Australia Should Provide Full Market Access for U.S. Pork

**SITUATION**

Australia limits the import of U.S. pork to heat-processed pork and frozen boneless pork for further processing because of what it claims is a threat of transmission of PRRS to the Australian swine herd, restrictions inconsistent with international standards.

- The World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) does not recognize trade in pork as posing a threat of transmitting PRRS. The OIE’s PRRS chapter states that “meat products” are a safe commodity and that “Veterinary Authorities should not require any PRRS-related conditions, regardless of the PRRS status of the exporting country, zone, or compartment.”
- The risk of introduction of PRRS into the Australian swine herd from the importation of U.S. pork is negligible. There never has been a case of PRRS being transmitted through the shipment of fresh, chilled or frozen pork from a PRRS-positive nation to a nation free of PRRS.
  - The import of approximately 60,000 tons of fresh/chilled/frozen pork from PRRS countries into New Zealand over a 12-year period failed to produce a single outbreak. The absence of a PRRS outbreak occurred over a period of time when there were either no or weak enforcement of phytosanitary restrictions.
  - The import of more than 500,000 tons of fresh/chilled/frozen pork over a five-year period from PRRS-positive countries failed to produce a single outbreak in Sweden, Norway, Finland or Switzerland. This was during a period of time when swill (garbage/waste) feeding was legal.
  - Beginning in 1997, several European studies have concluded that the risk of transmitting PRRS through meat is practically non-existent and does not warrant restrictions on the importation of pork from PRRS-positive countries.
    - Compared with other transboundary viruses, PRRS is unstable in the environment. Low pH and normal environmental temperatures rapidly inactivate the virus. Environmental conditions present in garbage or swill are even less conducive to PRRS stability.
    - The risk of infection via airborne transmission is negligible. Most studies conclude that the maximum distance that PRRS can travel is about 2 meters. Under more extra-ordinary conditions, a pig barn infected with a highly pathogenic isolate was able to infect pigs 120 meters away. Studies documenting the spread of virus during an outbreak fail to find evidence of aerial spread.
    - PRRS is not sustained in feral swine populations. In the United States, seven studies showed a seroprevalence of PRRS between 0 and 6 percent in feral swine. In one 2006 study from North Carolina, a single feral pig out of 120 was positive for PRRS antibody. In the same group of studies, the prevalence of another common virus, PCV2, was relatively high, ranging between 42 and 72 percent. PRRS in feral pigs is sustained through continuous exposure with infected domestic swine. Once PRRS is eliminated from domestic swine, the virus disappears from feral populations.

**NPPC POSITION**

Australia has restrictions on U.S. pork, prohibiting chilled or frozen U.S. pork from being sold at retail. There is no science-based justification and no legal justification for this unfair trade barrier, which should be eliminated.

**FAST FACTS**

- Pork is the largest U.S. agricultural export to Australia
- Sales have surged from 3,400 metrics tons in 2004, the year before the U.S. - Australia FTA went into effect, to 70,984 metric tons valued at $208 million in 2017
- Iowa State Economist Dermot Hayes says U.S. pork exports to Australia would increase significantly if Australia eliminated unjustified restrictions