

## COVID-19 Level 2 Operating Procedures to Conduct Livestock Auctions

### **Measures required to be adopted for Safe Saleyards and On-farm Auction Operation**

#### **Overview**

We are imposing a strict operational regime to perform livestock saleyard and on-farm auctions.

These Operating Procedures enable livestock auctions to be conducted in a manner compliant with Health and Safety obligations related to the risk of contracting and/or spreading COVID-19.

These Operating Procedures are mandatory. The Health and Safety requirements of any livestock sale activity must also not be compromised, and if an activity cannot be undertaken in compliance with these Operating Procedures, it should not take place.

This is intended to facilitate farmers meeting animal welfare and reasonable livestock care standards, the urgent demands of weather and grass related challenges, and to ensure the operation of this critical part of the food supply chain; whilst avoiding/mitigating compromise of the national COVID-19 effort to protect human health and life.

Livestock Saleyard and on-farm auctions support the sale and purchase of large numbers of livestock, and continue to be the primary price discovery route for many stock classes and in many market conditions. These roles are particularly important in difficult market conditions, as exist presently, and are essential to avoid serious animal and farmer welfare impacts and material commercial issues as farmers manage from the severe drought into winter.

Selling of many stock classes has historically relied heavily on auction selling on-farm and in Saleyards. Price discovery in the present market is a challenge without these yard or farm based auctions.

This guide contemplates an innovative sale format, supported where possible by live on-line auction arrangements, that will substantially mitigate COVID-19 risks, but facilitate these critical channels to market.

With control and site compliance responsibility taken by an agreed operating company, stock agents, farmers and yard teams will work together to make this happen safely (in COVID-19 and also more usual workplace safety terms).

A range of related pre-sale communication and supporting activity in relation to saleyard/auction activity progresses effectively and within COVID-19 guidelines.

This procedure also intends that registration, carrier arrangements and post-sale docketing/confirmations also happen outside of the immediate sale area where feasible, to reduce/avoid COVID-19-related risk.

Please note these guidelines will be adapted and modified by the responsible operator to ensure compliance with any ongoing and developing Government regulations to address COVID-19.

## **Operating Procedures**

It is mandatory for Saleyard and On-farm sale operators to ensure:

- That the responsible legal entity and management controlling any sale is clear
- Persons on site must comply with all Ministry of Health and other Government guidelines in relation to COVID-19
- That any person infected with, or displaying any symptoms of, COVID-19, or that is (or is living with) a vulnerable person (by virtue of their age, underlying health condition, clinical condition or are pregnant), or with any concerns that they may have been exposed to Covid-19, are prohibited from entering the site.
- Sale and detailed operational arrangements to be clearly planned, agreed and where appropriate, documented by all involved before sale day. This documentation (including this procedure document) shall be available to all attending auction/yard/agency workers and to other attendees on request.
- In respect of on-farm sales, where parts of the arrangements and facilities are temporarily assembled, agency management shall check the proposed set-up meets the Covid-19-related requirements of this operating procedure.
- Attendance to be limited to those interested in buying in the particular sale underway, those required to operate the sale, and a limited number of vendor rep agents. *No (or minimum – acknowledging the role of some vendors in stock handling and that some sales will be on vendor properties) vendor presence whilst Covid-19 response and related guidance so warrants–* they can communicate via phone with the limited number of agents present, supported by livestream or similar.
- Sale operator will manage maximum number of attendees to ensure compliance with any COVID-19 restrictions, and to ensure required physical distancing is able to be maintained at all times. This will include a person count and check at the entrance arrangement.

- Minimum required yard and stock handling agent staff to safely perform yard operations – strictly adhering to required distance rule, and other social distancing, hand washing/sanitising and related PPE (disposable gloves, masks if available). Yard team and agents working in yards to agree strict Covid-19-related working arrangements pre-sale.
- The names and contact details of all people in attendance are recorded in a register (including capture of contact details if not already known) – collected by attending clerical staff, rather than written by each attending individual.
- All buyer registration, post purchase confirmation, NAIT transfers, and carrier selection/arrangement (delegated to agents to arrange) handled outside of immediate sale area, and with any lining up to abide by social distancing requirements. Own agents pre-registered. Non-agent buyers encouraged to pre-register, and bring printed pre-registration detail with them (registering day before sale by phone will also be facilitated and encouraged to minimise numbers needing to register on day of sale). These requirements will be clearly advertised pre-sale and advised/policed at sale area entry point.
- Drafting and marking of stock on farm where possible.
- That the social distancing rule is obeyed at all times by all attendees, including arranging in-pavilion and other auction attendee arrangements to facilitate/drive that, with auctioneer input and a marshal policing compliance with all Covid-related requirements. Where necessary, this is to include marking buyer positions in the pavilion at least 1 metre apart.
- Clear entrance and exits so people not crossing paths.
- Strict compliance with other social distancing requirements – including hand washing/sanitiser, disposable gloves available to staff
- Saleyard operators will ensure that any facilities, including the pavilion seating/bench area, contacted by multiple people shall be appropriately disinfected prior to and at the conclusion of the sale.
- Furniture, keyboard and like equipment shall be such as to make this sanitising readily done (including whenever users change).
- One auctioneering team (comprising one auctioneer, one clerk and if room within the facility in compliance with social distancing requirements, one spotter) in the immediate auctioneering area at any time. The people contact areas sanitised (or not shared) between team changes.
- Provide both signage and policing of behaviours to ensure social distancing in relation to the selling area, yard and carrier operations on site
- Attendees will not engage in any activity beyond the specific requirements of the livestock handling and sale. No socialising, meals or drinks together or shared. Staff tea, coffee and any food/drink pre-supplied (or brought by each individual) individually – no communal smoko area or arrangement.
- Limit sale size to facilitate Covid compliance. Maximum working time for any staff member 4 hours before a break away from other people.
- Yard wash-up and related works are conducted on sale day if feasible, with a view to minimising travel.

- Livestock agents and other staff will minimise the travel and farm visits conducted to facilitate selling through Saleyards, and travel alone in their vehicles to and from yards, where/while that remains consistent with Government guidance. All involved will minimise travel away from their home.
- Where feasible operate with at least two separate teams working different days.
- Entity responsible for sale will ensure use of suitable livestock carriers with experienced drivers, and that all involved follow social distancing protocols. Carriers involved are to pre-agree pick-up and delivery times and arrangements, operate standard COVID-19 protocols, and also to maintain records of farms visited.
- Farmer buyers will be encouraged to travel alone, and to participate remotely where based outside the region.
- Responsible management shall review with all staff involved post each sale to ensure any issues are identified and resolved.
- All Current Best Practice Guidelines are to be followed

### **Personal Protective Equipment:**

- All attendees will be required to hand wash with soap or sanitize their hands on arrival at site. Hand sanitiser and/or soap hand washing facilities will be available.
- Disposable gloves shall be available to staff, and their use compulsory where staff cannot readily access hand sanitiser and/or soap hand washing facilities
- Face mask use shall follow current Government guidelines

### **Handling Cattle in compliance with Covid-19 requirements**

- A meeting ahead of each sale shall discuss and agree relevant Covid-19 operating roles and arrangements. Relevant yard management shall be responsible for monitoring Covid-19 safety compliance.
- Staff will operate in minimum team sizes and maintain required social distancing at all times
- Drafting should involve no more than two drafters and one person on the gate. Use of appropriate stock sticks will make the distancing rules workable
- Where stock is passed from one yard person to another, the two people will use side races/pens to ensure required distancing at all times
- Carrier staff delivering and removing staff will be operating under their own COVID-19 arrangements, but will be clearly notified of and required to comply with these Operating Procedures– including that they stay away from the pavilion/selling area and office/registration area, and communicate by phone, and with clerical/agent staff allocated to deal with them.

### **Livestream/Live On-line Auction**

- Companies will where feasible make these facilities available to clients, and encourage their use by buyers and vendors – particularly where these people are based outside of the region in which the sale is conducted.
- Operation arrangements of these systems at the auction shall abide by COVID-19 requirement.

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