**Budgerigar Council of Victoria**

**Response to Importation Risk Review**

Thanks for the opportunity to give our feedback which is to be reviewed.

There are many committee and normal members of the Budgerigar Council of Victoria who were involved in importing budgerigars back in 1990. Much has changed over this period including increasing expectations for our birds and animals’ welfare. The history of our experience’s tells us that we should have great concerns for the longevity of any imported birds.

Some of our members are likely to jump at the chance to import while others will have no interest at all. The Budgerigar Council of Victoria feel that we need to question the processes to ensure our members can make well informed decisions on what could be a significant expense and as such we request some clarity on the matters below.

**Pre - export items:**

We would like to confirm that it is possible to reduce the volume of intrusive pre-export oral and cloacal swabs by ensuring that these are only taken once and that these samples are used for the screening of all of the potential aliments thereby reducing the repetitive stresses on the birds. Stress after all is a significant contributor the mental wellbeing of the birds.

Taking serum samples from a statically valid sample size while appropriate is of high risk to these very small birds. We would like to understand the sample size for a shipment of 500 birds and are the birds sampled to be recorded for the owner to better be informed?

If serum samples remain essential, then the selection and approval of the Avian vet must be carefully considered. As far as budgerigars go we can put forward local highly recommended and skills appropriate vets at both the export and import stages.

Has there been any consideration of screening for *macrorhabdus ornithogaster* to prevent our breeders from bringing into their shed sick birds that are not likely to ever breed?

**Post – entry Items**:

We would like to confirm that it is possible to reduce the volume of intrusive post-export oral and cloacal swabs by ensuring that these are only taken once and that these samples are used for the screening of all of the potential aliments thereby reducing the repetitive stresses on the birds. Stress after all is a significant contributor the mental wellbeing of the birds.

For some larger shipments of say 500 budgerigars the turnaround time for “Parrot Bornavirus” and “Psittacid Alphaherpesvirus 1” testing will be very difficult to achieve. In the case of Psittacid Alphaherpesvirus 1 there is no facility in Australia that will be able to upscale their production to enable the achievement of disagnostic results in a timely manner. Currently Sydney University is the only laboratory that can run this test and it is dubious if the sample of 500 can be executed in the allotted 15 days quarantine period in Australia. Are you going to extend the 15-day quarantine period by pushing out timelines to 20 or 25 days to enable testing for the larger shipment? We feel it would be more appropriate to communicate these timeframes upfront to any participants.

**In general:**

We are concerned that taking serum samples from budgerigars is a significantly high risk to the birds. Is the testing for *West Nile Virus* appropriate as we understand that the only budgerigars to have been identified with this virus were experimentally infected with the virus? Has there ever been a natural occurrence of this virus in Exhibition Budgerigars?

Will it be up to the individual managing the importation to negotiate with a testing authority eg Sydney University - for pricing options or is the department providing a price per unit?

In this age of traceability and lifecycle reporting of use of animal treatments we would expect that importation groups would be provided with a complete list of treatments and dosage rates given to every bird. Is this your expectation as well?

**In conclusion**

We understand you have a very difficult task and you will not be able to please everybody particularly because each importation species will have such varied needs.   
  
We hope these questions help you to challenge and improve the process for everyone.

Best Regards,

Col Flanagan

President

Budgerigar Council of Victoria