ANNUAL REPORT

23

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safe meat

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Dear Stakeholder

I am pleased to present my first SAFEMEAT Annual Activity Report as SAFEMEAT Partners' Chair. This report describes SAFEMEAT's activities and performance for the 2023–24 financial year.

Firstly, I would like to thank the SAFEMEAT Partners and Selection Review Committee for appointing me as the Chair of the SAFEMEAT Partnership in November 2023. I would also like to acknowledge the leadership of Mr Allan Bloxsom as Chair of the SAFEMEAT Partnership until November 2023. I am grateful for his many important contributions to SAFEMEAT over his tenure with the group and I am very pleased to have the opportunity to build on this work.

SAFEMEAT has successfully delivered on several priorities to support the red meat and livestock sector, navigating through the many challenges and disruptions to our business-as-usual activities. While COVID is well and truly behind us now, the pandemic encouraged us to pivot operationally to engage constructively on SAFEMEAT matters and support members operations across their respective industries by hosting meetings virtually as well as face-to-face.

Some key pieces of work undertaken by SAFEMEAT in 2023–2024 include:

- Partners endorsed the HGP Management Plan which will provide a higher level of on-farm and supply chain assurance of HGP-free status using the LPA module. One of the highest market access priorities for Australia's red meat industry is to promote acceptance of our HGP-free production without the need for EUCAS

- SAFEMEAT members participated in the Exercise Integrate training exercise, to ensure SAFEMEAT maintains its capability to respond efficiently and effectively to incidents utilising this capability to effectively address potential risks along the supply chain as they occur

- Undertaking preparatory work for emerging global risk issue such as PFAS

- In anticipation of the mandatory eID implementation scheduled from 1 January 2025, SAFEMEAT endorsed the National Livestock Identification System Sheep and Goat Standards as well as updated the Goat National Vendor Declaration and the new Harvested Rangeland Goat NVD

- Development of the National Livestock Identification System Compliance Dashboard for improved consistency in jurisdictional reporting

- Endorsement of new National Livestock Identification System Animal Identification Technology Approval Program rules and requirements

- Endorsement of the new National Livestock Identification System Alpacas and Llamas Business Rules

As always, SAFEMEAT owes its success to the ongoing commitment and contributions of its members and observers. I would like to thank you all for your considerable efforts and continued support throughout 2023–24.

I would also like to recognise Mr Andrew Henderson's efforts chairing the SAFEMEAT Advisory Group over the past year and thank him for his assistance with my transition to Partners Chair. Andrew completed his tenure in March 2024, and we welcomed Dr Peter Barnard as the new Advisory Group Chair. Peter is well known in the industry and brings a wealth of knowledge to SAFEMEAT. The dedication and capability of Noelle Cornish as the key person in the SAFEMEAT secretariate is also gratefully acknowledged.

SAFEMEAT's work can be challenging at times, and we appreciate members' willingness to contribute their expertise, insights and resources. Members' work on issues such as livestock traceability and residue management underpin Australia's world leading red meat integrity system.

The value of SAFEMEAT as a vehicle for managing food safety and product integrity issues and as a consultative platform for the red meat and livestock sector in Australia cannot be underestimated.

Together, I am confident that we can continue to progress the important work that SAFEMEAT does to support Australia's reputation as a world leading producer of high quality and safe red meat.

Yours sincerely

Mr John Webster
Chair
SAFEMEAT Partnership

SAFEMEAT at a glance

SAFEMEAT is a consultative partnership between industry and government that represents Australia's red meat livestock and processing industries. SAFEMEAT provides a platform for engagement and collaboration on policy that contributes to ensuring Australian meat and livestock products adhere to the highest standards of safety - from the paddock to the plate.

Our role:

SAFEMEAT provides oversight and strategic advice on the red meat and livestock integrity system in place throughout the production supply chain that protects the safety and disease-free status of Australian red meat.

The arrangements for the establishment and operation of the SAFEMEAT Partnership are found under Schedule 4 of the Red Meat MOU. SAFEMEAT's role is to:

a) work with the objective of establishing world best practice in ensuring the safety of red meat and pork products

b) ensure each meat industry sector implements sound management systems to ensure safe and hygienic product is delivered to the marketplace

c) ensure adequate and nationally consistent government standards and regulations relating to meat safety and hygiene

d) ensure that effective crisis management strategies are put in place by the appropriate meat industry sectors and, to this end, ensure that there is a fully integrated and effective communications network

e) monitor industry meat safety performance.

A COLLABORATIVE PLATFORM

SAFEMEAT provides its members with a forum to develop unified policy for the Australian red meat and livestock industry's integrity systems, ensuring that there is a streamlined, integrated and collaborative approach to the delivery of safe Australian meat and livestock products.

PROMOTES BEST PRACTICE

SAFEMEAT is dedicated to promoting Australia's best practice management systems, rationalisation of regulation and standards within the industry, and driving the implementation of sound strategies and incident management principles to ensure the integrity of Australian red meat and livestock products.

The system includes on-farm assurance and through-chain traceability programs and reflects Australia's commitment to biosecurity and food safety.

MONITORS TRENDS AND ISSUES

SAFEMEAT proactively monitors emerging meat safety and integrity issues that may impact on Australian red meat and livestock products and provides strategic input and advice to ensure that risks are mitigated and market related opportunities are maximised.

SAFEMEAT secretariat

The SAFEMEAT Secretariat is currently provided by, and located in, the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

The Secretariat provides support to the Advisory Group Chair and SAFEMEAT Partners Chair and is responsible for ensuring the timely and effective operations of SAFEMEAT through the delivery of Secretariat services.

SAFEMEAT funding

Individual SAFEMEAT members covered their own costs to attend meetings and undertake projects.

The SAFEMEAT Secretariat was funded by Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA), through its wholly owned subsidiary, the Integrity Systems Company (ISC).

SAFEMEAT Partners

SAFEMEAT Partnership (Partners) provides the overarching strategic policy direction and makes the final determinations on the activities SAFEMEAT undertakes in the meat and livestock sector.

SAFEMEAT Partners met on the following dates during 2023–2024:

- 29 June 2023
- 29 November 2023

Independent Chair: John Webster (current), Allan Bloxsom (until November 2023)

Commonwealth Partners

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

States and Territories Partners

- Departments of Primary Industries or Agriculture (one representative)
- States or Territories Meat and Livestock Authorities (one representative)

National Industry Bodies Partners

- Cattle Australia (CA)
- Sheep Producers Australia (SPA)
- Goat Industry Council of Australia (GICA)
- Australian Lot Feeders' Association (ALFA)
- Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC)
- Australian Livestock Exporters' Council (ALEC)
- Australian Pork Limited (APL)
- Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF)

Service Provider Organisations

- Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA)
- Integrity Systems Company (ISC)
- Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC)
- Australian Livestock Export Corporation (LiveCorp)
- Animal Health Australia (AHA)
- AUS-MEAT
- Red Meat Advisory Council (RMAC)

Observer Organisations

- Australian Livestock & Property Agents Association (ALPA)
- Australian Livestock Markets Association (ALMA)
- Dairy Australia
- Wool Producers Australia (WPA)

SAFEMEAT Advisory Group

SAFEMEAT Partners is supported by the SAFEMEAT Advisory Group. The Advisory Group met on the following dates during 2023–2024:

- 1 June 2023
- 12 October 2023
- 5 March 2024
- 30 May 2024

The Advisory Group was established by Partners to form recommendations on the development, implementation and review of policy, standards, rules and strategic direction of the Australian red meat and livestock industry's integrity systems.

Independent Chair: Peter Barnard (current), Andrew Henderson (until March 2024)

Commonwealth Partners

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

States and Territories Partners

One State Food Authority representative

A representative from each State/Territory Government:

- NSW Department of Primary Industries
- QLD Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
- Agriculture Victoria
- Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA
- Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, TAS
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, WA
- Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade, NT

National Industry Bodies

- Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF)
- Australian Livestock Exporters Council (ALEC)
- Australian Lot Feeders' Association (ALFA)
- Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC)
- Australian Pork Limited (APL)
- Australian Renderers' Association (ARA)
- Cattle Australia (CA)
- Goat Industry Council of Australia (GICA)
- Sheep Producers Australia (SPA)

Observers

- Animal Health Australia (AHA)
- Australian Livestock Markets Association (ALMA)
- Australian Livestock and Property Agents Association (ALPA)
- Australian Livestock and Rural Transporters Association (ALRTA)
- Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC)
- Australian Pesticide and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA)
- Dairy Australia (DA)
- Integrity Systems Company (ISC)
- Australian Wild Game Industry Council (AWGIC)
- Australian Livestock Export Corporation (LiveCorp)
- Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA)
- National Residue Survey (NRS)
- Stock Feed Manufacturers Council of Australia (SFMCA)
- Wool Producers Australia (WPA)
- AUS-MEAT
- Red Meat Advisory Council (RMAC)

SAFEMEAT Working Groups

Over the past year SAFEMEAT has continued to draw expertise and guidance from its traceability and issue-specific sub-committees.

The Jurisdictional Traceability Group

The Jurisdictional Traceability Group (JTG) supports the SAFEMEAT Advisory Group and provides a consultative platform for government stakeholders to give advice on government policy and regulatory matters, and for promoting nationally consistent legislation, standards, and interpretation of integrity system rules.

Chair: Andrew Henderson (July 2023–March 2024) / Peter Barnard (March 2024–June 2024)

Membership

- Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Department of Agriculture and Fisheries - QLD
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action - VIC
- Department of Natural Resources and Environment - TAS
- Department of Primary Industries and Regions - SA
- Department of Primary Industries - NSW
- Dept of Industry Tourism and Trade - NT
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development - WA
- Integrity Systems Company (ISC)

Hormonal Growth Promotant (HGP) Working Group

The Hormonal Growth Promotant (HGP) Working Group was formed to address the risk of HGP detection in exported products causing market access disruption.

Chair: Andrew Henderson (July 2023–March 2024) / Peter Barnard (March 2024–June 2024)

Membership

- Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Department of Agriculture and Fisheries - QLD
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action - VIC
- Department of Natural Resources and Environment - TAS
- Department of Primary Industries and Regions - SA
- Department of Primary Industries - NSW
- Dept of Industry Tourism and Trade - NT
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development - WA
- Integrity Systems Company (ISC)

Per- and policy-flouroalkyl substances (PFAS) Working Group

The PFAS group was formed to monitor residue levels to assess the nature, extent and risk of PFAS contamination. To date, no maximum residue limits have been set for PFAS in Australia.

Chair: Andrew Henderson (July 2023–March 2024) / Peter Barnard (March 2024–June 2024)

Membership

- Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Department of Agriculture and Fisheries - QLD
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action - VIC
- Department of Natural Resources and Environment - TAS
- Department of Primary Industries and Regions - SA
- Department of Primary Industries - NSW
- Dept of Industry Tourism and Trade - NT
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development - WA
- Integrity Systems Company (ISC)
- Australian Lot Feeders' Association (ALFA)
- Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC)
- Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC)
- Sheep Producers Australia (SPA)
- Cattle Australia (CA)

Incident Response Working Group

The Incident Response working group was formed to oversee the consideration and implementation of the recommendations of the Exercise Integrate Report, and to conduct an annual high-level review of the Incident Response Manual (IRM) to ensure it is in line with contemporary national arrangements in advance of each IRM training exercise.

Chair: Peter Barnard

Membership

Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

- Australian Livestock Exporters' Council Ltd (ALEC)
- Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC)
- Cattle Australia (CA)
- Department of Primary Industries - NSW
- Integrity Systems Company (ISC)

Risk Review Working Group

The Risk Review working group was formed to consider and assess the emerging and current risks for SAFEMEAT that relate to products and animals as well as issues within SAFEMEAT's scope including systems, processes and more.

Chair: Peter Barnard

Membership

- Animal Health Australia (AHA)
- Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC)
- Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC)
- Cattle Australia (CA)
- Department of Primary Industries - NSW
- Integrity Systems Company (ISC)

National Vendor Declaration (NVD) Working Group

The NVD working group was formed to develop a Terms of Reference and scope for an Independent Review of the National Vendor Declaration.

Chair: Peter Barnard

Membership

- Animal Health Australia (AHA)
- AUS-MEAT
- Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Australian Livestock & Rural Transporters Association (ALTRA)
- Australian Livestock Exporters' Council Ltd (ALEC)
- Australian Lot Feeders' Association (ALFA)
- Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC)
- Australian Renderers Association (ARA)
- Cattle Australia (CA)
- Department of Agriculture and Fisheries - QLD
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action - VIC
- Department of Primary Industries - NSW
- Department of Primary Industries and Regions - SA
- Integrity Systems Company (ISC)
- Sheep Producers Australia (SPA)
- Wool Producers Australia (WPA)

Vaccinates Permanent Physical ID Working Group

The aim of the Working Group is to establish an agreed industry position on the development of physical identification mechanisms and PIC and device-based statuses, including associated business rules for the NLIS database, for the use of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and or Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD) vaccines. This is a preemptive measure that forms part of the red meat and livestock sectors preparedness strategy to mitigate the impact of a FMD and/or LSD incursion.

Chair: Andrew Henderson (July 2023–March 2024) / Peter Barnard (March 2024–June 2024)

Membership

- Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Department of Agriculture and Fisheries - QLD
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action - VIC
- Department of Natural Resources and Environment - TAS
- Department of Primary Industries and Regions - SA
- Department of Primary Industries - NSW
- Dept of Industry Tourism and Trade - NT
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development - WA
- Integrity Systems Company (ISC)
- Animal Health Australia (AHA)
- Australian Dairy Farmers Ltd (ADF)
- Australian Pork Limited (APL)
- Cattle Australia (CA)

Cotton Trash Working Group

The Cotton Trash Working Group (CTWG) provides input on the cotton trash protocol from SAFEMEAT's stakeholders and manages the potential residue issues that could arise from the feeding of cotton trash to livestock.

The Cotton Trash Working Group did not meet in 2023–2024.

Chair: Bob Barwell

Membership

- AUS-MEAT
- Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Australian Lot Feeders' Association
- Australian Meat Industry Council
- Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority
- Cattle Australia (CA)
- Cotton Australia
- Integrity Systems Company
- Namoi Cotton
- Sheep Producers Australia

SAFEMEAT's key activities in 2023–24

SAFEMEAT has been a valuable platform for engagement and collaboration between industries and government to date and will continue to be a vital avenue for industry to be consulted and have an ongoing role in ensuring the outcomes of the traceability reform process set the foundation for an effective future traceability system in the long-term.

SAFEMEAT's strategic priorities encompass nine key programs:

1. Standards and Regulations
2. Emergency Management
3. Animal Diseases (as they relate to food safety)
4. Residues
5. Pathogens
6. Systems Development and Management
7. Communications and Education
8. Emerging Issues
9. SAFEMEAT Initiatives Review

Key program	Purpose
Standards and Regulations	To contribute to the implementation of nationally consistent standards and regulations relating to meat safety and hygiene.
Emergency Management	To ensure effective crisis management strategies are in place and activated when required.
Animal Diseases *(as they relate to food safety)*	To ensure the red meat and pork sectors deal effectively with food safety issues arising from disease outbreaks in cattle, sheep and pigs.
Residues	To ensure the delivery safe and hygienic red meat with nationally consistent standards and regulations on residues.
Pathogens	To ensure the delivery of red meat that meets consumer expectations and regulatory requirements on pathogens.
Systems Development and Management	To facilitate the development and establishment of key management systems to underpin meat safety and hygiene programs.
Communication and Education	To facilitate communication of meat safety and hygiene issues to the red meat industries, and stakeholders.
Emerging Issues	To monitor and implement strategic initiatives on emerging issues, such as biotechnology, antimicrobial resistance, emerging diseases and bioterrorism.
SAFEMEAT Initiatives Review recommendations	The recommendations aim to deliver more robust industry assurance programs that incentivise participation, promote greater efficiency, and encourage continual improvement.

The key activities undertaken by SAFEMEAT in 2023–2024 against the nine programs are outlined below:

Exercise Integrate – Incident Response training

SAFEMEAT has been reviewing and testing incident response processes and collaboration arrangements. The Incident Response Manual (IRM) was endorsed by SAFEMEAT Partners in December 2022 and clarifies the role of SAFEMEAT in an incident or outbreak. Subsequently, a functional training exercise was held on 14 March 2023 that explored the transition from a Level 2 incident led by the SAFEMEAT Incident Response Team (IRT) to a Level 3 incident led by the DAFF Incident Management Team. The Exercise Integrate report was received in late 2023. Review of the recommendations is ongoing.

Goat NVD and Harvested Rangeland Goat NVD

In anticipation of mandatory Sheep and Goat eID implementation from 1 January 2025, work continues toward harmonised tagging requirements for all managed farmed sheep and goats using individual electronic identification. This work includes updating the NLIS Sheep and Goat Standards, with specific details for HRG Accreditation Manual/SOP and Registered Goat Depot Manual/SOP; as well as updating the Goat National Vendor Declaration (NVD) and creating a new Harvested Rangeland Goat NVD. The updated NVDs form only part of the HRG framework within the LPA program.

Harvested Rangeland Goat Accreditation Framework

This framework, aligned with the red meat integrity system, has been developed to enable the movement of harvested rangeland goats direct to slaughter or via one registered goat depot without an NLIS eID device, as part of the implementation of mandatory eID in sheep and goats. The framework was endorsed by SAFEMEAT Partners and included requirements for 1) the development of a Harvested Rangeland Goat Module as part of the of Livestock Production Assurance program and the required system/process changes; 2) the development of a new NVD for harvested rangeland goats and an updated NVD for goats and 3) and that the NLIS Standards include updated Registered Goat Depot Manual/SOPs and proposed Harvested Rangeland Goat Accreditation Manual/SOPs.

HGP Management Plan

The Hormone Growth Promotant (HGP) Working Group has been progressing work on a range of strategies to bolster the current HGP management system which will support market access for beef exported to the United Kingdom.

NLIS Animal Identification Technology (AIT) Standards Committee

The NLIS Device Standards and Device Accreditation process has been reviewed in line with modern practice and the emergence of new technologies and implementation of arrangements to support the transition to the new Standards and Rules, including the establishment of the new governance and advisory arrangements in line with the NLIS Animal Identification Technology Approval Program objectives.

NLIS Alpacas and Llamas Business Rules

SAFEMEAT Partners endorsed the NLIS Alpaca and Llama (A&L) Business Rules (v13) as the first official document to specify roles and responsibilities for industry stakeholders that will help ensure the traceability of alpacas and llamas and will facilitate swift responses by industry and governments in the event of emergency animal disease outbreaks, market access and food safety incidents.

NLIS Compliance Dashboard

The development of the Compliance Dashboard Reports was a key outcome of the National Biosecurity Committee traceability reform work SAFEMEAT has undertaken and aims to promote nationally consistent data collection and presentation with regards to jurisdictional reporting requirements. This standard set of performance indicators will assist to rapidly assess operating levels and detect issues and concerns, and target and lift performance across the different areas of the system, supporting industry engagement through increased extension activities. The first area of focus on the Compliance Dashboard has been on Property-Property movement system transfer data to assist in monitoring system performance.

NLIS Database Statuses for Management of C. bovis

SAFEMEAT Partners endorsed the new NLIS database statuses for management of C.bovis, which will allow risk assessment and validation controls for producers who use recycled water or where the cattle become accidentally exposed to recycled water, where the source water is likely to contain human faeces. Three new statuses in the NLIS database will identify high risk properties and animals, ensuring full inspection can be applied by meat inspectors as appropriate.

NLIS Sheep and Goat Standards

The NLIS Sheep and Goat Standards ensure the traceability of sheep and goats for disease control and food safety purposes nationally. The Standards reflect a minimum standard for states and territories to build upon if required, but ultimately, they should reflect the supply chain requirements the sector needs to meet mandatory electronic identification (eID). The Standards were endorsed by SAFEMEAT Partners in June 2024.

NLIS Statuses for Vaccinates

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and lumpy skin disease (LSD) are not present in Australia, however various industry and government preparedness initiatives have been activated to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to prevent entry of both diseases. Activities include consideration of the arrangements detailed in the AUSVETPLAN regarding how vaccines could be used, and under what circumstances in the event of an incursion. Two new NLIS statuses for FMD and LSD vaccines, including appropriate physical identification markers for vaccinated animals in line with AUSVETPLAN arrangements have been considered.

National Vendor Declaration (NVD) Review

NVDs were developed over 20 years ago to support export trade. Over time and due to the increased emphasis on assurance programs and systems, the NVD (including eNVD) has expanded. A Terms of Reference and scope for independent review of the NVD is now being developed for consideration to ensure that the NVD is fit for current and future use.

PFAS

Australia's environmental focus is to produce livestock with minimal possible levels of PFAS contamination, setting stringent limits rather than targets. The Australian Government is currently sponsoring research to examine the occurrence of PFOS in human biosolids utilised in agriculture, with a particular emphasis on developing management strategies such as rotating feed or grazing fields, which can be implemented without imposing excessive financial burdens on farmers. To the extent that it pertains to SAFEMEAT, methods of managing communications for those producers who have used biosolids on their property as well as properties determined to have point source contamination are being developed.

Current and Emerging SAFEMEAT Risk Review

The purpose and scope of SAFEMEAT is to ensure the integrity and safety of food products from meat producing livestock to protect Australia's market access and fulfil its role under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). SAFEMEAT is currently considering and assessing the emerging and current risks for that relate to products and animals as well as issues within SAFEMEAT's scope including systems, processes and more to create a Risk Register.

SAFEMEAT plays a key role supporting the collective efforts of both industry and government to maintain Australia's word-leading red meat and livestock integrity systems.

The environment we operate within is becoming increasingly complex. Trade volatility, technical barriers to trade, biosecurity risk and the growing focus on food safety will continue to drive the work of SAFEMEAT. As we move into 2025 and beyond, it is imperative that SAFEMEAT remains contemporary in its structure and approach to ensure it can adapt and respond to these emerging challenges.

Over the coming year, the SAFEMEAT Partnership, its working groups and sub-committees will convene to consider a range of matters to underpin the ongoing sustainability and prosperity of the Australian red meat and livestock sector. We anticipate progressing several priorities including:

- examining SAFEMEAT's role oversighting traceability system performance and implementing enhanced compliance monitoring tools
- reviewing residues based on trade risk and implementing enhanced risk mitigation measures
- ensuring that jurisdictions and industry are prepared for the mandatory sheep and goat eID implementation from 1 January 2025

- providing advice to producers facing point source PFAS contamination
- implementing enhanced HGP management measures for market access.

We will continue to work diligently and collaboratively, taking a proactive whole-of-chain approach to the challenges that we face for the benefit of every stakeholder in the Australian red meat and livestock supply chain.