

Free Range Pork Farmers Association Newsletter

March, 2008 "Breaking News"

Answers from the Ministerial Enquiry

In our December newsletter we let you know of a Ministerial Enquiry into the use of the term free range.

Below are the questions presented to the Minister and the answers that he has now provided.

Ms Clover Moore to the Minister for Emergency Services, Minister for Water Utilities representing the Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Energy, Minister for Mineral Resources, and Minister for State Development

With regard to reports that there is no specific standard definition for "free range pork":

1. Does the NSW Government support the establishment of a standard definition for "free range pork"?
2. What consideration has the NSW Government given to introducing a NSW standard definition for free range pork?
3. What investigations has the NSW Government taken into the pork industry's use of the term "free range" on labels to sell pork in NSW?
4. What are the results of investigations?
5. Is the NSW Government aware of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's statement that consumers are not aware of the difference between "free range" and "bred free range"?
6. Is the NSW Government aware of the Free Range Pork Farmers Association's concerns that a standard definition for "free range" should not include pigs that are raised indoors, including in sow stalls and farrowing crates?
7. What consideration has the NSW Government given to banning use of the term "bred free range", which includes pork from pigs raised indoors including in sow stalls and farrowing crates?

Answer

1. NSW Government acknowledges industry's definition of free range pork.
2. Any nationally adopted industry standard definition for free range pork as a method of production will be accepted as the standard terminology in NSW.
3. If evidence was provided to the NSW Food Authority then appropriate action could be considered under the NSW Food Act 2003.
4. See (3) above.
5. Yes.
6. Yes.
7. I am advised that NSW DPI has no knowledge of any NSW business that uses farrowing crates in its production system marketing "free range pork".

Relevant Links

[Pig Out!](#)

In regard to answer No.1, the peak pork body, Australian Pork Limited (APL) have for some time now had a description of free range pork on their website that reads:

Free Range Pork - What is it?

"A descriptor of free range pork is pork derived from animals raised in Australia with adherence to humane animal practices as prescribed by the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals (Pigs). Throughout their lives the pigs are provided continuous free access to the outdoors and shelter from the elements furnished with bedding. This term may only be used when both the growing pigs and the sows from which they have been bred have been kept under these conditions"

Although APL describe free range pork in this manner, they have, in the past, refused to enforce this descriptor and allowed producers to call their product free range even though it is grown in sheds and in one witnessed case, actually still using sow stalls. In a letter dated only February 2008, APL took the view that it is pointless to try to regulate or police the way free range products are labelled. Hopefully now APL will have to honour the free range description that they have worded and actually address the meaning of the term 'bred' free range.

Answer No. 7 indicates that the DPI too are aware of the use of sheds and sow stalls being used by producers marketing their product as free range.

Senate Inquiry into Meat Marketing

Senator Bill Heffernan, Liberal Senator for NSW, announced today the establishment of a Senate inquiry into meat marketing.

The Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport will look at the need for effective supervision of national standards and controls and the national harmonisation of regulations applying to the branding and marketing of meat.

The inquiry will be advertised shortly in major newspapers calling for submissions from interested stakeholders and public hearings will be scheduled. Submissions will close on May 4 and information about the inquiry can be accessed from the following website:

Senator Heffernan raised his concerns in February during Senate Estimates.

"There is a view out there in the industry at the moment, and I am talking about the harmonisation of meat standards across Australia, that there is a racket that has developed with the replacement of lamb with hogget and the better-bodied sheep and branding the meat as lamb and sending it to Sydney..."

Senator Heffernan said the Committee was prepared to receive confidential submissions so that witnesses can speak freely without fear of intimidation or retaliation.

"This has been flagged as a real concern from some stakeholders wishing to make a submission," he said.

[Senate Inquiry](#)

<http://www.freerangeporkfarmers.com.au>

[Unsubscribe from this newsletter](#)