

Answers provided by Mr Joyce (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources) to questions raised in Senate on 29.11.16 by Senator Rhiannon (Question No 235)

With reference to live export, where many animals experience injury and illness on voyages, and where medications are given to exported animals right up to unloading at the export destination, and noting that many such medications leave residues in the meat for extended periods of time and are considered a food safety and public health risk:

Q1 Given that it is usually impossible to determine individual identification of treated animals due to excrement covering ear tags, what processes are in place to ensure precise information as to which animals carry residues from treatment is provided to the importing country.

**A1 There are currently no importing countries that request this information.**

Q2 Are details of which animals carry residues from treatment publically available.

**A2 No**

Q3 Are details about the date and amounts of medication provided to each clearly identified (if attainable) animal routinely provided to the importing country.

**A3 No**

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Q4 Noting that faecal contamination in feed and water troughs from residue positive animals means residues may be consumed by many if not all non-treated animals in the pen of the treated animal, are these animals considered/flagged to importing countries as potentially carrying a level of medication residue; if not, why not.

**A4 No. See answer to question 1.**

Q5 Noting that many animals are sent to slaughter before the withholding periods, or residue clearance times, are lived out, and that an animal consumed with residues can be a public health issue to the consumer, is Australia advising importers not to consume meat or animal products from animals exported live from Australia due to the risk for a period of residue consumption; if not, why not.

**A5 No. Food safety and public health is a matter for the importing country.**

Q6 What is the risk for Australia's meat export market, which is worth over 7.5 times more to Australia than the live export trade, should residues of these chemicals be found in butchered live exported animals, and who would carry liability if a consumer in an importing country was found to become ill from eating medicine-contaminated meat from Australian live exported animals.

**A6 Traceability of animals used in food production is a critical part of Australia's food safety system. The system requires animals and animal products to be able to be traced back to their farms of origin. Countries importing Australian livestock manage traceability once livestock have arrived.**

Q7 Given that Australia's beef and sheep meat export market is highly regarded internationally as green, clean and reliable, what risk analysis has been done regarding the possibility of any drug-contaminated live export animals being discovered in an importing country and being confused with meat imports.

**A7 See answer to question 6.**

Q8 In regard to Australian exporters, who, it has been suggested, hope to export 1 million live cattle per year to China, which involves them having to be slaughtered within 14 days of arrival, and noting that many of the drugs used on live export ships have withholding periods of close to a month, some 90 days, and noting also that these withholding periods are observed and declared by Australia's meat exporters: 2

Q8a are live exported animals subject to the same withholding periods and declarations;

**A8a If an importing country specifies this requirement.**

Q8b what systems are in place to ensure live exporters adhere to such food safety measures;

**A8b Exporters are required to meet the Australian Standards for the Export of Livestock (ASEL). Standard 5.8 of the ASEL states veterinary drugs must be used in accordance with veterinary recommendations and manufacturers' directions.**

Q8c is the Australian Government ensuring that a sufficiently long feedlot time is being incorporated into the MoU currently being negotiated with the Chinese to avoid Chinese consumers suffering a public health risk; is so, can details be provided; and

**A8c A protocol has been negotiated for the export of feeder/slaughter cattle to China. The post arrival quarantine period or the time spent in a feedlot is up to the importing country.**

Q8d is such a precautionary withholding period enforced in any other importing country.

**A 8d Withholding periods before slaughter are determined by each importing country based on many factors. This information is not held by the department.**

Q9 Can the Minister provide reassurance that the Australian Government will not allow any withdrawal of medication requirements for sick animals on live export voyages.

**A9 Exporters are required to meet ASEL. Standards 5.2 and 5.7 of the ASEL require sick or injured animals to be treated or humanely euthanased if treatment is not possible.**

(10) Can a complete list be provided of the following:

(a) the medicines and other drugs used on live exported animals during the live export voyage;

(b) the resident clearance times of each of those drugs in animal bodies; and

(c) the health risks to consumers posed by each of those drugs should they be consumed as residues in contaminated meat.

**A10 No. This information is not held by the department.**