



# final report

Project Code: A.PAW.0008  
Prepared by: Clive Richardson  
Date published: MINTRAC  
March 2013

PUBLISHED BY  
Meat and Livestock Australia Limited  
Locked Bag 991  
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059

## Delivering livestock handling training to meat processors

Meat & Livestock Australia acknowledges the matching funds provided by the Australian Government and contributions from the Australian Meat Processor Corporation to support the research and development detailed in this publication.

This publication is published by Meat & Livestock Australia Limited ABN 39 081 678 364 (MLA). Care is taken to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this publication. However MLA cannot accept responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of the information or opinions contained in the publication. You should make your own enquiries before making decisions concerning your interests. Reproduction in whole or in part of this publication is prohibited without prior written consent of MLA.

## Abstract

The meat processing industry has faced some specific issues when approaching the delivery of stock handling training and these included a lack of:

- trainers formally trained and assessed in what is generically described as 'low stress' stock handling and now considered industry best practice
- training materials specifically customised to the meat processing sector
- training options that offered cost effective delivery strategies to service isolated students in what is a very 'thin' market
- management support, in some cases, to address staff competency in this area.

This project has addressed these issues through:

- the development of training and assessment materials, customised for the processing sector
- the piloting and validation of this material in the delivery of the Unit to stock handlers from beef and sheep processing plants
- training of trainers from RTOs, creating industry capacity for ongoing delivery and assessment
- the creation of the e-learning materials which will enable the delivery of this training to stock handlers in either remote locations or where numbers do not justify the delivery of face to face programs.

## Executive summary

Increasingly customers, regulators and importing countries are looking to Australian meat processors to demonstrate that stock handling at their establishments is undertaken by trained and competent operators. In some instances, as with the European Union, this evidence has to take the form of a Statement of Attainment issued against an accredited Unit. In addition a recent DAFF funded project established that there is a general desire on the part of the major stakeholders in the red meat industry to see consistent stock handler training delivered throughout the supply chain.

This DAFF project established that the accredited Unit of competency AHCLSK205A *Handle livestock using basic techniques* would best meet the requirements of all the sectors in the red meat supply chain. This Unit has now been incorporated into the MTM11 *Australian Meat Industry Training Package* and the purpose of this project has been to develop and pilot training materials that will enable the Unit to be delivered throughout the country in a cost effective manner.

The project had as its principle objectives:

- the development of customised training and assessment materials for the Unit
- the piloting of these materials with engaged RTOs and enterprises
- the development of e-learning and DVD support materials to support the delivery of the Unit

The industry has faced some specific issues when approaching the delivery of stock handling training and these included a lack of:

- trainers formally trained and assessed in what is generically described as 'low stress' stock handling and now considered industry best practice
- training materials for AHCLSK205A *Handle livestock using basic techniques* specifically customised to the meat processing sector
- training options that offered cost effective delivery strategies to service isolated students in what is a very 'thin' market
- management support, in some cases, to address staff competency in this area.

This project has sought to address these issues in a systematic way. In the first instance the project has enabled the industry to develop hard copy training and assessment materials for the Unit which are customised for the processing sector. These materials can be used to support the face to face delivery of this Unit to groups and individuals. The materials will be distributed in Word format and thus allow for companies and RTOs to further customise the materials with additional materials such as company work instructions and site specific photos or diagrams.

The project has allowed for the piloting of this material in the delivery of the Unit to stock handlers from beef and sheep processing plants. This piloting has enabled the materials to be validated and the industry to start developing a core of champions for 'low stress' handling techniques.

In addition the project has enabled trainers from RTOs and industry to be trained in the Unit and thus create a capacity for the industry to have the Unit delivered as part of:

- the normal traineeship
- on-site training programs
- industry professional development programs.

The creation of the e-learning materials will also allow the delivery of this training to stock handlers in either remote locations or where numbers do not justify the delivery of face to face programs.

The delivery of this Unit to employees, regardless of the delivery strategy, provides processors with a straight forward way of:

- inducting stock handlers
- improving stock handling standards and
- meeting the requirements of their own Approved Arrangement to have only competent stock handlers working with livestock.

Likewise it provides clear evidence to customers, regulators and importing countries that a processor is addressing the training needs of livestock handlers.

The livestock handling aspect of a slaughtering operation represents an ongoing challenge to the industry to demonstrate to both government and the community that it takes animal welfare seriously. Embracing the principles of 'low stress' handling and staff competency are made more difficult by significant levels of staff turnover and the decreasing availability of state funding for operator training.

The development of these training materials helps provide industry with a cost effective way of:

- delivering training
- spreading the concepts of 'low stress' livestock handling
- formally assessing stock handler competency.

Registered Training Organisations will now have the ability to meet industry requirements for training in this area by the provision of:

- professional development sessions for their staff
- hard copy training materials
- assessment tools
- e-learning materials for distance education programs
- access to government funding in some states.

The industry now also has the mechanism for delivering uniform and consistent training across the country in this Unit. The Unit is also being utilised by RTOs delivering training to producers, saleyard staff, feedlot stock handlers and stock transporters.

In addition to the benefits that derive directly to the processing sector the materials both in hard copy and e-learning format can be relatively easily rewritten and customised to livestock handling at feedlots, saleyards or on grazing properties. This will be of significant advantage to vertically integrated companies or to companies seeking to implement quality assurance programs through the supply chain.

# Contents

	Page
<b>1</b>	<b>Background ..... 9</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Project objectives ..... 10</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Methodology ..... 11</b>
3.1	Scoping the project .....11
3.2	Develop customised training and assessment materials that provide consistent livestock handling training in the processor sector .....11
3.3	Develop customised training and assessment materials with the view of ensuring the package applies generally to the supply chain .....12
3.4	Develop e-learning and DVD support materials .....12
3.5	Pilot the materials in the various sectors with engaged RTOs and enterprises .....13
3.6	Promote the uptake of the training with employers and RTOs through industry organisations, networks and industry conferences .....13
3.7	Seek State funding for the training of livestock handlers. ....14
3.8	Consider discussions with AMPC and other stakeholders in the supply chain to extend the training to the feedlot sector and possibly the transport and farm sectors.....14
<b>4</b>	<b>Results and discussion..... 15</b>
4.1	Scoping the project .....15
4.2	Develop customised training and assessment materials that provide consistent livestock handling training in the processor sector. ....16
4.3	Develop customised training and assessment materials with the view of ensuring the package applies generally to the supply chain .....18
4.4	Develop e-learning and DVD support materials .....18
4.5	Pilot the materials in the various sectors with engaged RTOs and enterprises .....19

4.6	Promote the uptake of the training with employers and RTOs through industry organisations, networks and industry conferences .....	20
4.7	Seek State funding for the training of livestock handlers. ....	20
4.8	Consider discussions with AMPC and other stakeholders in the supply chain to extend the training to the feedlot sector and possibly the transport and farm sectors.....	20
<b>5</b>	<b>Success in achieving objectives .....</b>	<b>21</b>
5.1	Objective 1: Develop customised training and assessment materials that provide consistent livestock handling training in the processor sector, with the view of ensuring the package applies generally to the supply chain .....	21
5.2	Objective 2: Develop e-learning and DVD support materials.....	21
5.3	Pilot the materials in the various sectors with engaged RTOs and enterprises .....	22
5.4	Promote the uptake of the training with employers and RTOs through industry organisations, networks and industry conferences .....	22
5.5	Seek State funding for the training of livestock handlers. ....	23
5.6	Consider discussions with AMPC and other stakeholders in the supply chain to extend the training to the feedlot sector and possibly the transport and farm sectors.....	23
<b>6</b>	<b>Impact on meat and livestock industry – Now and in five years time .....</b>	<b>23</b>
6.1	Current impact .....	23
6.2	Impact five years from now given the continued implementation of accredited livestock handling training .....	24
<b>7</b>	<b>Conclusions and recommendations .....</b>	<b>24</b>
7.1	Conclusions .....	24
7.1.1	Drivers for accredited training .....	24
7.1.2	RTO capability to deliver the training .....	25
7.1.3	RTO capability to deliver e-learning training programs.....	25
7.1.4	Industry awareness of low stress handling techniques .....	25

7.1.5	<b>Government funding</b> .....	25
<b>7.2</b>	<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>26</b>
7.2.1	<b>Industry awareness activities</b> .....	26
7.2.2	<b>RTO and industry trainer professional development</b> .....	26
7.2.3	<b>Industry uptake of accredited training</b> .....	26
7.2.4	<b>Cross sectoral livestock handler training</b> .....	26



# 1 Background

This project sought to develop and implement cross sectoral livestock handling training for red meat processors, with the view of establishing a baseline package that could further be extended to other sectors, including feedlot, transport and production.

Previous research has indicated that there are a wide range of training programs available across the red meat supply chain. However, that there has been little effort to coordinate the training mainly due to the silo approach to the development and delivery of training courses to the various sectors.

As a result of a DAFF financed project there was general agreement by the major stakeholders in the red meat industry that the Unit AHCLSK205A *Handle livestock using basic techniques* would be the best suited to develop a livestock handling training program for the whole supply chain.

In order to facilitate the uptake of this Unit in the processing sector and for the industry to adopt the concept of standardised livestock handling training across the supply chain it was necessary to:

- develop training materials and delivery strategies customised for the processing sector
- engage with industry to embrace stock handling training and the concept of 'low stress' handling
- engage with the relevant RTOs to take ownership of the courses and materials
- deliver professional development sessions for trainers and supervisors in the processing industry.

MINTRAC is conscious of the increasing pressure on the processing industry to have a demonstrated commitment to animal welfare and ensuring the competency of those who handle and slaughter livestock. This pressure is coming from a variety of directions including regulators, corporate customers, consumers and the community at large.

Real and sustainable change in the way livestock are handled in the processing sector will necessitate:

- the average industry trainer and assessor to have greater stock handling competency
- a change in culture in some plants to fully embrace the concepts of 'low stress' handling
- the routine formal assessment of stock handler competency.

In Australia there is a requirement under the *National Animal Welfare Standards for livestock processing establishments* that all livestock handlers and slaughterers must be trained and assessed as competent before being left to work unsupervised. This makes it a compulsory requirement for all export works.

Indeed the EU has regulations now requiring that livestock handlers and slaughterers in EU registered processing plants have nationally accredited training.

This aspect of livestock handling is soon also to be regulated in the various jurisdictions under the new Land Transport Standards.

The expectation of the corporate customers such as supermarkets is that processors will ensure good animal welfare outcomes at processing plants. In addition, some corporate customers are asking processors to vouchsafe the animal welfare outcomes throughout the supply chain. This not only requires good QA systems up and down the supply chain but also good training of operators at the various steps between producer and processor.

In order that stock handling training programs are effective, systematic and consistent they must assess competency in the same fashion. It is not tenable to have a supply chain where the different sectors have different competency outcomes for livestock handlers. This is especially true when it comes to minimising the impact of stressed cattle arriving at processing plants resulting in increased numbers of dark cutters, increased stock injuries and mortalities in transport, decreased yield (due to bruising) and decreased eating quality. Stressed stock are also more difficult to handle and more likely to represent an increased WHS risk to stock handlers.

It is important to understand that the industry is not only required to handle the realities of livestock handling and animal welfare it is also paramount that the aesthetics of stock handling be managed. This means that livestock are not only managed in a humane way but also handled in a way that does not look cruel or inhumane to consumers. This in turn means that training focuses not just on what is legally acceptable but what is best practice in terms of stock handling.

This need for good basic livestock handling practices in meat works was highlighted in research undertaken by the Melbourne University Animal Welfare Science Centre (A.MIN.0042, funded by AMPC/MLA). This research emphasised the importance of ongoing stock handler training in achieving sustainable cultural change and good animal welfare outcomes in meat processing plants.

## **2 Project objectives**

The objectives of this project were to:

1. develop customised training and assessment materials that provide consistent livestock handling training in the processor sector, with the view of ensuring the package applies generally to the supply chain
2. develop e-learning and DVD support materials
3. pilot the materials in the various sectors with engaged RTOs and enterprises
4. promote the uptake of the training with employers and RTOs through industry organisations, networks and industry conferences
5. seek State funding for the training of livestock handlers.
6. consider discussions with AMPC and other stakeholders in the supply chain to extend the training to the feedlot sector and possibly the transport and farm sectors.

### **3 Methodology**

#### ***3.1 Scoping the project***

To scope the project, MINTRAC undertook a comprehensive review of the Unit AHCLSK205A *Handle livestock using basic techniques* to document and analyse the competencies, skills and knowledge required by this Unit in terms relevant to its application to the meat processing sector.

Additionally, and in collaboration with AMPC and AMIC, MINTRAC identified a working group to review and provide feedback on the materials developed. A survey of all existing training materials available both in Australia and overseas was undertaken to ensure that the materials developed were not out of line with what is currently considered:

- best practice in livestock handling
- the most appropriate way to deliver the 'message' to stock handlers.

Practitioners and trainers were engaged to identify delivery strategies that were currently employed and working as well as weaknesses in the current provision of livestock handler training.

#### ***3.2 Develop customised training and assessment materials that provide consistent livestock handling training in the processor sector***

Having scoped out the Unit AHCLSK205A *Handle livestock using basic techniques* and identified the skills and knowledge to be addressed it was necessary to identify the content and format for the supporting training and assessment materials. It was also necessary to clearly define the audience for this training and the level at which the content should be pitched.

The initial phase involved identifying existing training materials available to the industry, as well as any applicable standards and regulations that should be incorporated.

Draft content for the training materials for this Unit was then developed and subject to an initial review by the technical review group. The amended training and assessment materials were then piloted and feedback from trainers and course participants used to further develop the materials. The piloted and amended materials were once again circulated to the review group.

The supporting hard copy training and materials for this Unit have been piloted / trialled in five stock handler courses for:

- sheep handlers at Yanco
- cattle handlers at Tocal, Gatton, Beenleigh
- multi-species stock handlers in South Australia.

### ***3.3 Develop customised training and assessment materials with the view of ensuring the package applies generally to the supply chain***

The training program developed using the Unit AHCLSK205A *Handle livestock using basic techniques* was designed as a multi-species training program that served effectively as an induction Unit for stock handlers regardless of where in the supply chain they were employed. This enabled the materials to be developed to address the specific requirements of stock handlers in the processing sector without these being essentially a guide to good stock handling.

### ***3.4 Develop e-learning and DVD support materials***

The development of the e-learning training and assessment materials to support the delivery of the accredited Units was a three step process.

In the first instance MINTRAC developed the framework and content for the hard copy materials which covered the underpinning knowledge for the Unit. The framework established the 'logic' regardless of the means of delivery i.e. face-to-face or distance education. Thus the piloting of the materials at a face-to-face course enabled the sequencing and nature of the content to be validated with both the typical trainer and student.

This initial phase was followed by a review of existing audio visual resources available to the industry to support the development of e-learning materials.

The final phase involved the development of the learning materials that can be utilised on-line if the RTO has a Learning Management System or via thumb drive and stand-alone computer. The assessment components of the e-learning format consisted of a number of short work-based tasks and comprehensive quizzes which can be submitted to the RTO via email or in hard copy.

The hard copy and e-learning materials will be subject to ongoing review and amendment as part of the usual MINTRAC arrangements for the review and updating of training and assessment materials.

### ***3.5 Pilot the materials in the various sectors with engaged RTOs and enterprises***

The Unit and materials have been trialled in five workshops in Victoria, NSW and SA with 55 course participants. The pilot courses not only allowed a trialling of the training and assessment materials but also the virtues/practicalities of on- and off-site training. This meant that three courses were delivered at agricultural training establishments and two delivered at meat processing plants.

The workshops involved instruction in the theory of livestock handling as well as practical demonstrations of low stress handling techniques. The courses also allowed participants an opportunity to practice these techniques under supervision.

Assessment was conducted as part of the normal practice in the delivery of the Unit in a face to face setting but using the assessment tools to be included in the e-learning package.

### ***3.6 Promote the uptake of the training with employers and RTOs through industry organisations, networks and industry conferences***

MINTRAC included livestock handling and the training materials project as an agenda item for discussion at:

- annual meat industry QA and Meat Inspection Conference in September of 2012
- the six state based training manager meetings
- the six state based QA manager meetings.

AMIC has been informed of the progress being made with this project and presentations on the topics have been made at QCMPA.

AMPC has likewise been kept abreast of the progress being achieved.

### ***3.7 Seek State funding for the training of livestock handlers.***

The State training authorities in the three states where the pilots were held have been approached either directly or via the TAFE network for funding to assist in the delivery of the Unit.

### ***3.8 Consider discussions with AMPC and other stakeholders in the supply chain to extend the training to the feedlot sector and possibly the transport and farm sectors***

MINTRAC has had discussions with AMPC as to where this initiative should be progressed in the coming year.

MINTRAC has engaged either directly or via RTOs with ALFA, ALMA and ALPA to consider the delivery of accredited training to livestock handlers at feedlots and saleyards. In addition MINTRAC has discussed the provision of livestock handler training with vertically integrated meat processing companies who are keen to establish consistency in both animal welfare and stock handling across their supply chain.

## 4 Results and discussion

### 4.1 *Scoping the project*

MINTRAC undertook a comprehensive review of the Unit AHCLSK205A *Handle livestock using basic techniques* and identified that the principle components to be covered by the materials supporting the delivery of this Unit are:

- livestock behavioural characteristics
- safe work practices
- humane livestock handling techniques
- livestock identification systems
- recognising sick and injured livestock.

The working group formed to review and provide feedback on the materials developed consisted of:

- Jeff House                      NSW DPI
- Shane Bullock                Teys Australia
- Michelle Edge                 AMPC
- Michael Bird                    CRF
- Kevin De Witte                 AHA
- Jodie Mackrell                 Midfields
- Glen Ekhardt                  Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE
- Boyd Holden                    Industry Livestock Consultant
- Richard Nicholls               JBS ASustralia
- Charlotte McIntyre            WA Dept. Of Agriculture

In addition a survey of all existing training materials available both here and overseas was undertaken to ensure that the materials developed were not out of line with what is currently considered:

- best practice in livestock handling
- the most appropriate way to deliver the 'message' to stock handlers.

MINTRAC identified and reviewed materials prepared and published by

- Temple Grandin
- NSW DPI safe cattle handling publications
- Ron Gill & Curt Pate DVD and publications
- MLA DVDs for Cattle handling in feedlots and sheep in live exports
- American Meat Institute's Recommended Animal Handling Guidelines and Audit Guide
- Kevin Stafford (NZ Cattle handling expert)
- Boyd Holden.

In addition livestock managers, training managers and stock handlers from both sheep and beef processing works were consulted as to issues impacting on handling skills at their works. Trainers in NSW, Queensland and SA including Verto, SQIT, Response and TAFESA were consulted to identify delivery strategies that were currently employed and working as well as weaknesses in the current provision of livestock handler training.

#### ***4.2 Develop customised training and assessment materials that provide consistent livestock handling training in the processor sector.***

Initially the Unit AHCLSK205A *Handle livestock using basic techniques* was reviewed and a list of the skills and knowledge to be addressed in the materials was developed and thus also determine the training program content. In addition existing stock handler training materials developed here and overseas were reviewed to make sure any materials developed as part of this project were not deficient.

At this point it was also important to establish that given this is an AQF Level 2 that the intended audience for this training is quite clearly a stock person working under supervision but who has responsibility for unloading, moving and monitoring livestock in the paddocks and lairage associated with a slaughtering establishment.



The Unit will provide stock handlers with a basic understanding of:

- animal welfare
- the four principles of livestock handling
- livestock behaviour
- livestock identification
- WHS associated with handling livestock
- when emergency kills are performed
- handling facilities.

The Unit will provide stock handlers with induction level skills to:

- humanely handle stock in yards, laneways and races
- identify sick and injured animals
- work as part of a team.

The Unit is NOT designed to give the trainee a detailed knowledge of:

- stock diseases
- uploading NLIS data
- developing kill sheets
- managing stock in lairage.

The fact that this is an AQF Level 2 Unit means that the Unit must be pitched at a level of induction or basic stock handling skills equipping the trainee with skills necessary to humanely and safely handle livestock in a workplace and in this case an abattoir.

A draft of the training materials for this Unit was developed and subject to an initial review by the technical review group. The amended training and assessment materials were then piloted and feedback from trainers and course participants used to further develop the materials. The piloted and amended materials were once again circulated to the review group.

The hard copy training and assessment materials for this Unit have now been piloted / trialled in five stock handler courses for:

- sheep handlers at Yanco
- cattle handlers at Tocal, Gatton, Beenleigh
- multi-species stock handlers in South Australia.

### ***4.3 Develop customised training and assessment materials with the view of ensuring the package applies generally to the supply chain***

The Unit AHCLSK205A *Handle livestock using basic techniques* was designed as a multi-species training program that can serve effectively as an induction Unit for stock handlers regardless of where in the supply chain they were employed. It addresses basic handling skills and knowledge common to all stock handlers.

The generic nature of the Unit and the way the materials have been prepared means that with little re-editing or reformatting the materials could be:

- essentially a guide to good stock handling regardless of the sector or
- customised to the specifics of a given sector in the supply chain.

### ***4.4 Develop e-learning and DVD support materials***

The development of the e-learning training and assessment materials to support the delivery of the accredited Unit AHCLSK205A *Handle livestock using basic techniques* was a three step process.

In the first instance MINTRAC developed the framework and content for the hard copy materials which covered the underpinning knowledge for the Unit. The framework established the 'logic' regardless of the means of delivery i.e. face to face or distance education. Thus the piloting of the materials at face-to-face courses enabled the sequencing and nature of the content to be validated with both the typical trainer and student.

This initial phase after four pilot sessions was followed by a review of any existing audio visual resources available to the industry to support the development of e-learning materials.

The final phase involved the development of the e-learning materials that can be utilised on-line if the RTO has a Learning Management System or via thumb drive and stand-alone computer.

The assessment components of the e-learning formatted consisted of a number of short work based tasks and comprehensive quizzes which can be submitted to the RTO via email or in hard copy.

The e-learning course covers the required knowledge for the Unit. Trainees work through the material a screen at a time watching videos illustrating points as they go. The trainee requires only point and click skills. In the version delivered on a stand-alone computer the trainee has a workbook in which they complete their assessment tasks as they go. On-line students will be able to complete assessment tasks with the option of e-mailing completed work or forwarding hardcopies of work place tasks and quizzes.

The hard copy and e-learning materials will be subject to ongoing review and amendment as part of the usual MINTRAC arrangements for training materials update.

#### ***4.5 Pilot the materials in the various sectors with engaged RTOs and enterprises***

The Unit and materials have been trialled in five workshops in Victoria, NSW and SA with 55 course participants. The pilot courses not only allowed a piloting of the training and materials but also the virtues/practicalities of on- and off-site training. This was possible because three courses were delivered at agricultural training establishments and two delivered at meat processing plants.

The workshops involved instruction in the theory of livestock handling as well as practical demonstrations of low stress handling techniques. The courses also allowed participants the opportunity to practice these techniques under supervision.

Assessment was conducted as per the normal practice in the delivery of the Unit in a face-to-face setting but using the assessment tools that are included in the e-learning package.

The participants came from sheep and beef processing plants and the overall evaluation of the course was that it provided participants with a very good understanding of low stress handling and most importantly how good animal welfare outcomes can be relatively easily achieved.

#### ***4.6 Promote the uptake of the training with employers and RTOs through industry organisations, networks and industry conferences***

MINTRAC included livestock handling and the training materials project as an agenda item at:

- annual meat industry QA and Meat Inspection Conference in September of 2012
- the six state based training manager meetings
- the six state based QA manager meetings.

AMIC has been informed of the progress being made with this project and presentations on the topics have been made at QCMPA.

AMPC has likewise been kept abreast of the progress being achieved. AMPC has now provided funding and support to extend this project to cover the use of working animals in meat processing establishments.

#### ***4.7 Seek State funding for the training of livestock handlers.***

The State Training Authorities in three states have been approached for funding to assist in the delivery of the Unit. This funding was initially provided to assist with the delivery of the pilot courses.

For the remainder of this financial year state funding has been made available to assist RTOs to deliver this unit to meat industry personnel.

#### ***4.8 Consider discussions with AMPC and other stakeholders in the supply chain to extend the training to the feedlot sector and possibly the transport and farm sectors***

MINTRAC has had discussions with AMPC as to where this initiative should be progressed in the coming year. AMPC has undertaken to take up the issue of consistent livestock handling training across the supply chain with ALFA, ALMA and ALPA to assess the feasibility of joint projects

MINTRAC has engaged with RTOs who are considering the delivery of accredited training to livestock handlers at feedlots and saleyards. In addition MINTRAC has discussed the provision of livestock handler training with vertically integrated meat processing companies who are keen to establish consistency in both animal welfare and stock handling across their supply chain.

## **5 Success in achieving objectives**

### ***5.1 Objective 1: Develop customised training and assessment materials that provide consistent livestock handling training in the processor sector, with the view of ensuring the package applies generally to the supply chain***

The project has allowed the development of comprehensive training and assessment materials for stock handlers at abattoirs to provide stock handlers with induction level skills to:

- humanely handle stock in yards, laneways and races
- identify sick and injured animals
- work as part of a team of stock handlers.

The materials support the delivery of the accredited Unit AHCLSK205A *Handle livestock using basic techniques*. This Unit was designed as a multi-species training program that can serve effectively as an induction Unit for stock handlers regardless of where in the supply chain they were employed.

The Unit materials therefore address the basic handling skills and knowledge common to all stock handlers.

The generic nature of the Unit and the way the materials have been prepared means that with little re-editing or reformatting the materials could be:

- essentially a guide to good stock handling regardless of the sector or
- customised to the specifics of a given sector in the supply chain.

### ***5.2 Objective 2: Develop e-learning and DVD support materials***

The project has facilitated the development of the e-learning training and assessment materials to support the delivery of the accredited Unit AHCLSK205A *Handle livestock using basic techniques*. The underpinning knowledge or theory component of the Unit can be delivered either on-line if the RTO has a Learning Management System or via thumb drive and stand-alone computer. The assessment

components of the e-learning program consist of a number of short work based tasks and comprehensive quizzes which can be submitted to the RTO via email or in hard copy.

The hard copy and e-learning materials are now part of the suite of training materials that are managed on behalf of industry and will be subject to ongoing review and amendment as part of the usual MINTRAC arrangements for training materials update.

### ***5.3 Pilot the materials in the various sectors with engaged RTOs and enterprises***

The Unit and materials have been trialled in five workshops in Victoria, NSW and SA with 55 course participants. The workshops involved instruction in the theory of livestock handling as well as practical demonstrations of low stress handling techniques. The courses also allowed participants the opportunity to practise these techniques under supervision.

Assessment materials were also trialled at these pilot courses. The participants came from sheep and beef processing plants and the overall evaluation of the course was that it provided participants with a very good understanding of low stress handling and most importantly what good animal welfare outcomes can be relatively easily achieved.

### ***5.4 Promote the uptake of the training with employers and RTOs through industry organisations, networks and industry conferences***

MINTRAC included livestock handling and the training materials project as an agenda item at:

- annual meat industry QA and Meat Inspection Conference in September of 2012
- the six state based training manager meetings
- the six state based QA manager meetings.

AMIC has been informed of the progress being made with this project and presentations on the topics have been made at QCMPA.

MINTRAC is now actively promoting the uptake of livestock handler training through its *Meat Industry Professional Development Program* and this is encouraging the delivery of the training at specific sites and as industry group training at locations such as Tocal Agricultural College.

Professional development for industry and RTO trainers to encourage the use of the e-learning materials will be run through the Training Managers' Networks and demonstrated at the Annual National Training Conference.

### ***5.5 Seek State funding for the training of livestock handlers.***

The State Training Authorities in three states are providing funds to assist with the delivery of livestock training to meat industry personnel for the remainder of this financial year state.

### ***5.6 Consider discussions with AMPC and other stakeholders in the supply chain to extend the training to the feedlot sector and possibly the transport and farm sectors***

MINTRAC has had discussions with AMPC as to where this initiative should be progressed in the coming year. AMPC has undertaken to take up the issue of consistent livestock handling training across the supply chain with ALFA, ALMA and ALPA to assess the feasibility of joint projects

MINTRAC has engaged with RTOs who are considering the delivery of accredited training to livestock handlers at feedlots and saleyards. In addition MINTRAC has discussed the provision of livestock handler training with vertically integrated meat processing companies who are keen to establish consistency in both animal welfare and stock handling across their supply chain.

## **6 Impact on meat and livestock industry – Now and in five years time**

### ***6.1 Current impact***

Training resources are now in place to deliver accredited livestock handling induction training and to abattoir personnel regardless of the size or location of the establishment. These training resources have been validated and piloted by trainers and staff from six major processing companies, three medium sized abattoirs and two small abattoirs. This means that the meat industry now has the capacity to meet

market and customer requirements for livestock handler training in a cost effective manner using proven resources.

Going forward the meat industry at large has access to stock handling training materials that will be regularly reviewed or updated as soon as there are major changes in the standards or regulations impacting on abattoir operations.

Furthermore, the livestock training materials are in a format that can be easily customised to meet the training requirements of other sectors of the red meat supply chain in the future.

The pilot program also means that industry has staff from five RTOs and thirteen processing companies who are in a position to deliver induction and existing worker training to livestock handlers.

## ***6.2 Impact five years from now given the continued implementation of accredited livestock handling training***

- The meat processing industry will have a livestock handling culture firmly based on low stress stock handling
- The provision of structured training for the induction of livestock handlers will be common practice delivering more competent livestock handlers for the industry and improved animal welfare outcomes.
- The industry will be able to meet customer, regulator and importing country requirements for stock handler training and competency as a matter of course.

# **7 Conclusions and recommendations**

## ***7.1 Conclusions***

### **7.1.1 Drivers for accredited training**

At this stage the main driver for delivering accredited training to stock handlers is the need for EU registered export plants to be compliant with the new EU regulations. However there is also a clear indication that some companies are keen to improve the standard of stock handling and are willing to



invest in quality low stress handling training for their staff. Again this may be driven by an awareness that skills are being lost because of high staff turnover.

### **7.1.2 RTO capability to deliver the training**

The delivery of high quality stock handling training at processing works may currently be the exception rather than the rule. This observation is based on the observed enthusiasm with which well qualified trainers have embraced the low stress stock handling Train-the-trainer programs.

In addition the training currently delivered at plants most likely involves the certification of stock handlers against existing workplace norms rather than being training which aims to achieve improvement and culture change. This suggests that more work will have to be done on improving both RTO and workplace trainer competency as well as promoting the concepts of low stress livestock handling with management.

### **7.1.3 RTO capability to deliver e-learning training programs**

There has been very little enthusiasm on the part of RTOs to deliver Certificate II training programs on-line to the meat industry. However there are a number of companies and RTOs albeit limited that have used computer based self learning programs to train small numbers spread over large distances. This model may well be the only viable way of addressing the training requirements of the majority of plants.

### **7.1.4 Industry awareness of low stress handling techniques**

One of the key prerequisites for achieving an improvement in stock handling standards at abattoirs is to get buy in from management. Specifically there has to be an appreciation on the part of management that low stress handling techniques not only represent best practice but can be implemented without loss of productivity or through put.

### **7.1.5 Government funding**

The outlook in the near future for government funding for Certificate II traineeships, skills sets and specific/strategic programs is not particularly good in any state with the exception of SA. The delivery of this type of operator training into the future will be based on fee for service and critical to this will be cooperation on the part of smaller/medium sized enterprises to generate the critical mass to justify stock handling workshops.

## **7.2 Recommendations**

### **7.2.1 Industry awareness activities**

There is an ongoing need for MINTRAC and the other industry bodies to continue to promote improved stock handling and stock handler training. This can be done through presentations to networks and conferences as well as field days for stock handlers and livestock managers.

### **7.2.2 RTO and industry trainer professional development**

This will be an issue into the future as the culture surrounding livestock handling changes there will be a need to improve trainer knowledge and competencies. Unlike product hygiene this is an area where trainers need a great deal of personal confidence to confront unacceptable behaviour especially when this can be entrenched behaviour. However, this project has shown that RTO and workplace stock handling trainers have an appetite for these professional development programs and that these programs do have a positive impact on the workplace.

### **7.2.3 Industry uptake of accredited training**

MINTRAC's role should continue to be one that facilitates the up-take of accredited training in this area. This will involve MINTRAC actively and specifically requesting state funding for stock handling training. MINTRAC should also play a role in providing ongoing professional development programs for RTO and company workplace trainers to enable the up-skilling of industry personnel. In addition MINTRAC should be running specific workshops on the use of the e-learning materials and these could be easily incorporated into the network meetings.

### **7.2.4 Cross sectoral livestock handler training**

Industry bodies will need to continue to communicate on this. There is a trend world-wide to see the introduction of QA programs that cover the whole of the red meat supply chain giving the industry's customers confidence that food safety and animal welfare issues are addressed at each step in the chain. The delivery of standardised, consistent training in welfare and handling across the supply chain will assist in maintaining consistent animal welfare outcomes and the uptake of these QA programs.

In addition the community's scrutiny, via the work of NGOs and the press, of the whole red meat supply chain will not diminish. In the face of this companies can demonstrate that they are exercising a duty of care to livestock by ensuring that workers have received structured training and assessment. MINTRAC for its part should continue to work with RTOs and vertically integrated meat processing companies who deliver standardised training to workers in other sectors of the supply chain.

