



A U S T R A L I A N M E A T P R O C E S S O R C O R P O R A T I O N

Meat Inspection and Quality Assurance Network (2015-2016)

FINAL REPORT

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1.0 Executive Summary

The Meat Inspection and Quality Assurance Network is a state based network of researchers, industry QA practitioners, trainers and regulators. It is a well-established network that is a highly effective means of distributing new information and providing extension services for AMPC RD&E activities.

In the 2015-2016 year a total of fourteen network meetings were conducted. This schedule comprises:

- Two network meetings in Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, and four meetings in New South Wales (two in the north, and two in the south)
- Two domestic networks in NSW and giving presentations at the Queensland Country Meat Processor Association and Young Guns meetings
- One joint training and MI&QA forum in each of Tasmania and the Northern Territory (funded through the Meat industry Training Network).

As in previous years there have been presentations and strong support from AMPC, MLA, the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, State Food Authorities and AMIC. Similarly industry participation remains strong. These forums allow research agencies to promote and disseminate industry-funded innovations and research. In addition they enable industry to provide feedback to researchers on their programs and their validity as well as a forum to discuss issues with regulators and identify those that require research or training initiative to resolve them.

In addition, MINTRAC Project Officers are, as part of this project, available to on-plant and regulatory personnel between meetings to answer incidental queries, investigate and respond to issues raised by processing personnel, and visit plants when requested.

This year a range of topics and research projects were discussed at the network meetings by researchers including work undertaken on:

- Rapid detection of pathogens
- Base line studies of micro contamination on carcasses
- Lymph node study on its role in salmonella
- The shelf life of vacuum packaged meat
- Shelf life prediction software.



AMPC also reported on market access work it has undertaken with regard to chilled meat into China and the features of the chilled meat trade and cold chain in China.

The Department of Agriculture and State Food Authority representatives spoke on:

- Outcomes from overseas reviews conducted by the US, EU, China and Malaysia
- Review of export regulations with an expectation that new regulations and orders will be in place by 2020
- Land Transport Standard

- Sheep and cattle AW Standards
- NLIS Issues
- AAO re-registration.

Dr. Kevin Sullivan also delivered a very well received presentation on heat stress in feedlot cattle.

Mark Beecham, from MINTRAC, delivered a presentation on the science of packaging, an area often taken for granted by Quality Assurance personnel.

MINTRAC also prepared processors and the regulators for the introduction of the new meat safety qualifications, due for introduction around mid-2016.

Over a period of nearly twenty years, this network has developed and evolved into a recognised industry forum for the sharing, debate and dissemination of a wide range of issues and research related to meat science, customer requirements and expectations, and the regulation of the Australian meat processing industry.

This network offers industry personnel, regulatory officers, researchers and industry personnel an opportunity to join a community of practice that alerts them to the latest issues and potential solutions. It has enabled the industry to develop a common understanding of such issues as animal welfare, professional development requirements, meat export orders and Department Meat Notices.

For research organisations such as MLA and AMPC it has provided a way of explaining to company representatives the nature of a specific research project, what its possible outcomes are and how the industry can assist in gathering data, samples etc. This collaborative approach to resolving problems is relatively unique in what is a highly competitive industry.

In a forever changing regulatory environment the network has enabled QA personnel to have changes in domestic and export market requirements explained to them by the relevant enforcement body and in particular what compliance will look like in terms of processes procedures and records.

It is a well-established network that is a highly effective means of distributing new information and providing extension services for AMPC RD&E activities.

Six recommendations for the coming year are made in this report.

2.0 Introduction

The AMPC funded Meat Inspection and Quality Assurance network, managed by MINTRAC, is a state based network of researchers, industry QA practitioners, trainers and regulators. Over a period of nearly twenty years, this network has developed and evolved into a recognised industry forum for the sharing, debate and dissemination of a wide range of issues and information related to meat science, customer requirements and expectations, and the regulation of the Australian meat processing industry

It is a well-established network that is a highly effective means of distributing new information and providing extension services for AMPC RD&E activities. The network meetings offer forums for the implications of new developments to be explained, explored and discussed.

This project included fourteen network meetings. Close liaison with AMPC, MLA, Department of Agriculture, State Food Authorities and AMIC occurred when setting meeting agendas and identifying professional development requirements for this network.

In addition, MINTRAC Project Officers have been available to on-plant and regulatory personnel between meetings to answer incidental queries, investigate and respond to issues raised by processing personnel, and visit plants when requested.

AMPC uses these forums to promote and disseminate industry-funded innovations and research as and when they become available.

The project also addressed the recommendations from the 2014-15 program funded by AMPC.

3.0 Project Objectives

The objectives of this project are:

- To provide an extension forum for AMPC and the meat processing industry;
- To facilitate the dissemination and application of information that impacts on quality or food safety from regulators, researchers and industry bodies;
- To ensure effective communication channels between regulators and industry;
- To ensure implementation of industry initiatives; and
- To ensure that industry projects and industry training programs reflect processor needs through the provision of updated training materials and professional development to trainers and lecturers.

4.0 Methodology

MINTRAC management of the program in 2015-2016 included:

- Organisation and running of two network meetings in Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, and four meetings in New South Wales (two in the north, and two in the south)
- Facilitating two domestic networks in NSW
- Giving presentations at the Queensland Country Meat Processor Association and Young Guns meetings
- Facilitating one joint training and MI&QA forum in each of Tasmania and the Northern Territory (funded through the Training Network)
- Development of communication channels between the various parties involved including industry, regulators, research agencies and training institutions
- Availability of the MINTRAC Project Officer to on-plant, industry organisations and regulatory personnel between meetings to answer incidental queries, investigate and respond to issues raised by processing personnel, and visit plants when requested
- Inclusion at each meeting of, as determined by AMPC, RD&E projects for delivery via presentation (extension) to industry
- Promoting the incorporation of AMPC R&D outcomes into QA and food safety arrangements
- Ensuring that new requirements and practices are incorporated into the nationally accredited qualifications
- Monitoring on-plant uptake of knowledge, practices and products featured through the network
- Advising on training materials that need modification due to changes in regulations, research outcomes, new technologies etc.
- Collection and analysis of data to determine the success of the networks in meeting their objectives
- Identification of new and emerging issues, particularly those which may require further research and development through AMPC.

5.0 Project Outcomes

5.1 Final summary of scheduled v actual network meetings

Fourteen meetings have been held this year, as follows.

Date	Location	Status
Thursday 19 August 2015	Melbourne	Completed
2-3 September 2015	Northern Territory combined meeting	Completed
Thursday 10 September 2015	Brisbane	Completed
Thursday 15 September 2015	NSW Domestic	Completed
Thursday 24 September 2015	Perth	Completed
Thursday 1 October 2015	Wagga Wagga	Completed
Thursday 8 October 2015	Tamworth	Completed
Thursday 5 November 2015	Adelaide	Completed
Wednesday 11 November 2015	Tasmania combined meeting	Completed
Thursday 25 February 2016	Melbourne Vic	Completed
Wednesday 3 March 2016	Perth WA	Completed
Thursday 10 March 2016	Tamworth NSW	Completed
Wednesday 13 April 2016	NSW Domestic, Sydney	Completed
Thursday 21 April 2016	Adelaide SA	Completed
Thursday 5 May 2016	Wagga Wagga NSW	Completed
Thursday 12 May 2016	Brisbane Qld	Completed

Minutes of all meetings were first checked and approved by AMPC and then distributed to those on the network lists. They were also included in the Milestone Reports.

5.2 Summary and analysis of meeting attendances

The following table provide a summary of attendances for the past six years. Previous figures for individual attendances have included the MI&QA conference – these have been provided in brackets for this year for the purposes of a more accurate comparison. Overall, attendances are 25 more than last year. There is a slight drop in the number of processing companies, largely due to rationalization - companies such as Teys, JBS and TFI are counted only once in these statistics.

A complete list of attendees was provided with the Milestone 4 report.

MI&QA Summary of Attendances (2010-2017)

Category	2010-11		2011-12		2012-13		2013-14		2014-15		2015-2016	
	Companies	People (+Conf)										
Meat Processing Companies	66	131	64	139	58	156	60	161	57	152	56	109 (+53)
Registered Training Organisations	13	43	22	52	15	45	18	51	16	52	14	38 (+12)
Industry Organisations	7	66	10	85	8	86	8	76	9	94	5	82 (+17)
Regulators	7	40	7	38	9	30	17	54	8	41	7	31 (+7)
Service Organisations	14	27	18	33	24	39	33	75	27	75	17	36 (+52)
Overseas visitors												5
Totals	107	307	121	347	114	356	136	417	117	414	103	301 (+138)

5.3 Draft schedule for July-December 2016 meetings

The draft schedule for the July – Dec meetings for all four Networks is provided below.

	Training Network 6/12	MI&QA network 8/14	Environment Network 1/3	Engineering Network 1/3
Victoria	10 August 2016 Melbourne	11 August 2016 Melbourne		
Northern Territory	Combined meeting 17-18 August Darwin			
Queensland	24 August 2016 Brisbane	25 August 2016 Brisbane		

Western Australia	14 September 2016 Perth	15 September 2016 Perth		13 September 2016 Perth
Wagga Wagga	21 September 2016 Wagga Wagga	22 September 2016 Wagga Wagga		
South Australia	14 September 2016 Adelaide	15 September 2016 Adelaide		
Tasmania	Combined meeting 6 October 2016 Launceston			
NSW Domestic		8 November 2016 Location?		
Tamworth NSW	15 November 2016	16 November 2016	26 August 2016 Wingham	

5.4 Summary of issues raised, initiatives and outcomes of the network for 2015-2016

5.4.1 Summary of meeting outcomes and activities for first six months

All invitations, agendas and meeting minutes were approved by AMPC prior to distribution.

This year’s first round of meetings featured an AMPC presentation on food safety, meat safety and sustainability research. Members from AMPC’s staff delivered on a range of topics and fielded questions on research outcomes.

Out of the discussions came a number of recommendations for future R&D projects including:

- Biosecurity emergency response
- Emergency disease recognition
- Ammonia refrigeration
- SOPs and Work Instructions for maintenance staff
- Automated meat inspection
- On-going RFP training and electronic export documentation
- EU requirements for staff training addressed through on-line training packages.

This list, along with suggestions provided from other Networks, was provided to AMPC.

The MLA presentation and demonstration of the shelf life predictor created significant interest among both QA and regulatory staff.

AMIC presented at three of the meetings prior to Dr. John Langbridge’s departure. John addressed

developments with the provision of meat safety officers by third parties as well ongoing market access issues in China and the Middle East.

Department of Agriculture staff presented on the results of past overseas audits, upcoming audits, registration for specific markets as well as the outcomes of the systems audits being conducted at a number of export establishments.

The MINTRAC activity update was presented and focused upon recently completed training materials and industry PD training requirements.

At the State based meetings in Tasmania, NT and the domestics in NSW the agenda items included reports from the State regulators, Food Authority and/or State DPI, covering:

- Land Transport Standard
- Sheep and cattle AW Standards
- Food Safety Issues
- AW Issues at processing plants
- NLIS Issues.

Dr. Kevin Sullivan, a leading feed lot veterinary consultant, delivered a presentation at three meetings on managing heat stress in feedlot cattle in meat processing plant lairages.

AMPC Snap Shots were used as discussion starters for the meeting and directed participants to where they could get further information off the AMPC website.

5.4.2 Summary of meeting outcomes and activities for second six months

This year's second round of meetings featured an AMPC presentation on rapid detection of pathogens as well as a market access presentation on chilled meat into China and the features of the chilled meat trade and cold chain in China.

MLA presented on:

- Base line studies of micro contamination on carcasses
- Lymph node study on its role in salmonella
- The shelf life of vacuum packaged meat
- Shelf life prediction software.

For industry the shortage of meat inspectors continues to be an issue.

The Department of Agriculture representatives spoke on:

- Outcomes from reviews conducted by the US, EU, China and Malaysia
- Review of export regulations with an expectation that new regulations and orders will be in place by 2020.

MINTRAC presented on the science of meat packaging and the need for companies to understand the

nature and specifications of the packaging used. This led to several companies seeking follow-up assistance to resolve issues around packaging.

MINTRAC reported on its AMPC and MLA funded projects including:

- grass seed reporting
- contamination on skin on goats
- ammonia refrigeration plant operator training.

MINTRAC also provided a refresher on the mandated training requirements to meet European Union requirements.

The Equivalence Mapping CDs, the outcome of a 2014-2015 AMPC project, were distributed to participants. Zero Tolerance Flip Charts were also distributed.

AMIC was unable to have a presence at the meetings principally due to staff shortage and unexpected clashes with other industry meetings.

5.4.3 Summary of support and assistance provided to network participants outside the formal meetings

Between the meetings a number of issues have been the subject of:

- Enquiries to MINTRAC
- Discussions with industry and regulatory personnel.

These have included:

- EU requirements for welfare training of stock handlers, slaughterers and QA staff
- Discussions with DA re training available to meet EU requirements
- Changes in Meat Safety (inspector) courses
- Delivery arrangements for meat inspector training by distance education
- Meeting HACCP training requirements of customers
- Equivalence of overseas qualifications in meat safety
- Currency assessment of prospective employees in meat safety
- The availability and structure of Certificate III level training in QA
- The arrangements available for industry to use stock handlers to perform ante mortem inspection
- Input into the review of meat inspection procedures (AMPC/MLA project)
- Report formats on health data on post mortem information
- Opportunities for coordinating Emergency Disease training for state regulatory personnel

- AHA requiring understanding of the level of industry knowledge of AUSVET plan for dealing with industry diseases/preparedness training
- NLIS requirements for the recording and uploading of foreign PICs
- Boiler training contacts for Tasmania
- Distribution of information about the shelf-life training courses for MLA/SARDI
- Assisting with identifying possible domestic plants for stunning training
- Availability of training for wild game meat inspection
- Availability of TACCP and VACCP training
- Availability of meat safety / food safety training in Vic and SA for a processing company
- Assisted CSIRO with the promotion of an industry workshop, and will be on a panel at this workshop
- Investigated a NZ inquiry about a *Common Illnesses in the Meat Industry* booklet
- Responded to general inquiry about the current status of Ecchymosis issues
- Responded to request for consultant contacts who can assist with minimizing rendering odours
- Responded to request for training for MHA training, meat micro, or general hygiene training for supervisors
- Circulated information on the AAO renewal process to RTOs
- Addressed three inquires related to packaging concerns.

5.5 AMPC SnapShots

An AMPC SnapShot for the MI&QA Network for the first six months was provided with Milestone 3, and then an updated version covering the full twelve months was provided with Milestone 4. As yet neither of these has been released by AMPC.

Published SnapShots, selected by AMPC, were distributed and discussed at every Network meeting.

6.0 Discussion

All scheduled meetings for the 2015-2016 year are now completed, although MINTRAC staff will continue to respond to inquiries from plants until the end of June.

The increase of attendances at meetings continues to demonstrate the importance and value of this project to industry.

Over 300 attendees have attended the fourteen meetings conducted for the MI&QA network during 2015-2015. Meetings have featured a wide range of presentations and discussion items, and continue to underpin the vibrancy and currency of this network. Participants regularly contact MINTRAC between meetings to seek further advice or referral to appropriate sources of information.

This project also addressed the recommendations from the 2014-2015 Final Report, and progress against each of those recommendations is provided below.

Recommendation 1

MINTRAC recommends that the network continues to operate the same number of network meetings as for this year. These meetings are well attended and obviously meet an industry need.

Completed

Recommendation 2

The network should actively participate in the roll out of the revised Animal Welfare Standard.

The revised AW Standard is still yet to be released. MINTRAC has been in discussion with Christian Mulders from AMIC and when the Standard is released MINTRAC will ensure that appropriately timed workshops will be conducted as part of the Training and MI& QA network activities.

Recommendation 3

The network should include practical workshops on the implementation of electronic export documentation.

The Department of Agriculture is yet to release the Meat Notice that will allow the electronic export documentation to be implemented and utilized. As soon as the Meat Notice is released MINTRAC will work with Des Bowler to deliver a supporting workshop for company personnel as part of the professional development program.

Recommendation 4

The sources and prevention of small stock contamination should form part of a workshop that focuses on the outcomes of the use of a small stock decontamination chamber.

MINTRAC has circulated at the MI and QA network meetings the AMPC Snap Shots on the outcomes of the research into the effectiveness of small stock decontamination chambers. In addition MINTRAC arranged for Dr. Ford to present on this subject at the annual MINTRAC MI&QA conference.

Completed

Recommendation 5

The new meat inspection qualifications and the models for delivery should be an agenda item at all AMPC MI&QA Network meetings.

MINTRAC has presented on this topic at both the AMPC Training and MI and QA Networks.

Completed

Recommendation 6

That MINTRAC seek to increase meeting participation by QA Managers by 10% in the coming year.

MINTRAC has addressed this recommendation by continuing to call companies who do not RSVP for the Network meetings as a well as a way of addressing the slight decline in network participation. While individual company participation is marginally down (after allowing for company takeovers) the number of network participants is up by 10 (slightly less than 10%) on the previous year, and is the highest recorded.

Completed

7.0 Conclusions/ Recommendations

Two of the following recommendations are brought forward from the current year, as they could not be achieved.

Recommendation 1

The network should actively participate in the roll out of the revised Animal Welfare Standard.

Recommendation 2

The network should include practical workshops on the implementation of electronic export documentation.

The Department of Agriculture is yet to release the Meat Notice that will allow the electronic export documentation to be implemented and utilized. As soon as the Meat Notice is released MINTRAC will work with Des Bowler to deliver a supporting workshop for company personnel as part of the professional development program.

Recommendation 3

The network should continue to include the Northern Territory and Tasmanian combined meetings.

Although the number of attending processors is relatively small, these meetings have enabled participants to experience presentations and networking they could not otherwise access, and they have been extremely appreciative of the opportunity. This has been very good PR for AMPC.

Recommendation 4

The network should monitor the introduction of the new meat safety and Quality Assurance qualifications, including models of delivery, to foster consistency of implementation, and to identify and address implementation issues.

Recommendation 5

It is recommended that AMPC identify a new group of SnapShots for inclusion in the next round of network meetings by the end of July 2016. It is also recommended that AMPC review the Fact Sheets and SnapShots listed on the AMPC website to ensure currency, and include a list of available Fact Sheets/SnapShots in the meeting papers.

Recommendation 6

It is recommended that AMPC continue to publish the booklet containing the full list of current Research and Development projects.

This booklet has been very well received by attendees and provides a useful overview of the level and scope of AMPC investment.