AMILSC for AUS-MEAT to notify the relevant authorities of Animal Welfare Non-conformances identified by an AUS-MEAT Approved Auditor or any other information related to compliance with the Program Rules and Standards.

The Rules include provisions to ensure that AUS-MEAT can meet its obligations and underpin its ability to act appropriately in the public interest in matters relating to knowledge of unlawful activities about the welfare of animals at certified processing Establishments.

AUS-MEAT also has an obligation to protect the Program's Trade Mark. Where significant circumstances occur which have the potential to jeopardise the reputation of the Trade Mark, AUS-MEAT must provide the owner of the Trade Mark (AMIC) such information as may be necessary to protect the reputation of the Trade Mark in accordance with the Program Rules and the AUS-MEAT Privacy Policy.

This procedure establishes an administrative protocol for use by AUS-MEAT of information concerning the Establishment or the business of the Establishment obtained in connection to compliance of certified Establishments with the Program Rules and Standards.

All personal information collected by AUS-MEAT in relation to an Establishments participation or certification with the AAWCS is managed in accordance with the *AUS-MEAT Privacy Statement* which is prescribed in the Rules as outlined below:

2.5 Use of Information

2.5.1 An Establishment certified in accordance with these Rules acknowledges that AUS-MEAT may use information concerning the Establishment or the business of the Establishment obtained in connection with these Rules or Certification as follows:

- a) providing any or all such information to any relevant Commonwealth government agency as AUS-MEAT considers appropriate in connection with an Establishment's approved arrangements at export registered Establishments and any alleged or suspected breaches of Commonwealth laws;*
- b) providing any or all such information to any relevant State government agency as AUS-MEAT considers appropriate in connection with the welfare of animals, including licensing requirements and any alleged or suspected breaches of relevant State laws; and*
- c) publishing details of Establishments that have sought or obtained certification under these Rules as AUS-MEAT considers necessary or desirable for the purposes of these Rules or the Voluntary Animal Welfare Certification Program.*

2.5.2 The information collected in the normal course of business by AUS-MEAT may be Personal Information. It is collected and disclosed for the purposes of AUS-MEAT's business purposes. AUS-MEAT respects the privacy of individuals. Generally AUS-MEAT does not release Personal Information other than as specified in these Standards. In particular, in response to a legal requirement, in an emergency, in response to any unlawful act or omission, or potential unlawful act or omission, or in otherwise exceptional circumstances, the Chairman of AUS-MEAT or his nominee may at his discretion authorise the release of Personal Information in accordance with an established Notification Protocol. Further information can be obtained from the AUS-MEAT Privacy Policy in relation to the collection, use and disclosure of personal information.

In addition, an Establishment's Management has an obligation under the Rules to notify AUS-MEAT of the occurrence of certain Significant Circumstances at the Establishment as follows:

3.8.1 The Establishment's management representative must immediately notify AUS-MEAT where significant circumstances occur at an Establishment certified in accordance with these Rules which have the potential to jeopardise the welfare of animals or the reputation of AUS-MEAT or the Australian Meat and Livestock Industry including the actions taken to manage the situation.

3.8.2 The Establishment acknowledges that information concerning such circumstances may be provided to the Owner of the Trade Mark as may be necessary to protect the reputation of the Trade Mark.

COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

1. During the course of AUS-MEAT business an authorised AUS-MEAT representative (Approved Auditor) identifies a potential breach of Commonwealth or State laws at a Processing Establishment in connection with the AAWCS Program.
2. The Auditor advises the Establishment that the issue may represent a potential breach of relevant legislative requirements and advises the Establishment that there may be a need for the relevant Government Agency to be informed.
3. The Auditor requests that the Establishment puts in place immediate action to identify and protect the welfare of any affected livestock and provide copies of relevant documentation as applicable.
4. Where the Establishment is an export registered facility, the Auditor brings any matter relating to export legislation to the attention of the senior Department of Agriculture & Water Resources (the department) on-plant veterinarian Officer on site who is responsible for further action in relation to the legislation concerned;
5. The Auditor must advise the AUS-MEAT Animal Welfare Program Manager or other Senior AUS-MEAT officer of the issue as soon as practicable.
6. Upon notification of the issue the Program Manager will consult with the General Manager – AUS-MEAT & Industry Standards, AUS-MEAT Chief Executive Officer and/or the AMILSC Chairman as applicable.
7. Matters relating to a potential breach of export legislation are reported to the nominated Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (the department) representative on the AMILSC in accordance with obligations set out in the formal agreement between DAWR (the department) and AUS-MEAT.
8. Any other matters are considered to determine if the integrity and reputation of the Australian meat industry may be compromised and/or whether it is in the public interest to report the matter to the relevant Agency and/or the Owner of the Trade Mark as applicable.
9. Where practicable, the AMILSC Chairman will convene a meeting of the AMILSC Committee to consider the matter. Determinations by AMILSC will take into consideration any possible impacts to ensure that there is no potential for any decision to unduly compromise the ability of the relevant Agency to initiate an effective investigation.
10. Where information concerning any such matters is provided to an Agency by AUS-MEAT, the AMILSC will request that the Agency keeps it informed of the outcome of any subsequent investigation and action taken by the Agency.
11. The AMILSC may reserve any determination of action to be taken by AUS-MEAT until the relevant Agency has advised that it has completed its investigations.
12. The AMILSC may require an increase in audit frequency pending the outcome of any such investigation. Any further action taken by AUS-MEAT would be in accordance with the Program Rules.