



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture,  
Fisheries and Forestry

# The Role of the On Plant Veterinarian (OPV) at Export Meat Establishments in Australia

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2024

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OPV

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# Overview

Legislation requirements for export meat processing establishments

Types of export meat establishments

The Australian Export Meat Inspection System (AEMIS)

Export pork processing in Australia

DAFF Veterinary presence on export meat establishments

Role of the OPV

# Legislation

Exporters of edible meat, offal (including casings) and or meat products of pigs, cattle, sheep or goat are required to hold a meat export licence (**Export Control Act 2020**).

**The Export Control Rules 2021** are legislative instruments that sit under the act and set out the operational requirements that meat export licence holders must meet to export specific goods from Australia (e.g., meat)

The Export Control Rules 2021 ensure any **importing country requirements** are satisfied, and that the export conforms with **The Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production and Transportation of Meat and Meat Products for Human Consumption (AS 4696)**.

Under The Export Control Rules 2021 it is the responsibility of the occupier of a registered export meat establishment to develop, implement and maintain an **approved arrangement (AA)** to meet their food safety and product integrity requirements and to facilitate export market access

There are two types of meat export registrations; Tier 1 and Tier 2

# Tier 1 Export Meat Site Registration

Does not allow for market access to the USA, EU or Canada

Tier 1 establishments export to countries that accept product prepared in accordance with the relevant Australian Standards with oversight by a State or Territory Regulatory Authority (SRA) under a MOU with DAFF

Most Tier 1 export meat establishments export to Australia's neighbouring pacific nations only



# Tier 2 Export Meat Site Registration

Tier 2 registration allows for meat export to markets that require oversight of the export meat establishment by the Australian Government eg USA and EU

DAFF is the Australian Government department responsible for this oversight and requires the permanent presence of a DAFF On-Plant Veterinarian (OPV) who verifies ongoing compliance with the establishment's AA

Tier 2 establishments are also subjected to regular DAFF audits of their AA as well as listing/re-listing audits from countries to which they export meat.

Establishments found to be non-compliant with their AA during DAFF verification activities or audit will be issued NCIs and/or CARs which require them to implement both short term and long term actions to rectify the non-compliance and ensure it does not re-occur

Non-compliance identified by importing countries during listing/re-listing audits may result in that company's licence to export meat to that country being withdrawn

Acceptable DAFF verification and audit of a company's AA provides the government with confidence to issue health certificates which are required for every load of exported meat for human consumption from Australia

# AEMIS

Australian Export Meat Inspection System (AEMIS) is an integrated set of controls specified and verified by DAFF that ensure the safety, suitability and integrity of Australian meat and meat products. Underpinning AEMIS is AS 4696. These standards are incorporated into an export meat establishment's AA and are continually monitored and verified by establishment QAOs and DAFF on plant staff.

AS 4696 requires that a suitably qualified inspector performs ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection of animals presented for slaughter for human consumption

In Tier 2 plants the OPV is responsible for ante-mortem inspection except on some pig plants where qualified and approved Pig Ante-Mortem Inspectors [PAMIs] do the ante-mortem inspection( the OPV supervises and verifies them)

Post-mortem inspection is conducted by either DAFF Food Safety Meat Assessors (FSMA) or by Australian Government Authorised Officers (AAO) under the supervision of the OPV

# Export Pork Processing in Australia

7 export-registered pig processing plants in Australia (1x QLD; 2x NSW; 1x WA; 2x SA; 1x Vic)

Most also process backfatters (cull sows/boars) either at the end of export kill or separately in a domestic plant

Per year, they process 5 million pigs (293K to 1 million across plants)

Processors operate at 330-900 pigs/hr

Average condemn rate is 0.15% (0.06-0.20%)

Main reasons for condemning pigs at ante-mortem are pot belly, welfare, injuries, and risk of contamination

Main reasons for condemning carcasses post-mortem are processing damage, gross contamination, multi-abscesses, enteritis, peritonitis, but interestingly, these vary across plants

# Veterinary presence on Tier 2 export meat establishments

**On-plant veterinarian (OPV)** - A DAFF authorised officer (veterinarian) employed by the government to conduct (or for some pig plants, to verify) ante-mortem inspection, daily supervision of post-mortem inspection and verification of the establishment's AA

**Area technical manager (ATM)** - A DAFF veterinarian who has responsibility for the supervision and technical performance of OPVs. They also assess and verify technical standards and operations in a defined group of export meat establishments through scheduled DAFF audits of the establishments AA

**Field operations manager (FOM)** - A Commonwealth authorised DAFF veterinarian who has responsibility for the verification of the performance and effectiveness of DAFF audits of export meat establishments. They also supply technical advice to senior DAFF management in relation to audit policy matters.

**National Veterinary Technical Manager (NVTM)** – A DAFF veterinarian who leads a team that oversees policy and work instruction review and development to support the DAFF OPVs and FSMAs. The NVTM is also the health certificate signatory for all export meat loads for human consumption



# The role of the On-Plant Veterinarian (OPV)

Conducting and/or supervising ante-mortem inspection

Supervising and verifying post-mortem inspection

Conducting verification of the establishment's compliance with their AA

OPV  
Main  
Daily Tasks

Validating export loads and documentation to confirm to export country authorities that exported goods have met their export requirements

Responsible for verifying animal welfare, be that through adequacy of facilities (ramps, pens, push-up races, cleaning and maintenance), handling practices, feed/water provision, and health of the animals.

Oversight of the establishment's response to animal welfare incidents and their reporting to the state and territory authorities eg non-compliance with Fit for Intended Journey Guidelines

Collecting and submitting samples for residue testing to NRS

Verification of the establishment's emergency animal disease preparedness plan to by assessing it against the requirements of the latest AUSVETPLAN Enterprise Manual on Meat Processing

# MEVS verification schedule planner

Daily																																
Daily Activity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2
Ante-mortem inspection verification - PAMs																																
Post-mortem inspection verification - AAOs																																
Slaughter floor and ofal room ZT / MHA product verification																																
White ofal product check (once/wk)																																
EBR/LO N/S supervision																																

Weekly								
Activity	Week 1		Week 2		Week 3		Week 4	
Pre-operative hygiene verification - S/F; EBR; offal rooms (*gear and contact surface swabs)								
	Date	Initials	Date	Initials	Date	Initials	Date	Initials
Product integrity and certification verification								
	Date	Initials	Date	Initials	Date	Initials	Date	Initials
Vendor declaration verification								
	Date	Initials	Date	Initials	Date	Initials	Date	Initials

Twice Weekly Activity		1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Boning room ZT / MHA product verification		DAYSHIFT	NIGHTSHIFT	DAYSHIFT	NIGHTSHIFT	DAYSHIFT	NIGHTSHIFT	DAYSHIFT	NIGHTSHIFT
		ESAM	Ctn meat	ESAM	Ctn meat	ESAM	Ctn meat	ESAM	Ctn meat
Microbiological testing programme verification									

Monthly Process Verification (CtC)				
WEEK 1	WEEK 2		WEEK 3	WEEK 4
Boning room (Day Shift)	Slaughter floor verification (gondola to evic stand)		Boning room (Night Shift)	Carcass chiller and LO
Date QAO	Date QAO		Date QAO	Date QAO
Surrounds / Amenities / Non-critical areas	Animal handling/welfare (load in to gondola)		Ofal rooms	DIST (chiller/freezer stores)
Date QAO	Date QAO		Date QAO	Date QAO

# OPVs Helping The Pig Industry

Whilst the OPV's day is full, and it is not obligatory, some OPVs may be amenable to assisting farm vets with surveillance or samples disease sampling

Nancy's experience:

- (1) Communicate with farm veterinarians to provide feedback re specific batches of pigs going through, welfare concerns re the submission of batches of pigs on farms they supply veterinary advice to
- (2) Collection of serum for farms on a monthly basis to develop a serum bank for disease testing/surveillance
- (3) Collection of blood/bone/tissue samples to investigate a bone density issue identified during PM inspection
- (4) Collection of AM blood samples for Mg testing (project looking at stress)
- (5) Monitoring of specific suspected/reported disease related to particular farm/s

