



Media Release

New Zealand Pork

13 April 2011

Pigs under threat from imported disease
MAF decision flies in face of new welfare code

New Zealand Pork is deeply concerned about new MAF standards issued today (13 April 2011) that relax biosecurity around imported pork. It says that not only could the lower standards undo the historic welfare code embraced by the industry in December, but also weaken New Zealand's biosecurity for the whole agricultural sector.

The proposed relaxing of biosecurity standards could allow the exotic disease Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS) to enter New Zealand and infect local pigs – impacting the pig welfare transformation already underway throughout the country.

Pork imported to New Zealand from countries with PRRS must currently undergo treatment to deactivate the disease. Under the new proposals this requirement would be eliminated. This opens the door for transmission of the disease.

New Zealand Pork CEO Sam McIvor says: "New Zealand pork producers have committed to world-leading animal welfare standards and are extremely concerned about the risks from the proposed relaxing of biosecurity standards around imported pork.

"It just doesn't make sense to introduce pig welfare standards on one hand while putting them at risk of this imported, highly-distressing disease on the other.

"Like many others in the economy our pork producers are doing it tough at present," says McIvor. "The changes farmers are making do come at a cost. The last thing they need is to be undermined by the potential for new and exotic diseases introduced as a result of short-sighted legislation.

Mclvor says the new MAF biosecurity standards would put New Zealand's overall biosecurity in jeopardy.

"There is real concern within the primary production sector about the precedent this sets for an increase in risk to New Zealand's biosecurity generally. The value of New Zealand's exports in world markets is due in large part to our world-class healthy production base. This message has been reinforced by industry in its submissions on the Biosecurity Law Reform Bill currently before Parliament.

"New Zealanders are concerned about animal welfare – why put this at risk?"

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For further information contact: Strahan Wallis 09 632 0523 or strahan@porternovelli.co.nz