



7 June 2005

## Pork industry wants urgent import bans

The board of Australian Pork Limited (APL) has today decided to seek an immediate ban on all pork imports from countries affected by the exotic disease Post Weaning Systematic Wasting Syndrome [PMWS].

The APL board was responding to a decision handed down by Mr Justice Wilcox in the Federal Court on Friday 27 May which declared import protocols for pig meat invalid.

APL, which is the national body representing Australian pork producers, began legal action in July 2004 against the Director of Quarantine who ordered in May 2004 that conditional entry of pig meat from countries with PMWS should be permitted.

Mr Justice Wilcox found that decision was “unsupported by any fact, scientific evidence or scientific expertise”. He said the decision was “bizarre” and “unreasonable”.

In line with Mr Justice Wilcox’s directions, APL Chairman Nigel Smith said APL had sent draft orders to the Government seeking a review by the Director of Quarantine of all pork import permits and processing licences in line with the findings of the court and an immediate ban on the issuing of any new pork import permits or licences.

“If the Director of Quarantine does not revoke the permits and licences for importation and processing of pig meat from PMWS positive countries then APL will take further court action to ensure such an outcome is achieved.”

Mr Smith said Australia was one of the few countries in the world free of PMWS and urgent and decisive action was required to address the catastrophic danger it represented.

“In Europe, major epidemics of PMWS have occurred since 2000 and are estimated to have killed eight million pigs and cost \$A1.5 billion. We estimate an outbreak of PMWS in Australia would add 15 per cent to the cost of production resulting in a \$55.3million annual loss in productivity and a \$188.9 million fall in gross domestic product. We simply cannot expose the Australian industry to this risk,” Mr Smith said.

He said Mr Justice Wilcox’s findings that in determining appropriate quarantine measures for PMWS Biosecurity Australia’s Import Risk Analysis were not based on “the necessary scientific research” confirmed the industry’s view of the whole IRA process as being fundamentally flawed.

“The industry has been warning the Australian Government and Biosecurity Australia (BA) of the dangers of PMWS and the need for more scientific research since the disease was first diagnosed in 1996.”



Mr Smith said that there had been ample warning to the Federal Government and the industry that imports might be affected by APL's legal challenge.

"The Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee's Inquiry into pork quarantine issues tabled on 13 May 2004 warned of the risks posed by imports because of the lack of science about the cause and transmission of PMWS.

"Because no Government action was taken, APL was forced to challenge the Director of Animal and Plant Quarantine's decision in the Federal Court.

"The possibility of APL's court action being successful has been well known for more than 12 months. APL wrote to the embassies of exporting countries in May 2004 to advise them that legal action would occur and of the consequences if it was successful," he said.

The APL Chairman said Mr Justice Wilcox found there was undisputed evidence that permitting imports would mean there was a 70 per cent chance of PMWS spreading to Australian pig herds within five years. An outbreak within ten years was a "virtual certainty".

"The industry understands a decision to ban imports (except for canned ham) will disrupt trade in pig meat in the short term. However, APL stands ready to work with producers, processors and retailers to minimise that disruption and ramp up local supply in the short and medium term through the application of appropriate supply contracts."

Mr Smith said APL was seeking a swift resolution of the issues so the risk of PMWS entering the country and devastating Australia's pig herd could be dealt with appropriately following Mr Justice Wilcox's decisive judgment.

*ENDS*

**Further Information:** John Lamont, APL Media Manager – 0418 697 595

MR140