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11 August 2000

**ANIMAL QUARANTINE POLICY MEMORANDUM 2000/36**

**IMPORTATION OF FERRETS: DRAFT REPORT OF THE IMPORT RISK ANALYSIS**

This Animal Quarantine Policy Memorandum (AQPM) provides the draft import risk analysis (IRA) report for the importation of ferrets for consideration and public comment. Responses by 13 October would be appreciated.

In November 1998 a notification (AQPM 1998/81) advised of the commencement of an IRA into the importation of ferrets, and in February 1999 a further notification (AQPM1999/12) confirmed that a routine approach had been adopted.

Progress on this issue was temporarily stalled as more pressing issues were dealt with including the development of the import conditions for disability assistance dogs for the Olympic Games, and the import conditions for defence services dogs returning from East Timor.

The draft IRA report is based on reviews of published literature and consultation with veterinarians with experience in ferret practice or diseases in Australia, the USA and New Zealand.

The proposed conditions include risk management measures to reduce to a minimal level, the risks of introducing disease agents not present in Australia. Whilst the popularity of ferrets as pets is on the increase, reliable objective information about their diseases was limited.

Rabies is considered the most serious disease from a socio-economic point of view. Experimental work on rabies in ferrets showed varying clinical responses related to the strain of virus used. Dog-mediated rabies was not used in the experimental work reviewed for this IRA. Consequently it is proposed that the importation of ferrets from countries where dog-mediated rabies is endemic should not be permitted. Importation of ferrets is proposed from countries free from rabies and countries in which dog-mediated rabies is absent or well controlled.

Two diseases specific to ferrets and mink presented particular problems. These were epizootic catarrhal enteritis (ECE) and Aleutian disease (AD). Lack of effective vaccines and treatments, coupled with long periods of infectivity made it apparent that long periods of quarantine and/or disease freedom on the property of origin would be the only effective quarantine measures. The

possible alternative of applying no quarantine measures to prevent the entry of these agents has been raised under the respective sections on risk management.

Your comments are invited.

AQIS will take account of stakeholder comments in finalising the IRA and submitting recommendations to the Executive Director of AQIS for consideration and approval.

Your response by 13 October 2000 would be appreciated.

We would be grateful if you would pass details of this notice to other interested parties, who should advise AQIS if they wish to be included in future communications on this matter. Inquiries should be directed to the officer whose contact details appear below.

### **Confidentiality**

Respondents are advised that, subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* and the *Privacy Act 1982*, all submissions received in response to Animal Quarantine Policy Memoranda will be publicly available and may be listed or referred to in any papers or reports prepared on the subject matter of the Memoranda.

The Commonwealth reserves the right to reveal the identity of a respondent unless a request for anonymity accompanies the submission. Where a request for anonymity does not accompany the submission the respondent will be taken to have consented to the disclosure of his or her identity for the purposes of Information Privacy Principle 11 of the Privacy Act.

The contents of the submission will not be treated as confidential unless they are marked 'confidential' and they are capable of being classified as such in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

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